

THE PROBLEM OF REVELATION AND REASON IN THE WRITINGS OF EMIL BRUNNER

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Louisville, Kentucky

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Doctor in Theology

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by  
Dale Moody  
January 1947

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## PREFACE

The author wishes to express his appreciation to Dr. W. O. Carver who first aroused the interest in the dimension of the personal that finally led to a study of Brunner and to Dr. H. Cornell Goerner under whom the work was completed. To Dr. G. S. Dobbins, whose instructions in practical psychology have added much to theological and philosophical understanding, the writer is sincerely grateful. Dr. H. W. Tribble, by personal interest, confidence, and spiritual insight, has been the greatest single influence on the writer's life and thought. His interest in this dissertation has been a constant stimulation to do a thorough job. These and many other friends among the students and teachers of this great institution have made the study of theology both an act of faith and a great experience.

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My wife and two little girls, to whom the dissertation is dedicated, have made many sacrifices for the completion of this study.

All translations from German writings, unless otherwise indicated, are mine. The bibliography includes only the books actually consulted in the writing. No doubt there is a debt to many others.

Louisville, Kentucky

Dale Moody

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Today a new spirit is sweeping across Protestantism. A new age is announced by men becoming possessed of a new faith, which is the old faith passed through the fire of historical and scientific criticism. More than a century of searching thought has made it impossible for many to return to the world-view of the past; but they still, in the light of modern research in religion, science, and philosophy, wish to remain Christians, believing that God has spoken his final revelation in Jesus Christ. It is not, therefore, a return of Rip van Winkle, a rousing from dogmatic slumber unaware that a revolution of thought has passed by. It is rather the faith of men who recognize the legitimate claims of criticism, but who, standing in a heap of ruins and in the thick of battle, have seen Christ still the author and finisher of faith. A Roman Catholic theologian, Dr. Karl Adam, whose own communion has seen the fighting only from afar, has described the scene as observed by the outsider.

There is no doubt that in the Protestant theology of Germany, which, a few years ago, appeared to the outside observer as a barren waste over which the hot wind of a limitless criticism played, springs have suddenly broken out: a new sense for the supernatural realities, for God and His revelation, for faith and miracle, rises up and fights with uncommon force!<sup>1</sup>

The central article in this quickening of faith is the doctrine of reve-

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by A. Birch Hoyle, "The Barthian Theology," in The Protestant Dictionary, edited by Charles Sydney Carter and G. E. Alison Weeks (London: The Harrison Trust, 1933), p. 78.

lation. Where the incarnation stood in the Early Church, the Holy Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, the belief in justification by faith in the Reformation, now stands the event of revelation. This has become the great divide between the Church and the world. At this point a decision must be made. Mr. T. S. Elliot has expressed the Christian attitude of our day when he says: "The division between those who accept, and those who deny, Christian revelation I take to be the most profound division between human beings!"<sup>2</sup> Here all Christians, Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant, are in a common cause; but to the Protestant theologians must go the honors for raising this central problem for our day.

#### I. THE PROBLEM PRESENTED

No doubt a great contemporary theologian and historian was correct when he said that the nineteenth century "is one of the most notable ever traversed by the Christian Church,"<sup>3</sup> but now that century seems only a prelude to the possibilities presented to the twentieth. "A theological watershed"<sup>4</sup> was reached at the close of the First World War when Karl Barth, then an obscure pastor in the Swiss village of Safenwil, published his Rómerbrief,<sup>5</sup> which, as Dr. Karl Adam again said, "fell like a bomb

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2 John Baillie and Hugh Martin, editors, Revelation (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 2.

3 Hugh Ross Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 1.

4 Holmes Rolston, "A Theological Watershed: An Exposition of the Rómerbrief of Karl Barth," Theology Today, I:103-120 (April, 1944).

5 The Preface to the first edition of Barth's Rómerbrief is dated August, 1918.

on the playground of the theologians."<sup>6</sup> Since then Barth has poured forth his pronouncements often so paradoxical that few theologians have been satisfied that he has spoken the last word. The situation has been made even more suspicious by Barth's repeated cleansings from any guilt of relating the world of the Bible to that in which man must live. In a famous chapter entitled "The Strange New World within the Bible," he says:

It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the content of the Bible, but the right divine thoughts about men. The Bible tells us not how we should talk with God but what he says to us; not how we find the way to him, but how he has sought and found the way to us; not the right relation in which we must place ourselves to him, but the covenant which he has made with all who are Abraham's spiritual children and which he has sealed once and for all in Jesus Christ. It is this which is within the Bible. The word of God is within the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

The word of God is within the Bible, and for this reason the problems of historical and natural science must be related to this Bible in which the revelation is found. It also comes into a world of religious experience, of religions that have molded great cultures and civilizations. It must be interpreted in relation to human reason, both theoretical and practical. Precisely, this is the problem with which the Christian claim to revelation is presented: How is revelation related to the general forms of human consciousness found in religion, science, and philosophy? But Barth's report has been too brief; his solution has been too simple.

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6 Quoted by John McConnachie, The Significance of Karl Barth (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), p. 43.

7 Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, trans. Douglas Horton (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1928), p. 43.

From Obstalden, another Swiss pastor had been hearing the bells of a new day even before Barth found the belfry rope and rang them so soundly.<sup>8</sup> Within a few months of the publication of Barth's epoch-making volume, Emil Brunner came to study in Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. This was symbolic, for Brunner was destined to become the one theologian who "combines most fully amplitude and versatility in his field, keenness of analysis and balance in conclusion, clarity of thought and power of presentation."<sup>9</sup> It is often assumed that Brunner is a sort of theological Hermes for Barth the Swiss Zeus. Why then any concern for Brunner's thought? For one thing, this is a wild assumption. The fact that both Barth and Brunner made violent attacks on the modern theology that had dominated Christendom for a century led many to confine them to the same inferno. Brunner's name followed Barth's as one would add Gomorrah to Sodom. Brimstone and fire have rained upon them as if they were one. But the relation between the Christian revelation and the general forms of human consciousness, fled from like the plague by Barth, is the special task to which Brunner has given himself.

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<sup>8</sup> A third Continental theologian, Karl Heim of Tübingen, second only to Barth in popularity among theological students before the war, has undertaken to relate revelation to the intellectual world in a manner congenial to Brunner, but the range is not the same. Karl D. Michalson, "The Doctrine of Reason and Revelation in the Theology of Karl Heim," an unpublished dissertation in Yale, 1945, has investigated this contribution.

<sup>9</sup> Nels S. F. Ferré on the cover of Brunner's The Divine-Human Encounter. Cf. Otto A. Piper, An Encyclopedia of Religion, edited by Vergilius Ferm (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 90.

The approach of Barth to theology is from the problem of what to preach. Brunner is a theological professor and sees the problem through the eyes of an intellectual facing the scientific, humanistic temper of the moderns, and throwing down the gauge to them. This is an important difference; because Brunner is forced to set his theology in relation not merely to the human needs of a parish but also to the intellectual needs of those seeking a reorientation of modern culture.<sup>10</sup>

Where Barth is weak Brunner is strong; where one is the most vulnerable the other is the most valiant. Not even the Reformers wrestled with the varied problems that clash on the pages of Brunner's writings. What follows therefore is no duplication of the work done on Barth's doctrine of revelation.<sup>11</sup> The problem here investigated then is the relation between the Christian doctrine of revelation and the general consciousness of humanity. It is the Word in relation to the world, revelation in relation to reason.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH ON BRUNNER

Interest in Brunner came in this country with his visit to speak

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<sup>10</sup> Edwin Ewart Aubrey, Present Theological Tendencies (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), p. 89.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Peter Halman Monsma, Karl Barth's Idea of Revelation (Somerville, N. J.: Somerset Press, Inc., 1937), a doctoral dissertation in Columbia University. Brubaker, Lauren Edgar, "A Study of Karl Barth's Doctrine of Revelation," unpublished doctoral dissertation in Union Theological Seminary, 1944.

in seven leading American theological institutions<sup>12</sup> in 1928. Writings that discussed his doctrine of revelation began to appear shortly after Reinhold Niebuhr, "The American Brunner,"<sup>13</sup> published his epoch-making<sup>14</sup> Moral Man and Immoral Society in 1932. No detailed examination of the problem of revelation and reason has appeared,<sup>15</sup> but mention of some value has been given in six publications, all but the first considering Brunner along with Barth. These form the only secondary sources of any specific value in the field of this dissertation. Therefore, the writings of Emil Brunner, examined in their entirety to date, are the chief sources for this study. Here consideration is given to the progress made in the six books that give some space to Brunner's doctrine of revelation and the problem presented by reason.

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12 I.e., the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in the United States at Lancaster, Pa.; Central Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio; the Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburg, Pa.; Princeton Theological Seminary; the Divinity School in Harvard University; Hartford Theological Seminary; and Union Theological Seminary, New York. The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. ix.

13 George Hammar, Christian Realism in Contemporary American Theology (Uppsala, Sweden: A-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1940), p. 250.

14 Ibid., pp. 4, 61, passim.

15 Fing-I Tseo, "The Christology of Emil Brunner," an unpublished doctoral dissertation in Yale University, 1941, treats the closely related subject of the person and work of Christ. George Rudolph Gordh, "Criticism of Reason in Contemporary Theological Methodology," unpublished doctoral dissertation in the University of Chicago, 1941, gives some attention to revelation and reason in Brunner's theology.

1. Eugene William Lyman: The Meaning and Truth of Religion (1933)

The first account<sup>16</sup> came from a liberal, Eugene William Lyman, Professor of Philosophy of Religion in Union Theological Seminary, when he published his The Meaning and Truth of Religion in 1933. He had been the teacher of Brunner back in 1919-1920 and was now a colleague of Niebuhr. Lyman, who had written the last part of his book while he heard Brunner lecture, was sharply reminded of the challenge that a theological transcendence presented to his liberal theology that put much emphasis on God's immanence in the world. The next to the last chapter of his book is, therefore, on "God, Immanent and Transcendent." His criticisms of Brunner are all against the principle of discontinuity between human nature and divine nature "in a dualism between reason and faith."<sup>17</sup>

The first consequence, he says, is that this theology is builded on philosophical scepticism.<sup>18</sup> Accepting the results of both natural science and historical criticism, Brunner rejects the scientific and historical world-view of the Bible. Following Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, reason is severely limited by ending in philosophical scepticism, that Kant's Critique of Practical Reason may be followed in establishing

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16 Eugene William Lyman, The Meaning and Truth of Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), pp. 416-426. It is of interest to note that an important detailed analysis of Barth, Gogarten, and Bultmann appeared in Europe about the same time. Theodor Siegfried, Das Wort und die Existenz (Gotha: Leopold Klotz Verlag, 1933), 3 volumes.

17 Op. cit., p. 418.

18 Ibid., pp. 419 f.



"the primacy of practical reason," i.e., faith.<sup>19</sup> A second consequence of this severing of faith and reason is that "it puts a decision of faith to accept a dogma about the historic Christ above the meaning and power of the historical content of Christ's teaching and life for revealing God and transforming men."<sup>20</sup> This discontinuity of Christ with history requires acceptance of revelation on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit rather than on the continuity of the historical content of Jesus' life with our highest ideals and values. To Lyman the liberal this is the "arbitrary sanctioning of a dogma."<sup>21</sup> The third consequence seen in this dualism is that it shifts from ethical dualism where it is valid to epistemological dualism where it "has the effect of confusing and weakening the valid meaning."<sup>22</sup> Lyman summed up his criticisms by saying:

If, then, we are not to found faith upon philosophical scepticism, if Christian faith is to centre in faith in the Jesus of history and not in a dogma about him, if a theological dualism is not to obscure ultimate moral values and the real nature of moral issues, we cannot hold to a conception of the transcendence of God which involves the denial of immanence.<sup>23</sup>

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19 It is interesting to note that in less than a decade one who was to become a successor to Lyman founded a series of Gifford Lectures on this primacy of the practical reason. See Richard Kroner, The Primacy of Faith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943). This is indicative of the passing of Lyman's liberalism in Union and in American thought in general.

20 Lyman, op. cit., p. 420.

21 Ibid., p. 421.

22 Ibid., p. 422.

23 Ibid., p. 425.

Brunner's defense against such criticisms forms a large part of this thesis.

2. Holmes Rolston: A Conservative Looks to Barth and Brunner (1933)

The second study<sup>24</sup> of Brunner came from a conservative, Holmes Rolston, who published his book later in the same year as Lyman's book. Since this came before the "Civil War" between Barth and Brunner, the "Swiss theologians" are treated as one voice crying against liberalism. Brunner is brought in as a lucid interpreter of Barth. The essential thought of Brunner is touched upon, but secondary sources about Barth and the English writings and translations of Brunner constitute the sources. The outline follows roughly the plan of Brunner's American and British lectures, and this is about the pattern of the problem in all of his early writings; but this is limited by the fact that the works in which Brunner is most original were not yet written. It was an encouragement to conservative American theologians who looked for relief from liberalism, but the work is of no permanent value for us today. Rolston, however, as a conservative, was one of the first among the young theologians in America to "become convinced that God, by the medium of the Scriptures and the Spirit, is speaking to our generation through the new Swiss theologians."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Holmes Rolston, A Conservative Looks to Barth and Brunner (Nashville, Tenn.: Cokesbury Press, 1933).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

### 3. Edwin Ewart Aubrey: Present Theological Tendencies (1936)

A third consideration came from another liberal theologian, greatly influenced by naturalism, Edwin Ewart Aubrey, at that time Professor of Christian Theology in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. His review<sup>26</sup> of the important theological tendencies came as the theological world was becoming aware that Barth and Brunner had gone their separate ways. His treatment of Brunner is brief,<sup>27</sup> but very concise; however the discussion is confined to the problem of the relation between a rather restricted view of reason and revelation, and the emphasis is on Brunner's criticism of reason rather than on the constructive statement of revelation. The study is important, however, as a first analysis of the relation between revelation and reason. But since then Brunner has written his monumental work on Revelation and Reason.<sup>28</sup>

### 4. John Baillie: Our Knowledge of God (1939)

The fourth book<sup>29</sup> has "become one of the classics in British theology in the twentieth century."<sup>30</sup> John Baillie, who may be con-

26 Present Theological Tendencies (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936).

27 Ibid., pp. 89-102.

28 Offenbarung und Vernunft: die Lehre von der christlichen Glaubenserkenntnis (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1941).

29 John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), pp. 28-35, 98-101, et passim.

30 Alan Richardson, "British Theology in the War Years," Theology Today, II:375 (October, 1945).

sidered the best representative of the "central trend" in theological thought today,<sup>31</sup> gives only a few pages to Brunner specifically; but the problems aroused by Barth and Brunner appear on every page. Baillie finds Brunner to be much in line with what he puts forward when he says:

He, too, insists on the present reality of the imago dei and on its relevance to our preaching as providing a point of contact in human nature which makes possible the reception by human beings of the Christian gospel. He, too, insists that God has in some degree revealed Himself to all men, and that we neither know nor can conceive of any human nature which is not already aware of confrontation with God.<sup>32</sup>

But Baillie agrees with Barth in rejecting Brunner's "absolute distinction between form and matter,"<sup>33</sup> though he departs more from Barth than from Brunner. He too thinks there is revelation, knowledge, and grace apart from the knowledge of Christ, but to make the distinction between form and matter absolute would involve a "facile sundering of goodness from reasonableness."<sup>34</sup> He says:

If we remained perfectly reasonable, we should also remain perfectly good. For perfect goodness and perfect reasonableness are one and the same thing. And, again, utter wickedness and utter unreasonableness are one and the same thing. It is always good to be reasonable and it is always reasonable to be good, while it is always unreasonable to be wicked. But if, on the one hand, utter wickedness is the same thing as utter unreasonableness, it is

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31 Dr. H. H. Farmer remarked that "John Baillie stands like a colossus in Britain today."

32 Op. cit., p. 28.

33 Ibid., p. 30.

34 Ibid., p. 32.

equally true, on the other hand, that all wickedness involves some degree of reasonableness -- a completely unreasonable being would be as incapable of wickedness as of goodness, for he would be simply non-moral. This means that total wickedness is a self-destroying conception.<sup>35</sup>

Baillie must then go farther beyond Barth than Brunner has gone. The chief value of this treatise is the penetrating analysis of man's receiving the divine revelation and the value of religious experience for religious knowledge.

5. Douglas Clyde Macintosh: The Problem of Religious Knowledge (1940)

The fifth consideration<sup>36</sup> of Brunner's doctrine of revelation is from the point of view of a "critical monistic realism." This is less appreciative and also less discerning than any of the preceding. Macintosh's monism can see in the "reactionary irrationalism" of this "dualistic epistemology" only "pretty much the old externally authoritarian irrationalistic theology of the evangelical Calvinism of two or three hundred years ago."<sup>37</sup> According to Brunner, "dependence upon a historical event and a historical person belongs to the essence of revelation";<sup>38</sup> but according to Macintosh, "if on grounds of historical criticism we should be obliged to regard the essential historicity of Jesus as doubtful, we should not find ourselves for that reason logically

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<sup>35</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>36</sup> Douglas Clyde Macintosh, The Problem of Religious Knowledge (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), pp. 335-347, passim.

<sup>37</sup> Op. cit., p. 344.

<sup>38</sup> God and Man (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 57.

obliged to give up an essentially Christian faith."<sup>39</sup> This evaluation of history is highly indicative of the chasm that exists between those who hold to a monistic epistemology and those who hold to a dualistic epistemology. Then, much as Rolston did seven years before, Macintosh makes no clear distinction between Barth and Brunner.

#### 6. Cornelius Van Til: The New Modernism (1946)

The latest critical study of Brunner<sup>40</sup> comes from a fundamentalist, who has discovered that dialecticism uses the same vocabulary as his orthodoxy but not the same dictionary. With the exception of Revelation and Reason, and The Christian Doctrine of God, most of the works of Brunner that relate to revelation are examined. The most basic criticism against Brunner is that the phenomenalism inherited from Kant makes the orthodox doctrine of direct revelation impossible.<sup>41</sup> At this point two critics as far apart as Macintosh and Van Til agree. Their reasons are very different, but the point is the same. A second criticism is that the theory of "Begegnung" is in contradiction to the Reformed doctrine of the objectivity of revelation. If revelation is not objective, orthodoxy is unable to possess the truth. If Brunner is correct then the beati possidentes, blessed possessors, lose their possession.<sup>42</sup> Follow-

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39 Op. cit., p. 341.

40 Cornelius Van Til, The New Modernism (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1946), pp. 160-211; 245-274, et passim.

41 Op. cit., pp. 169-171.

42 Op. cit., p. 1.

ing Greek metaphysics, Protestant orthodoxy interprets truth in the categories of the subjective and the objective; but Brunner, following what he believes is Biblical psychology, teaches that Christian truth comes into being only when God meets man in a personal encounter, a correlation that transcends the subjective-objective relation as God's "Thou" meets man's "I".<sup>43</sup> This would put the truth beyond the control and the dogmatism of orthodoxy. Every such form of agnosticism, for Van Til, even the most humble, must be denounced as heresy.

True revelation, Brunner contends, must not be thought of as being directly phenomenal. It must be paradoxically related to the phenomenal; only thus can it be truly free. Only then is it beyond the believer's control and the unbeliever's attack.<sup>44</sup>

The third accusation Van Til brings against Brunner is that dialecticism exhausts God in his revelation so that the Reformed doctrine of the self-contained God is undermined. How the threat to the self-contained God is harmonized with the charge that "God must not be bound by His own revelation"<sup>45</sup> is not clear. If God is not bound in his revelation, how can he be exhausted in his revelation? Actually Brunner seems to mean something very different, viz., that Christ exhausts the meaning of revelation, because he is unique. However, with these denunciations of Brunner in the name of orthodoxy, The New Modernism is the least inadequate of the secondary sources to this study. Van Til, like J. Gresham Machen,

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<sup>43</sup> The Divine-Human Encounter (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), pp. 52-55.

<sup>44</sup> Van Til, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

whose mantle he wears, is fundamentalistic orthodoxy at its best. The chief value of this work is to furnish an understanding why Brunner's doctrine of revelation in relation to reason and the Bible does not satisfy those who have set for themselves the precarious alternative: revelation or higher criticism.

### III. THE PLAN OF PROCEDURE

With the review of previous writings on Brunner, the ground is clear for a comprehensive study of the development of his thought, with special reference to the problem of revelation and reason. But this is not done before an investigation of the problem in the history of Christian thought as it relates to the background of Brunner's solution. Chapter II, therefore, goes back to the very sources that have guided Brunner in seeing and stating the problem to which he attempts to give a systematic and comprehensive answer. His claim to a Biblical theology takes the investigation to the Scriptures for an examination of his interpretation of pivotal passages. Then, since he tries to establish a connection with the theology of the Fathers, especially Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Augustine, his debt to the Patristic period is assessed. No claim of continuity with any Schoolmen is made, so they are passed by in silence; but since the Reformers are believed to be heralds calling the Church back to the theology of the Bible and the Fathers, both Luther and Calvin are examined. The modern thinkers who have influenced Brunner, both positively and negatively, are reviewed in seven groups, viz., (1) the critical philosophy of Kant; (2) the dialecticism of Kierkegaard;



(3) the personalism of Ebner, Buber, Gogarten, and Grisebach; (4) the existentialism of Martin Heidegger; (5) the Christian socialism of the Blumhardts, Ragaz, and Kutter; (6) the primal history (Urgeschichte) of Overbeck; and (7) the form criticism (Formgeschichte) of Bultmann. A certain antipathy for Kant and Heidegger, and to some extent for Bultmann, renders the influence of these three rather negative; but, for any protest of Brunner to the contrary, neither his problem nor his solution is intelligible apart from them.

Chapter III, then, turns to a chronological analysis of the problem as it emerges in the stages of Brunner's writings. The analysis sets forth what is designated as a critical and a constructive period before the departure from Barth. After this, a period of controversy with Barth, on one hand, and the Oxford Group, on the other, the analysis comes to what Brunner himself agrees is the period of personalism. It is also the most creative and original period in the solution of the problem of revelation and reason.

Chapter IV states the meaning of revelation with the problem of revelation and reason in the background. The dialectic of revelation defines such categories as time and eternity, continuity and discontinuity, immanence and transcendence, God and man; metaphysics, speculation, and mysticism; objectivity, subjectivity, and the dimension of the personal; special, general, and Christian revelation. The nature of revelation reviews revelation as a concept in its implications about God and man, the fact of revelation in creation, in the historical revelation as promise and as fulfillment, in the witness of the Scripture, the Church,

and the Spirit, and the fulfillment of history in glory.

The last three chapters examine revelation in relation to the three general forms of reason, viz., religion, science, and philosophy. The problem of the order is raised by the change of procedure in Brunner from the historical to the systematic order.

1. The historical order. Protestant theology has had a rapid growth. The problems which confront Brunner have come from a deep and detailed study of this development. After the Reformers had discovered anew the Biblical understanding of truth, a long period of controversy followed in which there was an attempt to establish the authority of the Bible by the dogma of verbal inspiration, but the rise of the historical and natural sciences presented an even more difficult task. This age of orthodoxy was followed by an age of reason that greatly weakened the original power of Protestantism, but the problem of revelation and theoretical reason remains. Religious experience revolted against the "high and dry a priori way," and the emphasis of romanticism and popular evangelicalism on feeling raised the problem of revelation and religious experience. But this emphasis on religious experience had little feeling for history, and the neglect led to historicism. So Protestant history proposes the problem of revelation and its relation to the Bible, reason, religious experience, and history. This is roughly the order followed in The Philosophy of Religion (1927), The Theology of Crisis (1929), God and Man (1930), and The Word and the World (1931), but the later writings turn to a more systematic order, which is followed in the last three chapters.

2. The systematic order. The systematic order attacks the problem in the order of proximity to revelation. So Chapter V treats "Revelation and Religion." Religious experience, as manifested in both the subjective (scepticism, mysticism) and the objective forms, is related to Brunner's definition of the Christian revelation as expounded in Chapter IV. The struggle of the Christian message with the claims of other religions takes the subject through the theory of Urgeschichte and then the five so-called parallels in the history of world religions, viz., the bhakti religion in Hinduism, the Amita Buddha in Eastern Buddhism, the Gathas of Zoroaster, the religion of Islam, and Judaism. The answer of Christian revelation to the naturalistic theory of religion involves an analysis of both naturalism and idealism.

Chapter VI, on "Revelation and Science," passes through the troubled waters of modern controversies about the relation between religion and science. Since the dogma of verbal inspiration has presented the basic difficulty, the relation between revelation and verbal inspiration is examined in connection with concepts of "communication" and "communion" in knowledge of God. To solve the problems presented by natural and historical sciences Brunner finds it necessary to reject the dogma of verbal inspiration, and this he does most soundly. Natural sciences, especially astrophysics, geology, and biology, force the Christian faith to relinquish an inseparable relation with the world-view of antiquity. Historical science, i.e., higher criticism and Formgeschichte, sharpen the understanding of historical revelation in both the Old and New Testaments. The final concern is with the claims of causality on the miracle

of revelation.

Chapter VII concludes the dissertation with an examination of "Revelation and Philosophy." Brunner has long been concerned with the Christian answer to the problems of epistemology and ethics; therefore, the first part of the chapter relates the truth of revelation to the truth of reason, and the last part relates the moral law to the gospel of grace. A third philosophical problem is introduced in the later writings of Brunner, viz., the possibility of a Christian philosophy; but, since this is the theme of his forthcoming Gifford Lectures on The Christian Philosophy of Civilization and Culture, no attempt is made to outline his published writings. No formal conclusion is given, since the last three chapters compare Brunner's view with the alternate approaches in the history of thought.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Brunner's thinking has not been done in a corner. There is both criticism and appreciation for the past. His aversions for Roman Catholicism, Protestant orthodoxy, and modernism are indicative of the epochs with which he feels least affinity. Roman Catholicism, as it received classic formulation in St. Thomas Aquinas and as now so "elaborately expounded and justified" by Erich Przywara,<sup>1</sup> is opposed by Brunner at two important points. The first is with regard to natural theology (theologia naturalis). Brunner sets his doctrine of the revelation of creation as a formal presupposition to the revelation of Scripture against the self-sufficient and unbroken system of Roman Catholicism.<sup>2</sup> A second point is the subjective-objective interpretation of truth, which delegates the authority of the Word to the "legal apparatus of the Church." The crowning expression of this is the dogma of papal infallibility -- Roma locuta, causa finita.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Walter Marshall Horton, Contemporary Continental Theology (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), p. 66. See pp. 65-84 for good brief statement of Przywara's theology.

2 Karl Barth, Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1934), p. 36, is adamant to see this distinction. Cf. Cornelius Van Til, The New Modernism (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1946), pp. 252, 316.

3 The Divine-Human Encounter (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 25. Cf. John S. Whale, Christian Doctrine (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944), p. 15.

Protestant orthodoxy is Brunner's bête noire.<sup>4</sup> Cornelius Van Til has rightly observed that "the oven is made seven times hotter for traditional orthodoxy than for either Romanism or modern Protestantism."<sup>4</sup> Like Rome, it has fallen into the objectification of the Word. "The 'paper Pope' (Papierenen Papst)," he says, "stands over against the Pope of Rome; quite unnoticed the position of the dependence on the Word of God is usurped by the appeal to pure doctrine, which in turn is made tantamount to the Word of God."<sup>5</sup> The change of the seat of authority from the Pope to the Bible is the only difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy; both are shackled to an objective authoritarian system. The third opponent of Brunner is modernism. In revolt against the authoritarianism of Catholicism and Protestantism there came a "fetter-smashing urge in the individual";<sup>6</sup> but still thinking in terms of the objective-subjective antithesis, it fell into "the subjective dissolution of theology."<sup>7</sup> None of the three has understood Christian truth as personal correspondence.

Great appreciation for other periods in Christian thought is found. There is repeated insistence for the need to return to the Biblical point of view, but the Scriptures must be considered as "the ground and norm

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4 Op. cit., p. 2.

5 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 32. Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1941), p. 11.

6 Ibid., p. 26.

7 Ibid., p. 35.

of faith," as "our abiding standard of reference," and as "the classical expression of Christian faith" rather than "as the historical starting point."<sup>8</sup>

As starting point, as the pattern of a Christian knowledge of revelation, we may choose the Reformation confession of faith as being that expression of faith which, although outside the Bible, most clearly expresses the view that the faith founded on the Scriptures takes of itself.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, if Brunner's background is understood in the broadest perspective, attention must be given to the Scriptures and the Fathers before the Reformers and the modern influences. Brunner's background is therefore considered from the point of view of the material principle, found in the Scriptures and the Fathers, and the formal principle, found in the Reformers and the modern philosophical and theological influences.

### I. THE SCRIPTURES

Specific statements in the Holy Scriptures are not shibboleths with Brunner, but there are some passages that witness to God's revelation in a more profound way than others. Indeed, the center of the history of God's revelation and redemption, and thereby the Scriptures which bear witness to it, is the cross of the Son of God.<sup>10</sup> Paul's Romans and John's Gospel are Brunner's armor on the right hand and on

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<sup>8</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, trans. A. J. D. Farrer and Bertram Lee Woolf, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Die Mitte der Bibel (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1938), pp. 3f.

the left.<sup>11</sup> To him Paul gives the classic statement of general revelation and John the most succinct statement of special revelation. This is not a contradiction but a balance between two poles of thought. An examination of Brunner's interpretation of these passages brings us within the threshold of his thought.

1. The Epistle to the Romans. -- Paul declares that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them."<sup>12</sup> That is why God gives man "the summons to behold God in His Works."<sup>13</sup> But sin blinds man to the divine majesty, and ungodliness leads to unrighteousness. Man is without God, for he is ungodly. Without the grace of Christ man is indeed ungodly in the sense that he opposes the truth in his deeds and thoughts and that he and his fellow-creatures are left alone to do the right. However he is not ungodly in the sense that he is wholly free from God. Man is always under God's dominion, either under his grace or under his wrath. The wrath of God is a head-wind (Gegenwind) of the divine will to indicate to man, so to speak, "which way the wind is blowing," when he runs against God's will. God reveals his nearness even to the ungodly, even in his wrath, with which he reminds man that God is not

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11 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 111.

12 Romans 1:18f.

13 Man in Revolt, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 91, note 1. Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 63ff.



mocked. There is no human being without a relation to God. To this the heathen religions bear witness. This they could not do if God did not at first give them an inevitable witness by his works in nature and history. The denial of such a "general revelation" (allgemeinen Offenbarung) as a presupposition to the historical revelation of grace in Jesus Christ can not claim the support of Paul. To speak against this fact is to speak against the fact of man's responsibility. If man has not known God, how then can he be responsible? However, he is responsible when he knows about the power of divine self-revelation.<sup>14</sup> The passage, therefore, lays "bare human guilt and human responsibility through the relation of man -- pagan man -- to the revelation of creation."<sup>15</sup> Brunner's interpretation of this passage is the basis for his departure from Barth.

2. The Gospel of John. Over against this emphasis on the revelation of God's wrath in general revelation stands that of John on the special revelation of grace and truth. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth."<sup>16</sup> This entrance of the Word of God into history cuts across any interpretation that would reduce the Christian revelation to some general historical or psychological

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<sup>14</sup> Der Römerbrief: Übersetzt und ausgelegt (Leipzig und Hamburg: Gustav Schlossmann Verlagsbuchhandlung (Gustav Flick), in Bibelhilfe für die Gemeinde, herausgeben von D. Erich Strange, 1938), pp. 12f.

<sup>15</sup> Man in Revolt, p. 73, note 1.

<sup>16</sup> John 1:14

meaning. A great theological commentator has put the emphasis of John in classic words, when he says that the Fourth Gospel

. . . refuses to come to rest in any haven provided by historical or psychological (mystical) analysis. Say that the Gospel is the product of an author who has found rest in a state of mystical quietness and perfection, and its steady, consistent emphasis upon historicity, upon the flesh of Jesus the Son of man, renders the mystical commentator uneasy in its presence. Say that it is the work of an eyewitness whose reminiscences have been arranged, or ordered and straightened out by himself or by some disciple familiar with his memories, and the book stirs angrily under our fingers, and declares that the flesh profiteth nothing; that mere historicity, mere reminiscences, would bury the truth irrecoverably in the earth; for the truth which Jesus is and was can be made known only by the Holy Spirit of God, who is the Spīrit of Truth; and the Paraclete had not been given to the disciples while they were eye witnesses of the life and passion of Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

To this event of revelation faith looks, and "to be determined by this event, this fact of the Word, this Word Incarnate, is faith."<sup>18</sup> All other articles of the Christian creed are grounded in this one. This description of faith describes the divine revelation as a whole. Even when it is described in other terms, this is what is intended. "Formulations of truth exist which are rather 'one-sided' -- which stress the less important aspects of truth -- but this formulation of the Christian message," Brunner declares, "goes to the very heart of the matter; it is absolutely central."<sup>19</sup> The following remark expresses the same dialectic so well expressed by Hoskyns:

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17 Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), Vol. I, p. 119.

18 The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934), p. 205.

19 Loc. cit.

Something of extraordinary significance takes place when man first becomes aware of this central point around which all thought and reflection must revolve if it is to have a meaning; when he begins to understand that nothing conditional exists apart from the unconditional, nothing finite without the infinite, nothing relative without the Absolute.<sup>20</sup>

The Greek Logos is completely transformed in becoming a vehicle for Christian faith, for here is a conjunction of the ideal and the real, the historical and the super-historical, eternity and time, God and man. "This, which would make every good Platonist's hair stand on end," Brunner observes, "is the central article in the Christian theory of knowledge."<sup>21</sup>

## II. THE FATHERS

The Johannine doctrine of the incarnation of the Word of God passed from the school of Ephesus into the age of the Fathers. Against the "idealism" of the Gnostics, (Irenaeus of Lyon, and after him Athanasius of Alexandria,) defended a realistic interpretation of the incarnation that is so extreme that Adolph Harnack has called it objective and mechanical. But Brunner protests that:

We tend to forget that the Fathers of the Church had a very different task from that of the Reformers; it was their duty to secure the objective aspect of the Gospel against false doctrines, whereas the Reformers had to secure the subjective aspect.<sup>22</sup>

It is significant that Brunner's great work on The Mediator expresses

20 Ibid., p. 207.

21 Man in Revolt, pp. 49f.

22 The Mediator, p. 255, note 1.

the thought of these two early Fathers of the Church more than it does any of the others, and his Man In Revolt owes a heavy debt to the most influential of the later Fathers, Augustine of Hippo. The contribution of the three with reference to the problem of revelation and reason is here considered.

1. Irenaeus of Lyon (?130-203?). Lundensian theologians with Emil Brunner have rescued Irenaeus of Lyon from the limbo of liberalism to which Harnack confined him. Brunner is bold to make confession of his debt to Irenaeus. He says:

If anyone should feel inclined to call my work "theology of the type of Irenaeus," I would be quite inclined to accept the description. Only I would have to remind my critics that between Irenaeus and the present day there have been Augustine, the Reformation, and Kierkegaard.<sup>23</sup>

The first systematic statement of the Christian faith is found in the last three books of Irenaeus' Against the Heresies (c. 180 A. D.), which presents the special revelation of the Word of God over against Gnostic speculation. Gnosticism, with all its vagaries, is nothing less than a fantastic and popular expression of dualism. The world of good is set over against the world of evil, and an endless speculative system of aeons is brought forth to bridge the gulf. The first two books of Irenaeus' great work are the fullest account of the Gnostic ideas. They are presented for the refutation which follows in the last three of the five books. The Gnostics had severed the God of creation from the God

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23 Ibid., p.222.

of redemption, but Irenaeus relates the two by the incarnation, through which God accomplishes his revelation and his reconciliation.

And thus was the hand of God plainly shown forth, by which Adam was fashioned, and we too have been formed; and since there is one and the same Father, whose voice from the beginning even to the end is present with His handiwork, and the Substance from which we were formed is plainly declared through the Gospel, we should therefore not seek after another Father besides Him, nor look for another Substance from which we have been formed, besides what was mentioned beforehand, and shown forth by the Lord; nor another hand of God besides that which, from the beginning even to the end, forms us and prepares us for life, and is present with His handiwork, and perfects it after the image and likeness of God.<sup>24</sup>

Since God the Father and God the Son are one, man may escape from corruption by "following the only true and steadfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus, who did through His transcendent love, become what we are that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself."<sup>25</sup> In relating the creation and the resurrection in the incarnation, Irenaeus comes to his classic statement of special revelation. With a part of this statement Brunner begins his book The Mediator:

For the Lord taught us that no man is capable of knowing God, unless he be taught by God; that is, that God cannot be known without God: but this is the express will of the Father, that God should be known. For they shall know Him to whomsoever the Son has revealed Him.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Irenaeus, Against the Heresies, V. XVI. 1, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), Vol. I, p. 544.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., V. preface (p. 256).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., IV, vi. 4 (p. 468). Brunner evidently has the statement which is underlined in mind, though he never credits Irenaeus with it, when he says: "Gott kann nur durch Gott erkannt werden." Der Mittler (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), p. 3.

The emphasis of Irenaeus, like that of John, is clearly on the special revelation of the Word of God made flesh in Jesus Christ.

2. Athanasius of Alexandria (293-98--373). On the watershed between the ante-Nicene and the post-Nicene periods lived the Nicene theologian Athanasius, and without him the influence of the early Fathers is incomplete; for he balances the special revelation in Irenaeus with the general revelation as a presupposition. Brunner mentions his interpretation of the Logos with great appreciation:

The Logos doctrine of Athanasius is the finest of all in its systematic, and at the same time non-speculative existential character. Athanasius above all has clearly worked out the idea that man, created in the Word of God, has in it his life-principle -- granted by grace -- and since he has fallen away from the Word can only be restored by the Word coming to him again. 'God's Word had to come Himself.' Only the Logos could make good, since He alone reveals God and in his revelation brings back the life which had been lost.<sup>27</sup>

This is a succinct statement of the argument found in Athanasius' De Incarnatione Verbi Dei (A. D. 318). Against the materialism of the Epicureans, the limited God of Plato, and the dualism of the Gnostics, Jesus Christ is presented as "the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God" who "entered our world," though "He was not far from it before, for no part of creation had ever been without Him, Who, while ever abiding in union with the Father, yet fills all things that are."<sup>28</sup>

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27 The Mediator, p. 229.

28 Athanasius, The Incarnation of the Word of God, trans. A. Religious of C.S. M.V. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), p. 33.

Since the Logos was "not far from" the creation, God could be known through nature, holy men, or the law.<sup>29</sup> But he continues:

Men had turned from contemplation of God above, and were looking for Him in the opposite direction, down among created things and things of sense. The Saviour of us all, the Word of God, in His great love took to Himself a body and moved as man among men, meeting their senses, so to speak, half way.<sup>30</sup>

God was present through the Word as the power by which the creation is sustained, even before the Word dwelt among us; but this was not seen as long as men looked below and not above. Now that the Word has come God is found in all things.

The self-revealing of the Word is in every dimension -- above, in creation; below, in the Incarnation; in the depth, in Hades; in the breadth, throughout the world. All things have been filled with the knowledge of God.<sup>31</sup>

3. Augustine of Hippo (354-430). The third of the Fathers who stands in Brunner's background is Augustine, who taught both a revelation in creation and a revelation in reconciliation. The original revelation, which, when man becomes a sinner, is the source of human perversion, is especially prominent in the writings of the Bishop of Hippo. He teaches that man, even in his perverted condition, retains a relation to God, who holds man responsible for his rebellion and the contradiction of the revelation in the creation. For Augustine a good God made a good world, including man, but the corruption of sinful rebellion is so serious that

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29 Ibid., 12 (pp. 39f.).

30 Ibid., 15 (p. 43).

31 Ibid., 16 (p. 44).

there is no escape save the mercy of God. It is this, Brunner believes, that stands behind the famous words at the beginning of The Confessions:

And man, being a part of thy creation, desires to praise Thee, -- man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that Thou "resistest the proud," -- yet man, this part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee. Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.<sup>32</sup>

It is this revelation in creation that is valid even apart from the revelation in reconciliation, so that man needs no further revelation to be accountable before God. Had the historical revelation remained silent there would be knowledge of God. Here Augustine is very plain. He says:

For, though the voices of the prophets were silent, the world itself by its well-ordered changes and movements, and by the fair appearance of all visible things, bears a testimony of its own, both that it has been created, and also that it could not have been created save by God, whose greatness and beauty are unutterable and invisible.<sup>33</sup>

But, in the second place, the revelation in the reconciliation alone discloses the divine love. This supreme revelation in the supernatural Son of God confronts man with the mystery of divine love and mercy.

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32 Augustine, Confessions, I. i., trans. J. G. Pilkington (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927), p. 1. Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 75; God and Man, trans. David Cairns (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 116.

33 Augustine, The City of God, XI, 4, trans. Marcus Dodds, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), Vol. II, p. 207.



The true Mediator whom in thy secret mercy Thou hast revealed to the humble-minded, and didst send, that by His example also they might learn the same humility, that Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, appeared between sinful mortals and the immortal Holy One.<sup>34</sup>

The natural knowledge of God at times almost overshadows the supernatural knowledge in Augustine, but the emphasis on original sin, which distorts this original revelation, gives a total picture much as that drawn by Brunner.

### III. THE REFORMERS

The formal problem of the Christian faith did not present itself to the early Church. The Apostles and the Fathers were concerned with the content, the material principle of faith. Only when alien ideas from Greek culture confused the nature of faith did the question become acute. It was then that the Reformation, with a confession of faith founded on the Scriptures, challenged the corruption of the Scriptural norm. It is this confession that is regarded by Brunner as the classical pattern of the Christian knowledge of revelation. The paradoxical unity, founded on the principle of discontinuity, of the event of revelation and the present time, stands in discerning opposition to the authority of the church and tradition, founded on the principle of continuity. "The Reformation was a protest," Brunner asserts, "against

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<sup>34</sup> Augustine, Confessions, X..68, as translated by W. J. Sparrow Simpson, St. Augustine's Episcopate (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944), p. 124.

this calamitous transformation of the original Christian principle of revelation, which was indissolubly connected with the uniqueness, the  $\epsilon\phi' \acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha\chi$ , the 'once for all' of the Apostolic message.<sup>35</sup> Rejecting all intermediaries between Christ and the soul, because the uniqueness of revelation excludes a continually renewed incarnation of the Logos, the Reformers declared that the Holy Spirit alone can accomplish that incomprehensible identity between the Word of God in Scripture and the Word of God in the soul. Brunner expressed his estimate of the dialectical principle of the Reformation thus:

This paradoxical unity of Word and Spirit, of historical revelation and God's contemporary presence, of "Christ for us" and "Christ in us" -- this is the secret of the Reformation, of its power to renew Biblical faith and shake off the fetters of a century-long foreign rule, both theological and ecclesiastical.<sup>36</sup>

The two Reformers who have influenced Brunner most are Luther and Calvin.

1. Martin Luther (1483-1546). -- At three special points in Brunner's doctrine of revelation, the influence of Luther is noticeable. The first is the distinction between general and special revelation. Luther quaintly remarked that, before the fall, God could have appeared to Adam and Eve "naked," without any external, sensible envelopment of his presence and essential nature; but, after sin came, God enrobed himself in the wind, the tabernacle, the cloud, and the pillar of fire. The whole

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35 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 23.

36 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 29.

creation became a "mask of God."<sup>37</sup> Thus man is cut off from direct vision of God, and external forms become the means of manifestation. In these "garments" God reveals himself. The visible world declares the invisible being of God, i.e., his eternal power and godhead. Even the goodness and the grace of God are revealed; but man, ensnared in sin, is unable to discern them. This, because of God's love for man, brings God to reveal himself in a special revelation in Jesus Christ.

This special revelation to man's blinded understanding leads to a second principle in Luther that has influenced Brunner, viz., the relation between the special revelation and the distorted reason of man. There is a place for reason in Luther's thought, but its limitations must be taken into consideration before the proper use can be determined. Against Roman Catholicism, which followed Aristotle in making a large place for reason, Luther asserted that "Faith only exists where there is nothing to be seen, for it is seeing in the dark."<sup>38</sup> The truths of Scripture are, therefore, the opposite of general truths which are clear per se; they are "the contrary of reason."<sup>39</sup> They are credible because God's authority, not reason, guarantees them. The use of reason must be set within this limiting pattern set by revelation. Nevertheless, there is a positive function for reason to perform within the bounds of

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37 Julius K stlin, The Theology of Luther, trans. Charles E. Hay (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897), Vol. 11, p. 218.

38 The Mediator, p. 338.

39 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 27.

revelation. In answer to the question why Christians use their natural reason, seeing that it is put aside in matters of faith, Luther replies:

The natural reason of a human creature in matters of faith, until he be regenerate and born anew, is altogether the darkness, knowing nothing in divine cases. But in a faithful person, regenerate and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, through the Word, it is a fair and glorious instrument, and work of God: for even as all God's gifts, natural instruments, and expert faculties, are hurtful to the ungodly, even so are they wholesome and saving to the good and godly.<sup>40</sup>

Reason is also reliable in negative things, but in positive propositions it is deceptive;<sup>41</sup> therefore, only as it is enlightened and established by faith, does it find a positive place in the Christian revelation. To attempt to prove revelation or to establish faith by reason is as futile as throwing "light upon the sun with a lighted lantern," or resting "a rock upon a reed," or as the "great fool who in the thick of battle sought to protect his helmet and sword with bare hand and unshielded head."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, let us make use of reason, within the limitations that God has appointed, "as of a character in a comedy."<sup>43</sup>

The third great principle in Luther that has influenced Brunner is that of the relation between the Word of God made flesh in Jesus Christ and the Bible. The primary revelation of God is Jesus Christ,

<sup>40</sup> Martin Luther, The Table-Talk, trans. William Hazlitt (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication Society, n. d.), CCXCIV (p. 177).

<sup>41</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, p. 74.

<sup>42</sup> Martin Luther, The Papacy of Rome, trans. A. Steimle, in The Works of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915), Vol. I, pp. 346f.

<sup>43</sup> Martin Luther, The Table-Talk, XLVIII (p. 27).

and the Scriptures are a witness to this revelation. "Christ is the king of the Scriptures"; the Scriptures are the "cradle in which Christ is laid."<sup>44</sup> The secondary form of revelation is the proclamation of the Word by the living witness. When the Scripture is preached by the mouth of the minister, the Word of God enters into the heart of those that hear. "There the Holy Ghost is present," Luther proclaims, "and imprinteth the word in the heart, so that it consenteth unto it. Thus every godly teacher is a father which gendereth and formeth the true shape of the Christian heart, and that by the ministry of the word."<sup>45</sup> Certainty comes, not through rational conclusions, but because God is heard in the sermon and the sacrament. The third form of the Word of God is the Holy Scripture, which is held in paradoxical unity with the Holy Spirit in the soul. This, however, does not bring Christian faith into conflict with criticism of Scripture. Luther was very free in his expressions regarding the books of the Bible. He observed that the prophets "sometimes uttered prophecies about kings and the course of worldly things which these seldom fulfilled and were often erroneous"; that, even Isaiah "mixed many things together"; that Chronicles is no more than a Jewish calendar; and that the Books of Kings are more trust-

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<sup>44</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, p. 34; The Divine Imperative, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1937), p. 545; The Word and the World (London: The Student Christian Movement Press, 1931), pp. 84f.

<sup>45</sup> Martin Luther, A Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (New York: Robert Carter, 1845), p. 420.

worthy than they.<sup>46</sup> His critical attitude allowed him to speak of James as a "right strawy epistle" and to throw 2 Esdras, which in his day was canonical, into the Elbe, because he could not understand it.<sup>47</sup> Luther's seat of authority was in the testimony of the Holy Spirit that the message was sent from God. He concludes: "Even if you had all the wisdom of the whole of Scriptures and all reason, yet if it did not come or was not sent from God it would be nothing at all."<sup>48</sup>

2. John Calvin (1509-1564). --The influence of Calvin on Brunner is no less than that of Luther. No great systematic statement "On the Knowledge of God the Creator" and "On the Knowledge of God, the Redeemer," as the first two books of Calvin's Institutes are called, is found in the German Reformer. Luther has hidden his views in unexpected places, but Calvin begins his sonorous system by stating the distinction between the knowledge of God the Creator and the knowledge of God the Redeemer. He says:

Since God is first manifested, both in the structure of the world and in the general tenor of Scripture, simply as the Creator, and afterwards reveals himself in the person of Christ as a Redeemer, hence arises a twofold knowledge of him; of which the former is first to be considered, and the other will follow in its proper place.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, p. 35.

<sup>47</sup> Edgar J. Goodspeed, The Apocrypha (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 40.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted by Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, I.xi.1., trans. John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936), Vol. I, p. 51.

(1) "On the Knowledge of God the Creator." God has given man three sources of religious knowledge. First, the knowledge of ourselves is "not only an incitement to seek after God," Calvin says, "but a considerable assistance towards finding him."<sup>50</sup> Since man's "existence is nothing more than a subsistence in God alone,"<sup>51</sup> Calvin thinks that all men have a natural instinct for God, an instinct "which is inseparable from their very constitution."<sup>52</sup> For this reason, he says, "Since there has never been a country or family, from the beginning of the world, totally destitute of religion, it is a tacit confession, that some sense of deity is inscribed on every heart."<sup>53</sup> A second source of religious knowledge is God's manifestation in the world. The depth of this conviction in Calvin's mind is seen in the following words:

God hath not only sown in the minds of men the seed of religion, already mentioned, but hath manifested himself in the formation of every part of the world, and daily presents himself to public view, in such a manner, that they cannot open their eyes without being constrained to behold him.<sup>54</sup>

But, since, the manifestation of the deity in both man and the world is obscured by the sin that is in man, God has given the Holy Scriptures as a third source of knowledge. As old persons, whose eyes are dim by reason of years, can scarcely read two words of a most beautiful book, though

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50 Ibid., I.i.1 (p. 48). Cf. Man in Revolt, pp. 72f.

51 Ibid., I.i.1 (p. 47).

52 Ibid., I.iii.3. (p. 56).

53 Ibid., I.iii.1 (p. 54). Cf. The Mediator, p. 33.

54 Ibid., I.v.1 (p. 63). Cf. The Divine Imperative, pp. 221, 600, 602, 615.

they perceive something written there, yet by the assistance of spectacles can read distinctly, — "so the Scripture," Calvin writes, "collecting in our minds the otherwise confused notions of deity, dispels the darkness, and gives us a clear view of the true God."<sup>55</sup> But the Scriptures are not sufficient apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Biblical writers. Calvin correlates the word of Scripture with the witness of the Holy Spirit. The word of God "will never gain credit in the hearts of men," Calvin declares, "till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit."<sup>56</sup> But, with this persuasion that needs no reasons, man has "a knowledge supported by the highest reason, in which, indeed, the mind rests with greater security and constancy than in any reasons."<sup>57</sup>

(2). "On the Knowledge of God the Redeemer." Having finished the discussion of the knowledge of God the Creator in the first book of the Institutes, Calvin turns to the knowledge of God the Redeemer in the second book. God reveals himself in Christ as Redeemer first in the law and then afterward in the gospel. The law was added, Calvin argues, "not to draw away the attention of the chosen people from Christ, but rather to keep their minds waiting for his advent, to inflame their de-

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55 Ibid., I.vi.1 (p. 80).

56 Ibid., I.vii.4 (p. 90). Cf. Mackintosh, H. R., Types of Modern Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), pp. 6f.

57 Ibid., I.vii.5. (p. 91). Cf. The Philosophy of Religion, p. 27.



sires and confirm their expectation, that they might not be discouraged by so long a delay."<sup>58</sup> But Christ, though known to the Jews under the law, is clearly revealed only in the gospel. Calvin compares the knowledge under the law with that of the gospel in this way:

For when he appeared in this image, he made himself visible, as it were, in comparison with the obscure and shadowy representation of him which had been given before. This renders the ingratitude and obstinacy of those, who shut their eyes amid this meridian blaze, so much the more vile and detestable.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, it seems, Calvin applies the distinction now made between general and special revelation to both our knowledge of God the Creator and of God the Redeemer. Both are revealed in a general way, and both are known in a special way. With Luther he makes a place for natural knowledge of God.<sup>60</sup>

#### IV. MODERN BACKGROUND

The fact that Brunner makes much of the classical thought of the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the Reformers does not mean that he takes flight from the problems of modern man. For all of his protests against "modern man," he is essentially modern himself. The problems proposed by modern thought have presented him his own problem of revelation and reason. Seven of these modern influences are important for an under-

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., II.vii.1 (p. 376).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., II.ix.1 (p. 460).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. "Die Frage dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als der Theologie," Zwischen den Zeiten, 1932, p. 515: "Keiner der Reformatoren hat dem natürlichen Menschen jedliche Gotteserkenntnis abgesprochen."

standing of his background.

1. Criticism: Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant is the great colossus who bestrides the way to modern thought. His critical philosophy falls into three periods.<sup>61</sup> In the first, under the influence of Leibnitz and Wolff, he was a rationalist, rejecting all empirical tests and regarding rational thought as the only way to ultimate truth. About 1765 he begins his second period, in which he was partially influenced by British empiricists. The Essays and Enquiries of David Hume, which he read in German translations, he said, "awoke me from my dogmatic slumber."<sup>62</sup> The third period is the "critical period," which is of greatest importance; for, by 1781, he had developed a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. In the Critique of Pure Reason (1781)<sup>63</sup> he posits a "thing in itself" (Ding an sich), which is beyond human experience and observation. Being transcendent, not transcendental or applicable to any human experience, it exists as an independent reality apart from the subjectivity of all knowledge. This unknown "thing in itself" evokes within us a confused manifold of sensations, which are organized by the sensibility with its pure forms of space and time

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61 W. K. Wright, A History of Modern Philosophy (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), pp. 256-258.

62 Cf. Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1933), p. 7.

63 Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Co., 1929).

(transcendental aesthetic). The understanding, with its twelve schematized categories, also organizes these sensations (transcendental analytic). The combine of the sensibility and understanding upon sensations furnishes us with the objects of experience, which are subject to the laws of mathematics and physics. Then the reason attempts to complete the unification of the forms and categories, for which no sensuous content is available in its transcendental ideas (the soul, the world, and God), which are of regulative value only. In the Critique of Practical Reason (1788),<sup>64</sup> the transcendental ideas, now denominated God, freedom, and immortality, become postulates of the moral law. In the Critique of Judgment (1790)<sup>65</sup> analogies in nature, art, and organic life suggest but do not demonstrate the truth of the postulates of practical reason.<sup>66</sup> But, in Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (1793-94),<sup>67</sup> the contradiction so implicit in this dualism, but so gracefully avoided by most idealists, is faced in the recognition of the problem of "radical evil" (das radikale Böse). Kant's attempt to solve evil "within the bounds of reason" so entangled the problem as to make it "impossible to accept any immanent

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<sup>64</sup> Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, trans. T. K. Abbott (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1927).

<sup>65</sup> Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment, trans. J. H. Bernard (London: Macmillan and Co., 1914).

<sup>66</sup> W. K. Wright, op. cit., pp. 261-292.

<sup>67</sup> Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1934).

solution of the problem of human existence."<sup>68</sup> At this point Brunner makes the Christian doctrine of revelation relevant to the human situation.<sup>69</sup>

If evil is actual separation from God -- and that is what we mean when we speak of sin and guilt -- then that continuity with the divine has been broken, and there is no way which leads back from man to God, there is no continuous process, not even that of mystical graces, to lead man back to his origin.<sup>70</sup>

The knowledge of sin brings man to the recognition that there is no way back from man to God; there is only a way from God to man.<sup>71</sup>

2. Dialecticism: Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). -- Kierkegaard, "The Great Dane," looked straight into "the terrible crystal" and stood with fear and trembling before God. In his interpretation of religion he saw three "stages on life's way."<sup>72</sup> The first is the aesthetic stage of

68 The Mediator, p. 130.

69 Cf. Ibid., pp. 127ff., 142ff.; The Divine Imperative, pp. 44ff.; Man in Revolt, pp. 100ff.; 126ff., 152ff., 222ff.

70 Ibid., p. 131.

71 Der Mittler (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), p. 115: "Erkenntnis der Sünde und Erkenntnis Gottes bedingen sich gegenseitig . . . diese Erkenntnis der Sünde ist nur möglich auf Grund der Offenbarung." A study in contrast as to Kant's relation to the Christian point of view is seen in Cornelius Van Til, The New Modernism (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1946), pp. 9-27, who thinks criticism and Christianity are mutually exclusive, and Richard Kroner, The Primacy of Faith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), pp. 24-66, who thinks Kant restored Christian thought after the successive reigns of Plato and Aristotle.

72 Søren Kierkegaard, Stages on Life's Way (1845), trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), pp. 363-444.

eudaemonistic enjoyment of the thing.<sup>73</sup> The banquet in the Stages and Hegel's uncommitted life are examples. The second or ethical stage, in which life is shared with others, is illustrated by Fichte's idealism.<sup>74</sup> The last stage, the religious, is divided into religiousness A, the religion of immanence, and religiousness B, the religion of transcendence. The former is ethico-religious legalism; the latter is Christianity. But there is no continuity between religion and Christianity, no passage from religiousness A to religiousness B. The law is against us. There is no deliverance. But there is! Since man could not come to God, God has come to man. This is Christianity's "Absolute Paradox." It is the "Absurd."

This is the contradiction within immanence. But that which in accordance with its nature is eternal comes into existence in time, is born, grows up, and dies — this is a breach with all thinking . . . . This is the paradox — religious sphere, the sphere of faith. It can be believed altogether — against the understanding. If anyone imagines that he understands it, he can be sure that he misunderstands it.<sup>75</sup>

No historical inquiry can remove the paradox. Since this historical fact is no simple historical fact, immediate contemporaneity is involved in the same risk as any other century. It is an eternal contemporary, and

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73 Søren Kierkegaard, Either/Or (1843), trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), Vol. 1.

74 Ibid., Vol. II.

75 Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 513f.

all must take the same gamble, risk, leap.<sup>76</sup> The influence of this thought on Brunner has been tremendous.<sup>77</sup>

3. Personalism: Ebner, Buber, Gogarten, Gisebach. -- Kierkegaard's emphasis on the subjectivity of truth and the individual as addressed by the transcendent God gave rise, after long neglect, to a "group"<sup>78</sup> of writers, who, in the generation after World War I, explored the possibilities of the dimension of the personal. The first of these<sup>79</sup> was the Austrian philosopher Ferdinand Ebner, who wrote an "epoch-making"<sup>80</sup> book in 1918 and 1919 on The Word and Spiritual Reality<sup>81</sup> in which he recognized his debt to Kierkegaard. "The 'I' is a late discovery," he says at the first of his book, and he then goes on to say that it is "formed by

76 Søren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans. David Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), pp. 44-93; Training in Christianity, trans. Walter Lowrie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 66ff.

77 Cf. The Word and the World, pp. 6, 70; God and Man, trans. David Cairns (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 40; The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 40-82.

78 At least they have been "grouped" by the Swedish writer, John Cullberg, in his book: Das du und die Wirklichkeit (Uppsala: A.-B Lundequistka Bokhandeln, 1933). Cf. Man in Revolt, p. 519.

79 The Divine Imperative, p. 636.

80 Man in Revolt, p. 176.

81 Ferdinand Ebner, Das Wort und geistigen Realitäten: pneumatologische Fragmente (Innsbruck: Brenner-Verlag, 1921).

abstraction from the Thou."<sup>82</sup> In chaotic and fragmentary utterances he affirms and reaffirms his conviction that a new spiritual reality emerges in the relation between one person and another. The most significant form of this relation is speech, and the fact that when we are "by ourselves" we cannot do without speech, and that something has only really been thought out when it has been formulated in speech, is a sign that human existence is not only a solitary rational existence but that it is a common existence in which we impart to one another. Speech is reason in community.<sup>83</sup> Not even the moral imperative in Kant's individualism can deliver us from the loneliness of the ego. Man must be addressed by God, for whom he has "addressability" (Ansprechbarkeit).<sup>84</sup> "Human personality," Ebner claims, "always consists in the existence of the 'I' in relation to the 'Thou.'"<sup>85</sup>

The second writer of this group is Martin Buber, spiritual leader of contemporary German Judaism, whose "prophetic little book,"<sup>86</sup> Ich und

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82 At this point Continental personalism is distinguished from Borden P. Bowne's "Boston personalism," which interprets God in terms derived from human personality. The former makes the approach from transcendence, the latter from immanence.

83 The Divine Imperative, p. 636.

84 Ferdinand Ebner, op. cit., pp. 18ff. Cf. John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 29.

85 Ferdinand Ebner, op. cit., p. 36.

86 The Divine Imperative, p. 590. Cf. Herbert H. Farmer, The Servant of the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 26.

Du (1923)<sup>87</sup> has become "a minor classic of the thought of our time."<sup>88</sup> Against Schleiermacher and Otto, Buber shows that, while the feeling of dependence may be connected with our attitude toward God, it is not its essence. The one analogy is the relation of an "I" to a "Thou." Opposed to this I-Thou combination is the I-It, so that man's "world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude."<sup>89</sup> The twofold attitude of man divides life into two egos, two worlds, two Gods. The impersonal world of the past manifested in objective experiences and organization is set over against the dimension of the personal with the relation of subjects in community.

The primary word I-Thou can be spoken only with the whole being. Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the Thou; as I become I, I say Thou. All real living is meeting (Alles wirkliche Leben ist Begegnung).<sup>90</sup>

But Brunner came to understand Ebner and Buber through a third

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87 Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1937).

88 John Baillie, op. cit., p. 161.

89 Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 3.

90 Ibid., p. 11. Karl Heim, God Transcendent, trans. Edgar Primrose Dickie (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), has placed himself in an almost incalculable obligation to the work of Buber. Heim's work may be considered a profound systematic clarification of Buber's thesis. Brunner's The Divine-Human Encounter has used the theme as is seen by the German title of his work: Wahrheit als Begegnung (Berlin: Furche Verlag, 1938).



member of the group, Friedrich Gogarten,<sup>91</sup> a north German pastor at Dorn-dorf and tutor at Jena before he became Privatdozent in 1927. His writings at this period had a strong influence on Brunner.<sup>92</sup> In 1930 Gogarten became Professor of Systematic Theology in Breslau and in 1935 in Göttingen. In opposition to his old teacher, Troeltsch, he taught a system of "gläubiges Denken" (reasoning born out of faith). This led him to Luther and Kierkegaard until conservative political thought led him into National Socialism and the shameful defection to the "German Christians," who taught that God is revealed in national history.<sup>93</sup> Brunner mentions Gogarten's The Religious Decision,<sup>94</sup> along with Barth's Römerbrief, as an important source of knowledge for the thought set forth in his Experience, Knowledge and Faith.<sup>95</sup> In the year that Buber published his I and Thou, Gogarten set forth a view of God as "the Unknown by our knowing, the Unconceived by our concepts, the Measureless for our measures, the Inexperienceable for our experiences" in his Of Faith and Revelation.<sup>96</sup> God is transcendent, beyond what we are able to experience

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91 The Divine Imperative, p. 636.

92 The Mediator, p. 209, indicates a departure of Brunner from Gogarten.

93 Otto A. Piper, An Encyclopedia of Religion (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 306.

94 Friedrich Gogarten, Die religiöse Entscheidung (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1921, 1924).

95 Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube (Tübingen: J. C. Mohr, 1924), p. IV. Cf. Man in Revolt, pp. 440ff.

96 Friedrich Gogarten, Von Glauben und Offenbarung (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1923), p. 11.

or think; for this transcendence God is contemporary and contingent upon every moment of history.

However we may try to solve it and however one may alter its form in so doing, the problem of history is fundamentally the problem of the presentness of the past. Were the past merely past, as it is in the case of all natural events, there would be no such thing as history but only an unhistorical present -- and indeed not even that, for there can be a real present only where there is something past that becomes present.<sup>97</sup>

Gogarten's chief contribution is his attempt to relate faith to history.<sup>98</sup> History is where persons meet, and this means to turn from abstract pre-suppositions to the concrete reality, to the confrontation of living persons in mutual relation. This is "otherwise expressed," he argues by saying, "the Thou is always before the I. Or more correctly: through thee I am."<sup>99</sup>

When Gogarten came to Jena to teach in 1925, one of his teachers in philosophy was Eberhard Grisebach, and it is not difficult to trace an affinity between their ideas of this period. Kierkegaard's idea of the moment is elaborately demonstrated in Grisebach's The Present, a Critical Ethik,<sup>100</sup> which teaches that our only touch with reality (Wirklichkeit)

97 Friedrich Gogarten, Ich glaube an den dreieinigen Gott: Eine Untersuchung über Glauben und Geschichte (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1926), pp. 71f.

98 Cf. Ibid., p. 83: "Unsere These, dass Geschichte etwas ist was in der Gegenwart geschieht, bedeutet, also keine Abwendung von der Vergangenheit."

99 Ibid., p. 57.

100 Eberhard Grisebach, Gegenwart, eine kritische Ethik (Halle-Saale: Max Niemeyer, 1928).

is in the present, the past and the future being alike unreal except as they are contained in the present. The ethical implications of this for the "future teacher" is that no metaphysical pretensions about the nature of reality are to be made. Since the ethical situation involves the contingent and unexpected, the student is to be encouraged to discover his own perspectives. Truth (Wahrheit) belongs to the past and is confined to the individual who thinks in a circle. "The answer is involved in the question."<sup>101</sup> To it belongs all systems and thinking in abstractions, and there we rest in dogmatic slumber until "we are awakened out of the dream of system."<sup>102</sup> We then discover that the absolute and the God of philosophy are unreal and that all ideas are idols.<sup>103</sup> The realm of Wahrheit and the realm of Wirklichkeit are driven asunder and there is no connection between them. Theology takes things that are not lawful to utter and makes them metaphysical. This onslaught brought a reply from Brunner. In an important article on Grisebach's Attack on Theology,<sup>104</sup> he agrees with Grisebach that the negative conclusions of philosophy open up a new dimension of which we were formerly unaware.<sup>105</sup> But to leave the question there is to avoid the whole problem of relation (Zusammenhang).

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101 Ibid., p. 52.

102 Ibid., p. 127.

103 Ibid., pp. 476, 566. This is too strong for Brunner. Cf. The Divine Imperative, p. 612.

104 Emil Brunner, "Grisebachs Angriff auf die Theologie," Zwischen den Zeiten, VI (1928), pp. 219-232.

105 Ibid., p. 221. Cf. Van Til, op. cit., p. 166.

Brunner insists that God is the connection, and that he is too deeply hidden to be discovered by reason. He must reveal himself if he is to be known.<sup>106</sup>

4. Existentialism: Martin Heidegger. -- Often in the writings of Brunner<sup>107</sup> the names of Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, Georg Simmel, Max Scheler, and Martin Heidegger appear. Space does not permit a consideration of all these, but an understanding of the existentialism of Heidegger helps to relate Brunner's doctrine of revelation to the general consciousness of the human situation. Trained in Edmund Husserl's radical structural analysis of pure consciousness, he succeeded his master as Professor of Philosophy at Freiburg-in-Breisgau in 1929. His most important work, Being and Time,<sup>108</sup> was first published in Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung in 1926. He turns away from Husserl's idealism to a realistic philosophy that extends far beyond the relation between subject and object. He aimed at a phenomenological analysis of human existence in respect to its temporal and historical character. Concentrating on the Greek tradition of the pre-Socratics, he endeavored to approach anew the problem of being (Seinfrage). Under the influence of Kierkegaard, he pursued an "existential" analysis of human existence in order to discuss the

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106 Ibid., p. 231. Cf. The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 11ff.

107 E.g., The Divine Imperative, p. 701.

108 Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1927).

original philosophical question of being in a new way. Man is a being in the world here and now (Dasein), and as such he is in Existence. Existence is all that is known to exist; it is more than man and less than All. Beyond it is the Seiende, which brought Existence into being. This Seiende has its Sein. Man, then as Dasein, is so related to the Sein of the Seiende, to Seiende, and to Existence that he has some of all in his nature. But man is not aware of this, for he is fallen.<sup>109</sup> He has descended from the Sein of the Seiende to Existence, and finally to Dasein. But, like the prodigal son, man longs to return to the Sein of the Seiende.

Sorge (concern), which Heidegger interprets as structure of consciousness par excellence, has a special horizon of being toward the ultimate; and, on the other hand, Angst (dread) is directed toward the objective world. In Existence man turns to mix with others in civilization, culture, morality, and religion.<sup>110</sup> Sorge becomes obscured by the cares of daily life, and so he loses concern for the totality of life.

For human existence, according to its nature, can be either an appropriate or an inappropriate existence (eigentliches oder uneigentliches Dasein). That is, human existence may have one of the two modes or forms which are to be called "appropriateness" and "inappropriateness" (eigentlichkeit und uneigentlichkeit).<sup>111</sup>

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109 Cf. Ernest H. Freund, "Man's Fall in Martin Heidegger's Philosophy," The Journal of Religion, XXIV (1944), pp. 180-187.

110 Martin Heidegger, op. cit., p. 117. "Alles Dasein ist Mitsein."

111 Ibid., p. 42. Quoted by Ernest H. Freund, op. cit., p. 181.

So man lives in this contradiction, at the crossing of the ways. The proper life is one of concern, but dread grips him with the feeling of being on the verge of nothingness. Sorge is restored by such experiences as conscience, the foreboding of death, and the existential consciousness of time. Such thoughts as Death create fear until man's thoughts and convictions pass beyond Existence to the Sein of the Seiende; then Death gives way to Courage. Man remembers the long journey away from home, and he now thinks he can pass through the gates of Death back home. This is the cosmic story of life -- where I came from, what I am, and where I am going.<sup>112</sup>

5. Christian Socialism: The Blumhardts, Ragaz, and Kutter. --

Many readers of Brunner's The Divine-Human Encounter have been arrested by statements<sup>113</sup> about the church and the sacraments strangely similar to those of the Anabaptists, some of whom were drowned in Züricher See for their beliefs and practices. An explanation of this tendency must take account of an acute crisis in Switzerland which threatens to replace the national church with one that is confessional. This challenge to the official church has come from the signs of new life in Christian Socialism,

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112 Cf. The Mediator, p. 11; Paul Tillich, "Existential Philosophy," Journal of the History of Ideas, V (1944), pp. 44-70; Werner Brock, An Introduction to Contemporary German Philosophy (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), pp. 109-17; Van Til, op. cit., pp. 107-30; W. Tudor Jones, Contemporary Thought of Germany (London: Williams and Northgate, 1931), Vol. II, pp. 116-120.

113 Especially pp. 178ff.

which was organized in Switzerland in 1906. But the roots of the movement go back to Swabian Pietism, to a movement led by the Blumhardt's, father and son.

At one place<sup>114</sup> Brunner confesses that the best in his theology when he started came from Christoph Blumhardt and Kierkegaard. Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805-1880), the father of Christoph Blumhardt (1842-1919), was a Lutheran minister who in 1830 became a teacher in Basel Missions School, but later, in 1838 succeeded Pastor Barth at Möttlingen, near Calw in Southern Germany. Here he faced the depth of demonic powers reminiscent of the days of the New Testament. A striking mental cure of a girl named Gottliebin Dittus wrought a complete change in the mind of the earnest pastor and greatly revived the church. So many people attended his services that on Good Friday, 1845, no less than 176 places were represented. Many healings from physical infirmities were reported from Blumhardt's laying on of hands in token of absolution. He remained with the "distressed," despite many calls elsewhere, until in 1853 he bought the royal watering place at Boll as a place to minister to sufferers from many lands, races, and classes.<sup>115</sup>

His sons joined him in 1869 and 1872, and in 1880 Christoph took over the work at Bad Boll. In 1899 he left the official church, threw

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114 Ibid., pp. 39f.

115 J. Hesse, "Johann Christoph Blumhardt," The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (New York: Funk Wagnalls Company, 1908), Vol. II, p. 206; Peter Halman Monsma, Karl Barth's Idea of Revelation (Somerville, N. J.: Somerset Press, 1937), pp. 35f.

off all pietistic theological mannerisms, and threw himself boldly into the task of social reconstruction. In a time when it took courage to declare oneself for Social Democracy, he labored to redeem the material and human world. Behind all of this he believed that "the living God," sovereign and free, was active. The center of gravity for the Kingdom of God is God's revelation in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.<sup>116</sup> God confirms his revelation in continually revealing himself in an ever new outpouring of the Holy Spirit (eine neue Ausgiessung des heiligen Geistes). Apart from this continued revelation preaching is a dead and lifeless system. "What is a continued preaching without a continually renewed revelation? It is and ever more will be a beautiful human creation in which there is no life and no movement."<sup>117</sup> God is in action; he is known in action. Speculative systems of philosophy and theology are nothing apart from the living God.

The power of this movement was felt by Brunner through Leonhard Ragaz and Hermann Kutter. Ragaz was Professor of Theology in Zürich from 1908-1921 and was a leader of Swiss Christian Socialism. His profound appreciation for the Blumhardts brought forth a book on them<sup>118</sup>

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116 Eduard Thurneysen, Christoph Blumhardt (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1926), p. 39.

117 Christoph Blumhardt, Gedanken aus dem Reiche Gottes in Anschluss an die Geschichte von Möttlingen und Bad Boll und unsere heutige Stellung (Bad Boll, 1895), p. 31. Cf. Eduard Thurneysen, op. cit., p. 42.

118 Leonhard Ragaz, Der Kampf um das Reich Gottes in Blumhardt, Vater und Sohn und weiter (Erlenbach-Zürich: Rotapfel Verlag, 1922).



and many other works that were read with appreciation by the proletariat and with terror by the conservatives and the orthodox.<sup>119</sup>

Kutter was until 1898 pastor of a church near Berne; in that year he was elected minister to the New Minster in Zürich. Here the proletariat was especially strong, and Kutter soon became convinced that official Christianity was in opposition to the Bible. Boldly he uttered his convictions from the pulpit. Those who elected him deserted him, but great numbers who had never cared for the church, especially the "lower classes," heard him gladly. When, according to the practice of the official church in Switzerland, election came around at the end of six years, the orthodox and conservatives voted against him. Atheists and unbelievers, Democrats and Socialists gave him an overwhelming vote. All this dividing of the camp is understandable from the contents of Kutter's manifesto, Sie Müssen,<sup>120</sup> published in 1904. Official Christianity stands in diametrical opposition to the Bible. It has forgotten that God lives. Social Democracy professes atheism, but the church practices it. Where the Bible says, "Yes," it says, "No"; where the Bible denies, we cringe and whisper, "Yes." The living God of Jesus

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119 Du Sollst (1904); Dein Reich Komme (1908). A brief statement of his ideas is "Zur gegenwärtigen Umgestaltung des Christentums," Neue Wege (Basel, October, 1909). Our own Walter Rauschenbusch recognized him as a great example of Social Christianity. See Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianizing the Social Order (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), p. 117.

120 Hermann Kutter, Sie Müssen (Berlin: Herman Walther Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1904). They Must, trans. Rufus W. Weeks (Chicago: Co-operative Printing Company, 1908).

the church has exchanged for a mere idea of God. Where Jesus stood -- we do not stand. He was one with God, and we have no God. The church knows how to persecute, but it does not know how to be persecuted.

It serves God with all possible pious anxiety for salvation, but it forgets from age to age that God recognizes true service only in conquering evil and in loving the poor and lowly. It dreams its sweet dreams over its dogmas and ceremonies -- and lo, when God awakes it through the thunder of the social revolution, the first word that Christianity can murmur through its sleepy lips is -- "godlessness"! 121

But the Living God makes men great, free, and broad. Whoever has him comprehends all things, suffers all things, believes all things, hopes all things. He holds himself apart from nothing in the world. For him the name of God has meaning. He does not look at the world through the eyes of a dreamer, chasing the phantasy of his own creation. Life to him is real. He serves no official cult of Mammon.

Why has this condition come to pass? Because the church has chosen a system instead of God. "System," he says, "stands still; the gospel presses forward. Even Protestantism, even the Protestant Church, is a system of the gospel and not the gospel itself."<sup>122</sup> The system shuts God out. The system is conservative; the gospel is progressive.

God gave his Church a living word. The Church has corrupted it to self-righteous piety, ceremony and dogma. It toys with God. It pretends devotion; it plays hide and seek with God's promises; it acts as if its dogmas were the rules of the Kingdom of God; it keeps back the Gospel in its artificial formulae.<sup>123</sup>

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121 Ibid., p. 29.

122 Ibid., p. 38.

123 Ibid., p. 213.

And this is the "prophetischen Mannes" to whom Brunner dedicates his Experience, Knowledge, and Faith, remembering that he could not have written it without his "long personal influence."<sup>124</sup>

6. Urgeschichte: Franz Camillo Overbeck. -- Another figure in Brunner's background who was not popular with "official" Christianity was Franz Camillo Overbeck (1837-1905). His understanding and friendship with such intellectual developments as Nietzsche, Treitschke and Rhode represented led him to stand apart from much of the popular thought of the church. He became cool and critical toward the theological tradition which modernized the interpretation of Jesus, though he continued to teach theology in Jena and later in Basle. Writing numerous studies on the New Testament and primitive Christianity, he recognized a strong eschatological element strangely neglected by rationalistic liberalism.

Much in the spirit of Kierkegaard, he was frankly sceptical about the scientific systematic theology that had captured all truth in a neat system. In his most famous work Christianity and Culture, he criticized "the system" as a deadly abstraction, the "Satan of religion."<sup>125</sup> In opposition to historicism, he based faith on what he called Urgeschichte (primal history).<sup>126</sup> The being of man is between two poles: Urgeschichte

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<sup>124</sup> Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1923), p. IV.

<sup>125</sup> Franz Overbeck, Christentum und Kultur, edited by Carl A. Bernaulli (Basel: Benno Schwabe and Co., 1919), p. 26.

<sup>126</sup> Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1923), pp. 105-113.

and Endgeschichte. At one end of life man comes upon the plane of history from the super-historical, super-temporal world of origins (Entstehungsgeschichte) where distinctions between particular and universal are not made.<sup>127</sup> At the other end is death through which man must pass into the unknown world. Between the two, subject to temporality and relativity, is "history."<sup>128</sup> Now, original Christianity walked in the realm of primal history, beyond all human manipulations by objective science; on the other hand, historicism worships the creation of its own fantasy.<sup>129</sup> In itself history has no meaning.<sup>130</sup> To found faith here is to build on shifting sand. There Christianity becomes identical with culture, passes through youth and old age, progress and degeneration, and comes to the end of all earthly things -- death.<sup>131</sup> But true faith operates in the realm of pure possibility;<sup>132</sup> the real believer stands in a land of promise that he may call his own,<sup>133</sup> outside of history in empty space.<sup>134</sup>

7. Formgeschichte: Rudolf Bultmann. -- At the close of World War

127 Franz Overbeck, op. cit., p. 19.

128 Ibid., p. 15.

129. Ibid., p. 17.

130 Ibid., p. 23.

131 Ibid., pp. 13, 27.

132 Ibid., p. 22.

133 Ibid., p. 16.

134 Ibid., p. 33.

I the center of gravity in New Testament research shifted from the study of the Synoptic problem to the new science of Formgeschichte (form history). Within a period of two years (1919-1921) four German scholars, Karl Ludwig Schmidt, Martin Alberz, Martin Dibelius, and Rudolf Bultmann seriously scrutinized the question as to accretions and interpretations that had arisen between the words and deeds of Jesus and the written documents of the New Testament.<sup>135</sup> Johannes Weiss and Julius Wellhausen among others had previously made suggestions, but the full implications were not realized until after the war. Bultmann especially comes in frequently for both appreciation and criticism in Brunner's discussions that relate to revelation.<sup>136</sup>

Bultmann, who at first taught at Breslau and Giessen, now teaches at Marburg. His influence on Brunner has been mostly through his writings. His History of the Synoptic Tradition<sup>137</sup> distinguished between the "apothegms," the pregnant saying of Jesus which climax the short story, and the "words of the Lord" (Herrenworte), the sayings that have no framework. The rest, which is merely "supplementary material," includes miracle stories, healings and nature miracles, historical narratives and

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135 Cf. E. Basil Redlich, Form Criticism (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), pp. 25ff.

136 E.g., The Mediator, pp. 157, 177, 187, 190, 196, 372, 386, 423; Man in Revolt, pp. 471, 474, 542, 545, 547; Offenbarung und Vernunft (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1941), pp. 22, 82, 96, 103, 118, 278, 281 f., 289; Die christliche Lehre von Gott (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946), pp. 80, 84, 90, 204.

137 Rudolf Bultmann, Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht, 1921, 1931).

legends. Only a few sayings and incidents are regarded as fully historical. The sceptical and radical Bultmann goes much beyond what the more conservative Dibelius is willing to prune away. What is left for Bultmann is, apparently, humble pie for preaching.

So his Jesus (1926),<sup>138</sup> as C. C. McCown remarks, was a great surprise to scholarship "to discover that what he had given away with the left hand of criticism he had recovered with the right hand of Barthian dogmatism."<sup>139</sup> Combining the eschatological emphasis of Schweitzer with the ethical teachings of Jesus, he limited himself to the real message of Jesus, i.e., "to what he purposed, and hence to what in his purpose as a part of history makes a present demand upon us," to a "personal encounter with history."<sup>140</sup> His interest in the personality of the historical Jesus is excluded;<sup>141</sup> his interest is only in the Jesus of faith. What we know about the historical Jesus is almost nothing except that his ministry in the beginning was linked to a similar messianic movement of John the Baptist and that he died on the cross as an insurrectionist. The message of Jesus centers in a genuinely future kingdom which comes

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138 Bultmann, Rudolf, Jesus (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1929), Jesus and The Word, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934).

139 Chester Charlton McCown, The Search for the Real Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), p. 202.

140 Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p. 86.

141 Ibid., p. 8. Bruner, The Mediator, pp. 157f., holding to both the "Christ in the flesh" and the "Christ after the flesh," makes a major departure from Bultmann on this point.

by an act of God at the end of time and history.<sup>142</sup> It therefore belongs to neither time nor history. Jesus, transcending all legalism, demands obedience to the purpose of God. In a remarkable synthesis of radical criticism and theological transcendence, Bultmann sets man in his puny nakedness at the point of decision before the sovereign will of God.<sup>143</sup>

Bultmann's sharp sceptical knife keeps Brunner at bay much of the time, but his influence on Brunner is unmistakable. At the end of a long period of conflict with both Bultmann and Barth it is no little comfort for Brunner to find Bultmann's golden sentence in his The Gospel of John: "The world is God's creation and as such God's revelation."<sup>144</sup> Is it Brunner or Bultmann speaking at the close of the little writing on The Idea of Revelation in the New Testament?

But the demand that we say unequivocally which precisely is the Word of God must be rejected, because it rests upon the "conception" that it is possible to indicate a collection of sentences which exist objectively and are to be objectively understood. What "Word of God" means can indeed be formally explained; but it is precisely this formal explanation which makes it clear that a "content" of God's Word cannot be delivered like a manufactured article, but can only be had as it is heard time and again.<sup>145</sup>

142 Ibid., pp. 51ff.

143 Ibid., pp. 120 ff.

144 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 96: "Die Welt is Gottes Schöpfung und als solche Gottes Offenbarung."

145 Rudolf Bultmann, Der Begriff der Offenbarung in Neuen Testament (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1929), p. 45. A detailed analysis of Bultmann's thought is found in Theodor Siegfried, Das Wort und die Existenz (Gotha: Leopold Klotz Verlag, 1933), II, pp. 107-296.

But Bultmann's greatest influence on Brunner comes through the former's monumental commentary on The Gospel of John,<sup>146</sup> which combines radical criticism and genuine revelation in an amazing and bewildering manner. With Barth's Epistle to the Romans this work will no doubt be the second most widely discussed commentary in the movement of dialectical theology and, it might be added, the final blast that destroys any bridge to fundamentalism with its theory of verbal inspiration. His theories of Redequelle and *συνετα* -Quelle will no doubt be discussed for generations to come, but his exposition of the content of the Fourth Gospel is no less important. Around the doctrine of revelation, the first half (Chs. 1-12) expounds the revelation to the world and the second half (Chs. 13-20) the revelation to the Church. In conclusion, it may be said, in the words of Professor Easton: "John's Gospel has always been the favorite source to which dialectic theology appeals; and in Dr. Bultmann's hands the appeal has been carried through without deviation."<sup>147</sup> Bultmann's becomes the final major influence to be found in the historical background to Brunner's problem of revelation and reason.

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<sup>146</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1941).

<sup>147</sup> Burton Scott Easton, in an extended review of Bultmann's commentary, in Journal of Biblical Literature, LXV, 81. Cf. in the same journal, his article on "Bultmann's Source," LXV, 143-156.



## CHAPTER III

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROBLEM IN BRUNNER'S WRITINGS

The writings of Emil Brunner disclose a development that moves, like a fast train in his native Swiss Alps, with increasing perspective and insight from the uncertain beginnings of his doctoral dissertation, published in 1914, to the calm assurance and brilliant formulations of Revelation and Reason in 1941 and The Christian Doctrine of God in 1946. His forthcoming Gifford Lectures and the projected four volume systematic theology are sure to form the climax of his career, but the circumstances of time have confined this dissertation to the period 1914-1946. Through thirty-two years an amazing continuity runs. A few retreats are made, but in the broad outline there is a constant advance toward the present climax in the period of personalism. No diametrical difference is seen between the early and the later periods of Brunner's thought.<sup>1</sup> What follows, then, is a chronological sketch of the labyrinthine ways of "an intellect sharpened to the keenness of a razor."<sup>2</sup>

#### I. THE EARLY BRUNNER (1914-1928)

In the lofty Swiss city of Winterthur, a place of about sixty

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1 Cornelius Van Til, The New Modernism (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1946), p. 209.

2 David Cairns in the "Introduction" to Brunner's God and Man (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 35.

thousand souls, Heinrich Emil Brunner was born<sup>3</sup> the son of a teacher of Bible in the public schools. When he was about three his parents moved to Zürich, where the boy was educated through the public schools and the University of Zürich. Like Barth he started as a theological liberal of the school of Albrecht Ritschl,<sup>4</sup> but the influence of Leonhard Ragaz soon turned his mind toward a more vital faith. He became interested in the problem of religious knowledge and published his doctoral dissertation on the subject of Symbolism in Religious Knowledge.<sup>5</sup> In this publication Brunner prophetically pointed the direction his thought would take.

Scholasticism is a phenomenon which is not confined merely to the Middle Ages; as at all times, now in the present, the progress of thought is being retarded through a law of mental inertia, through a natural tendency to seize untested views as irrevocable, axiomatic truths and to erect upon such dogmas the building of a world-view. Repeatedly it is pointed out that these presumptuous rocks are sand and with the foundation the whole structure is overthrown.<sup>6</sup>

Against this foundation of sand Brunner is a most caustic critic from this opening statement of his first writing to his "magnum opus" on the subject, Revelation and Reason (1941). But there is more than a critical statement about the past; there is also a constructive proclamation for the future. He continues:

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3 Otto A. Piper, in An Encyclopedia of Religion, edited by Vergilius Ferm (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 90.

4 Cf. The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 7: "Troeltsch himself, who began his theological career as a Ritschlian -- as most of us did."

5 Das Symbolische in der religiösen Erkenntnis (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1914).

6 Ibid., Preface.

One such apparent axiom, one of the fatal errors in the history of human thought is the fundamental presupposition of intellectualism, viz., that the understanding is solely and supremely the center of the knowledge of reality; and the meaning of the philosophical and theological movement of the recent past and the present from Kant to Bergson can be best understood as working out a new comprehensive conception of truth. Not through disregarding the knowledge can one remove a working of the intellectualistic schematism which is for the intellectual, especially for the religious life so dangerous, but solely through proof of a deeper source of knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

Brunner has most certainly not disregarded the values of the intellectual life, neither has he failed to discern the limitations and pretensions that attend it. But beyond this Socratic function, like a Delian diver, he has sounded this "deeper source of knowledge." The early period, from his doctoral dissertation until his conflict with Barth, follows through these initial indications. There is to be discovered a critical and a constructive period in the early Brunner.

1. The critical period. After graduation from the University of Zürich and some study in Berlin, the German speaking Swiss went to England to teach French in a boys' school! All of this he did to learn the English language, and the fact that Brunner reads, writes, and speaks German, English, and French is not without significance for the balance of his theological development. World War I brought him back to Switzerland to be a soldier, and after this he spent eight and one half years in Obstalden as pastor. Here he really discovered St. Paul and Kierkegaard and first met Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen. In 1919 he and Heinrich

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<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit.

Barth, the brother of Karl Barth, gave the addresses at the Aarau Studentenkonferenz, Brunner speaking on Thought and Experience and Barth on Knowledge of God.<sup>8</sup> Brunner's address is a tirade against the impersonal elements in modern civilization that crush personality as understood in the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup>

The year 1919-1920 was spent in Union Theological Seminary in New York, at that time the lamp of American liberalism. It seems that Brunner found more in America's past to interest him than he found in the present, for on his return to Switzerland he published a beautiful tribute called The Memorable History of the Mayflower Pilgrim Fathers.<sup>10</sup> He too had crossed the Atlantic into a new world, and his return opened avenues of understanding between the old world and the new. Brunner, with a deep appreciation for America, was to become the best bridge across which the traffic of thought could move between Europe and young America. Soon this call to a pilgrimage of faith sounded again in his book on Experience, Knowledge and Faith,<sup>11</sup> which passed through five editions in twelve years. The system builders have brought experience and knowledge together apart from faith. Following the identity philosophers they have escaped the

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8 Emil Brunner, Denken und Erleben, and Heinrich Barth, Gotteserkenntnis (Basel: Kober, 1919).

9 Ibid., pp. 5-34.

10 Die denkwürdige Geschichte der Mayflower Pilgerväter (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1920).

11 Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1921).

need for the Mediator. These abstract systems of thought, having attained a finished product, have ruled out the Spirit and faith.

The idea of God as God, the system of thought as the truth itself, the doctrine as the subject of faith, the catechism, the mechanical capability of being taught, the finished system, the dogma, -- that is the necessary result of that putrefaction and stiffness (Verwechslung und Erstarrung).<sup>12</sup>

Faith, being a form, is not the acceptance of some system of truth. By a leap of faith man escapes from the bondage of intellectual systems and mere psychological experience. Pure faith is empty of content.<sup>13</sup> Brunner is now well aware that the great ocean is real and that experience and knowledge are related by faith, not by a system. He has clearly left the old world behind when he says:

Who would permit himself, while here we stand at the threshold of a newer knowledge, to presume to bid the word itself? A last word may soon be possible, a farewell, dedicated to a bygone age, to a work of a century lying and settled back of us -- a farewell full of reverent acknowledgment and gratitude but a farewell of those who no more can look backward but only forward. That we stand before a crisis and which way we must take is clear to me.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond the rocky Scylla of cold and hard thought and the whirling Charybdis of experience Brunner sets sail, not in the ship of system, not with a philosophy of identity, but in faith that responds to God's revelation.

Now again in his native Alps he becomes a Privatdozent in the University of Zürich in 1922, presenting as his Habilitations Vorlesung another criticism of reason, The Limits of Humanity. Against the back-

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12 Ibid., p. 75.

13 Ibid., p. 98.

14 Ibid., p. IV.

ground of Paul Natorp's Religion within the Limits of Humanity (Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der Humanität), the outline for the relation between revelation and reason is sketched. Natorp had confined his religious philosophy to the realm of the immanent, but Brunner thinks of a transcendent sphere which, as manifested in the collapse of culture and civilization in World War I, severely limits experience and reason. The absolute halt, "the crisis of the human situation, the ground of our need, is God."<sup>15</sup> At this point, where God discloses the limitations of humanity, the evangelical faith of the Reformation is oriented.<sup>16</sup> Within two decades this mustard seed was to grow into the tree of thought in Revelation and Reason.

In 1924, at the age of thirty-five, he became Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology in Zürich, a position made famous by a long line of scholars in the succession of Huldreich Zwingli and Johannes Oecolampadius; and to celebrate the occasion Brunner fired a big gun at the idol of modern theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher, when he published Mysticism and the Word, a monumental criticism of the attempt to substitute religious experience for revelation. Brunner charges that Schleiermacher's philosophy of identity that made the product of the religious consciousness and that of speculative rationalism the same removed the need of the Word of God.<sup>17</sup> Goethe and romanticism thought: "Feeling is all, name is

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<sup>15</sup> Die Grenzen der Humanität (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1922), p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

sound and smoke"; on the other hand, Luther had said: "The Word is the first principle." Between the two one must choose. "Either mysticism or the Wort."<sup>18</sup> In Schleiermacher's system theology is reduced to anthropology; God is an extension of the consciousness of man.

The most fearful devastation accomplished by mysticism is that it destroys the appreciation of the Word, that it substitutes the idea of a revelation based on the music of feeling for the clear and light revelation of the Word of God.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the idea of the "vision of the universe,"<sup>20</sup> the "instinct for the universe,"<sup>21</sup> the striving for unity with the universe,<sup>22</sup> and resonance with the universe<sup>23</sup> rule out the Word of God. Brunner calls men away from Schleiermacher's mystical idea of dependence to the ethical idea of obedience.<sup>24</sup> True faith, instead of dependence on one's deepest feelings, is obedience to the Word "that is given in the miracle of the revelation of Jesus Christ."<sup>25</sup>

Having renounced reason in his The Limits of Humanity and severely criticized religious experience in the Mysticism and the Word, a way is

18 Ibid., pp. 5, 399; "Entweder die Mystik oder das Wort."

19 Ibid., p. 6.

20 Ibid., p. 48.

21 Ibid., p. 49.

22 Ibid., p. 52.

23 Ibid., p. 85.

24 Ibid., p. 94.

25 Ibid., p. 191.

being cleared for a constructive statement of the Christian revelation as Brunner understands it. A triad of small writings is written in rehearsal. The next year the relation between reason and revelation is reviewed and further clarified in Philosophy and Revelation.<sup>26</sup> Modern man has fallen into the superficial trust of reason, but he does not ask himself the meaning of any activity of which mental activity is only one.<sup>27</sup> He remains on the surface of life and avoids the problem of personal decision, and yet this problem is at the very heart of his philosophy and science.<sup>28</sup> Reason is trusted with simple faith, but the problem of whether reason is any way to reach God is not asked.<sup>29</sup> In a second brief writing, Reformation and Romanticism,<sup>30</sup> he again emphasized the contrast between the reformation understanding of revelation and romanticism's exclusive emphasis on feeling.

Romanticism is essentially a world view and transfiguration. Reformation faith however is revelation, hope and at the same time a will to a new world. For this reason the Reformation has become a world-shaking force, while romanticism is still only a significant and very important topic of the day.<sup>31</sup>

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26 Philosophie und Offenbarung (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1925).

27 Ibid., p. 8.

28 Ibid., p. 27.

29 Ibid., p. 31.

30 Reformation und Romantik (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1925).

31 Ibid., p. 26.



The next year a third writing,<sup>32</sup> The Absoluteness of Jesus, written for the German Christian Student Movement, places Jesus Christ in opposition to both rationalism and romanticism as had been done in the previous writings of this critical stage of the early period, especially in Experience, Knowledge and Faith and Mysticism and the Word.

2. The constructive period. In the early critical writings Brunner's convictions were being formed, and the time has come for a statement of the central doctrine of the Christian faith, i.e., the person and work of Jesus Christ. It seems that Barth's rebuke about his criticism of Schleiermacher precipitated the effort to be more constructive. He says:

My friend Barth was certainly right when in his criticism of my book on Schleiermacher he reminded me that it is easier to see the mistakes of others than it is to lead forward oneself along the right path. And yet I believe that destructive work is not unnecessary, all the more because it would itself be impossible without at least some -- however inadequate -- knowledge of the new truth.<sup>33</sup>

The most concise statement of Brunner's doctrine of revelation during this early period is his volume in the series called Handbuch Der Philosophie. Erich Przywara of Munich was asked to present the Roman Catholic view,<sup>34</sup> and Emil Brunner of Zürich the Protestant view. This

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32 Die Absolutheit Jesus (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1926).

33 The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934), pp. 15, 16.

34 Religionsphilosophie katolischer Theologie (München and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1926). Translated into English by A. C. Bouquet as Polarity (London: Oxford University Press, 1935).

Brunner did in The Philosophy of Religion from the Standpoint of Protestant Theology.<sup>35</sup> The relevance of the Christian doctrine of revelation rises from reflection on the relation (Zusammenhang) between particular events. Przywara<sup>36</sup> had distinguished the Catholic philosophy of religion from three main types: the pure immanence of pantheism, which identifies God with the world and man; the pure transcendence of deism, which utterly separates God from the world and man; and transcendentalism, which moves upward from man to God in flights of transcendental insight, until it sees all things in God. Przywara rejects all of these, holding that man never comes into perfect harmony with God in this world. By a "dynamic tension" (schwebende Spannung) the human reason moves without final rest or harmony, from the world to God. This is done through the function of reason as set forth by St. Thomas Aquinas in his famous doctrine of the Analogy of Being (Analogia Entis). Since this work appeared the year before that of Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion was aware of this claim of reason on the part of the distinguished Jesuit. Brunner holds that reason is unable to discover the relation between particular facts and that the God of Christian faith breaks into this complex of philosophical grounds.

To philosophize is to reflect on the mental grounds with the assumption that ultimate validity belongs to the complex of grounds and consequences developed by natural reason. Christian faith on the other hand involves recognizing that this complex has been broken into by revelation.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Religionsphilosophie protestantischer Theologie (München und Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1927). Translated into English by A. J. D. Farrer and Bertram Lee Woolf as The Philosophy of Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937).

<sup>36</sup> Op. cit., pp. 36-62.

<sup>37</sup> Op. cit., p. 13.

At this point of reason's capacity to discover the unity beyond plurality Protestant and Catholic philosophy of religion meet and part. Protestantism is much nearer to philosophical pluralism; Roman Catholicism is much nearer to rationalism.

With The Philosophy of Religion another great book came into being. The Mediator,<sup>38</sup> to which the other book was "prolegomena," is a constructive specimen of actual theological thought that clarifies the point of view from which Brunner's criticisms had been made. The reception this work received in the Christian world may be seen in the words of H. R. Macintosh in the preface to the English translation:

Emphatically it is a book for the times. Alike for critical acumen and for reverent insight into the being and work of our Lord, as the Person in whom God is revealed, finally and decisively, it stands out conspicuously. The reader comes to feel that the Bible is behind this man's argument.<sup>39</sup>

The book undertakes to demonstrate what it means to say that the complex of reason has been broken into. The person and work of Jesus Christ is no illustration of that which is already known. That is what the modern conception of Christ has made of him, but it has undertaken to construct a faith "within the bounds of reason."

Thus the stumbling-block of revelation is this: it denies that divine truth is a continuation of human thought, in line with existence as we can conceive it, and as it seems real to us. But our whole culture is built upon this continuity, upon it is based our confidence in science, and -- this is the root of the whole matter

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<sup>38</sup> Der Mittler: Zur Besinnung über der Christusglauben (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), translated by Olive Wyon as The Mediator (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934).

<sup>39</sup> The Mediator, p. 10.

-- upon it is based the confidence of man in himself.<sup>40</sup>

Reason is confident that there is a continuity between man and God. Christian faith, in its recognition of the fall as alienation from God, thinks in terms of discontinuity. There is no way from man to God; there is only a way from God to man, and this means faith in the Mediator. This is the stumbling-block to all reason. Brunner later corrected his emphasis in The Mediator on the being of Christ rather than on the work of Christ,<sup>41</sup> but this remains a major statement of the meaning of revelation.

## II. THE LATER BRUNNER (1928-1946)

About a year after the publication of The Mediator Brunner accepted an invitation to lecture, in the autumn of 1928, on the Foundation of the Swander Lectureship in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in the United States, located at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Brunner had become a famous theologian since he left America, nine years before, thinking of the Mayflower. These lectures,<sup>42</sup> which were in part repeated in six other theological institutions in America,<sup>43</sup> are a popular survey of Brunner's theology. On his return to Europe he lectured, mainly on

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<sup>40</sup> The Mediator, p. 108.

<sup>41</sup> The Divine-Human Encounter (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), pp. 142-143.

<sup>42</sup> The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929).

<sup>43</sup> Ante, p. 6.

ethics,<sup>44</sup> in various universities in Holland in the autumn of 1929. Again, in the spring of 1931, he delivered lectures,<sup>45</sup> which are in substance about the same as his American lectures, in London, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

#### A. The Period of Conflict

But during the days of popularity a period of controversy, which was to precipitate Brunner's problem of revelation and reason in a permanent form, was in preparation. His old friend Karl Barth became impatient with Brunner's sustained attempt to find a place for the natural orders in a system of Christian ethics and to relate the Christian revelation to the general consciousness of man. This finally led to a complete break between the two Swiss theologians. A second conflict came with his opposition to the Oxford Group, but this soon ended with Brunner becoming "the theologian of the Oxford Group." The close of this period of conflict found Brunner's solution to his problem clarified and ready for consolidation.

1. The conflict with Barth. After his return from America, Brunner had written an article, in 1929, on The Other Task of Theology.<sup>46</sup> Following Pascal and Kierkegaard, who found in human consciousness a

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<sup>44</sup> God and Man, trans. David Cairns. (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 70.

<sup>45</sup> The Word and the World (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1931).

<sup>46</sup> "Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie," Zwischen den Zeiten, 1929, pp. 255ff.

point of contact for the gospel, Brunner argues that the other task of theology is anthropology. The first task, to be sure, is to make the message of the gospel known; but the gospel is not preached in a vacuum. The Word is preached to the self-conscious human being, and it is the task of theology to relate revelation to this human consciousness. A lecture,<sup>47</sup> On the Orders of God, February 3, 1929, boldly grounded Christian ethics in the orders of creation and presented the problem of natural theology along with the general consciousness of man.

Brunner's most widely discussed book came as a comprehensive elaboration of the principle set forth in his lecture in 1929. The title, The Commandment and the Orders,<sup>48</sup> indicates the problem set for ethics, i.e., the relation of the command of God to the natural orders of society. Up to this point liberal theologians had lamented the lack of ethics in the dialectical theology,<sup>49</sup> and Brunner himself had felt concern about this situation.

It may seem an audacious statement, though it would not be difficult to prove its veracity, that since the time of the Reformation no single work on ethics has been produced which makes the Evangelical faith its centre. It was only in the course of my work, as I began to seek for help and counsel from others, that this amazing fact became clear to me.<sup>50</sup>

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47 Von den Ordnungen Gottes (Bern: Gotthelf Verlag, 1929).

48 Das Gebot und die Ordnungen: Entwurf einer protestantisch-theologischen Ethik (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1932). Translated by Olive Wyon as The Divine Imperative (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1937).

49 Albert C. Knudson, "The Barthian Ethics," The Crozer Quarterly, October, 1935, p. 331.

50 The Divine Imperative, p. 10.

The foundation for Christian ethics is found in the Christian doctrine of the orders of creation (Schöpfungsordnungen), which Brunner defines in the following way:

By this we mean those existing facts of human corporate life which lie at the root of all historical life as unalterable presuppositions, which, although their historical forms may vary, are unalterable in their fundamental structure, and, at the same time, relate and unite men to one another in a definite way.<sup>51</sup>

If God speaks to man through the natural orders, then the immanence of God in the spirit of man and in nature is a problem with which the Christian revelation is confronted.

On the Orders of God and The Commandment and the Orders had emphasized the natural orders, while The Other Task of Theology stressed the consciousness of man. Both of these confront special revelation with the problem of general revelation. In a fourth writing,<sup>52</sup> The Question of the Point of Contact in Theology, Brunner takes up again the problem of the relation of the gospel to the mind of natural man. Theological anthropology, necessary as it is for a complete understanding of man, does not exclude man's natural knowledge of himself in a philosophical anthropology. Similarly, the special revelation that descends into the consciousness of man, with his language and culture, finds a point of contact. This knowledge is not genuine knowledge of the true God, but it is necessary as a point of contact to make the Word of God meaningful. Discontinuity and

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51 Ibid., p. 210.

52 "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie," Zwischen den Zeiten, 1932, pp. 505-532.

continuity must be related. How is this possible? Brunner answers this question by the distinction between formal personality (persona quod) and material personality (persona quid). By the principle of continuity in the formal personality man recognizes himself before and after the acceptance of the gospel. The formal personality is then the capacity for perception and the point of contact for the gospel. But, since pure form is never found apart from some matter, there is some content to the knowledge of God before the revelation of God in Christ. It is our task to keep in balance the material and the formal, the gospel and the law, redemption and creation, theology and philosophy, transcendence and immanence, special and general revelation, discontinuity and continuity; but, as Brunner is careful to emphasize, "that continuity stands therefore in the service of this discontinuity."<sup>53</sup> Man's distinction from the rest of creation, the formal imago dei, and a natural knowledge of God are apart from special revelation; but this natural knowledge of God is the knowledge of a God of wrath.<sup>54</sup>

All the while Barth had been reading Brunner's arguments and watching the development with interest. While Brunner was trying to bridge the gulf between dialecticism and the consciousness theologians, Barth, under repeated criticisms, sought to make the gulf deeper.<sup>55</sup> In an

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53 Ibid., p. 511: "Jene Kontinuität steht also im Dienst dieser Discontinuität."

54 Ibid., p. 525: "Erkenntnis des zornigen Gottes."

55 Cornelius Van Til, op. cit., pp. 192-196.



article on Fate and Idea in Theology<sup>56</sup> Barth rejected all polarity between philosophy and theology; all such contact is a dialectical tension between givenness and non-givenness. In another article, Theology and Modern Man,<sup>57</sup> Barth confined theology to one task, with obvious reference to Brunner's article on The Other Task of Theology.<sup>58</sup> In a third article on Theology and Modern Missions,<sup>59</sup> Barth decried any attempt of the modern missionary finding a point of contact for the preaching of the gospel. The issue is clearly drawn: either Barth who denies any point of contact or Brunner who affirms that there is. It is evident up to this point that the two were filled with mutual suspicion. Barth was first to open the issue. In an article on The First Commandment as Theological Axiom,<sup>60</sup> Barth charged that Brunner had lapsed into a Thomistic natural theology.<sup>61</sup> Brunner defended himself in Nature and Grace,<sup>62</sup> insisting that God does speak to us through nature; but, through

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56 "Schicksal und Idee in der Theologie," Zwischen den Zeiten, 1929, pp. 309-348.

57 "Die Theologie und der heutige Mensch," Zwischen den Zeiten, 1929, pp. 374-396.

58 Zwischen den Zeiten, 1929, pp. 255ff.

59 "Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart," Zwischen den Zeiten, 1932, pp. 189-215.

60 "Die erste Gebot als theologisches Axiom," Zwischen den Zeiten, 1933, pp. 297-314.

61 Ibid., pp. 311ff.

62 Natur und Gnade: zum Gespräch mit Karl Barth (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1934).

man's sin, the voice of God is not heard in the orders of creation. Brunner does not retreat, but defends the position expounded in The Question of the Point of Contact in Theology.<sup>63</sup> The same distinction of categories is found in man and in nature. Speaking of the formal and the material image of God, he says:

Formally the image is not in the least infringed upon; whether he is sinful or not, man is a responsible subject. Materially the image is completely lost, for man is through and through a sinner and there is nothing in him that is not stained by sin.<sup>63</sup>

In this same pattern a distinction is made between the objective and subjective senses of natürlich in natural theology. The objective-divine sense is the knowledge of God made known through his continuing power for revelation (Offenbarungsmächtigkeit); the subjective-human-sinful sense has reference to man's rational constructs of natural laws.<sup>64</sup> God reveals himself in an objective manner in the order of creation, but "sin darkens the sight of man in such a manner that in the place of God he knows and fancies gods (Stelle Gottes Götter).<sup>65</sup> But there is a revelation of God in nature and man, and "it is the task of our theological generation to find its way back to a sound natural theology."<sup>66</sup>

This was too much for Barth. In an explosive outburst of theological anger he denounced Brunner with verbal assault and battery. His an-

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63 Ibid., p. 11.

64 Ibid., p. 15.

65 Ibid., p. 14.

66 Ibid., p. 44.

swer to Brunner was a curt and caustic "No".<sup>67</sup> To teach that man, despite his sin, has a "susceptibility to the Word of God" (Wortempfänglichkeit) or "verbi-competence" (Wortmächtigkeit) or "addressability" (Ansprechbarkeit) and that man himself is a "word-receptive being" (Wortempfängliches Wesen) by virtue of his remaining a subjective self is a denial of the Reformation doctrine of salvation by grace alone (sola gratia).<sup>68</sup> The subjective point of contact (Anknüpfungspunkt) is created anew by grace. Brunner has endowed man with a capacity that renders the doctrine of total depravity meaningless.

But Brunner is not willing to limit our knowledge of God to special revelation. Where Barth rejects the idea of the image as a formal potentiality for God Brunner retains it. Where Barth speaks of a special revelation alone, Brunner affirms a general revelation in nature and man. Barth knows of saving grace, but Brunner finds sustaining grace (Erhaltungsgnade) also. Brunner finds natural ordinances while Barth does not. Barth believes in faith alone (sola fides), but Brunner finds a point of contact between faith and reason. With Brunner the new creation is a consummation of the old, but with Barth the new creation is miracle. The cleavage is complete. They never were able to "bury the hatchet," so the battle goes on.<sup>69</sup>

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67 Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1934).

68 Ibid., p. 17.

69 Karl Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik (Zollikon: Verlag der Evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1940), II.i., pp. 107-141; Emil Brunner, Offenbarung und Vernunft (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1941), pp. 78-81.

2. The encounter with the Oxford Group. Brunner's connection with Frank Buchman and the Oxford Group Movement only accentuated Barth's antipathy for his theological opponent. Barth's charge that what Brunner once persecuted he now preaches is in a measure true, but that is most evident when Experience, Knowledge and Faith and Mysticism and the Word are compared with Man in Revolt.

The first contact that Brunner had with the Oxford Group was when he came to lecture at Princeton and found both faculty and students deeply stirred by the spiritual experiences of guidance and confession of sin and the consequent turn toward honesty and purity.<sup>70</sup> With great energy he denounced this "error of Methodism" which talked about conversion as if it "were the process by which a sinful man is actually transformed into a Christian man!" This "vitiating influence upon orthodox thinking," he thought, could only result from a "deplorable misunderstanding" of Romans VII and VIII as two different stages of the Christian life.<sup>71</sup> It turned people from the Word of God to religious experience.

Therefore faith must cling solely to the Word, but not to experience. Experience comes of faith, but faith never comes of experience. The principle of the Christian life is not experience but the Word of God, which can only be believed and cannot be experienced.<sup>72</sup>

But still Brunner is able to speak of "the new birth" and "the change of

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70 Meine Begegnung mit der Oxforder Gruppenbewegung (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1934), p. 2.

71 The Theology of Crisis, p. 21.

72 Ibid., p. 64.

heart,"<sup>73</sup> even though he does not give an explanation as to how he is able to do this. It is hardly consistent with his criticisms of religious experience, especially in his early writings. The second contact came two years later, in 1931, when Brunner came to lecture at King's College in the University of London. Already in Switzerland he had heard how the Oxford awakening had turned a great university to a living faith and a life of prayer, but now he saw what the movement really meant. At the close of one of his evening lectures a romantic, solitary, feminine looking youth invited him to a Group party on the spacious premises of a countess. This revival activity of a salvation army in the proletarian city hall he could endure, but a salvation army in a salon was too much for his Swiss heart. His awakened interest in the movement was extinguished.<sup>74</sup> Yet in a certain sense Brunner had "invited himself," if the printed lectures indicate what he said at King's College. He proclaimed, in the spirit of Kierkegaard, that faith is a passion in which man's whole existence is turned in conversion and regeneration.

That is why faith is a suffering, comparable to the spark which flashes from the flint when struck by the steel. It means a shaking of the whole existence which can be compared only to what we call passion. In fact, it is a curiously mixed passion or suffering; it is even, as the classical Christian expression puts it, a death -- the death of the old self, the autonomous Ego. And at the same time it is a joy, the joy of a prisoner freed from chains and dungeon who is recalled home from exile, the joy of the prince called back to human life from being under a spell; it is the resurrection of the new Ego.<sup>75</sup>

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73 Ibid., pp. 75, 77.

74 Meine Begegnung mit der Oxforder Gruppenbewegung, p. 3.

75 The Word and the World, pp. 71f.

The third contact came when the movement reached Switzerland. Reports that came from Geneva were favorable, and Brunner was impressed. When it stirred Zürich he finally faced the implications of the movement and eventually attended a house party in Ermatinger.<sup>76</sup> Then he saw in the movement the possibilities of a renewal of the Church and a question which the church must face.<sup>77</sup> His acceptance and defense of the movement was not uncritical, for he saw much nonsense and superficiality in the actual practice of guidance.<sup>78</sup> But it showed itself to him to be the most hopeful sign of a revival of the church that had failed to satisfy the hunger and thirst of the masses for the bread of life.<sup>79</sup> Whatever the merits of the movement may be, it is abundantly evident that it turned Brunner from his early assertions that made revelation and religious experience mutually exclusive.

The new interest stimulated by the Oxford Group is manifested in both the spiritual and practical aspects. The spiritual interest appears most definitely in his three lectures<sup>80</sup> in the University of Copenhagen in September of 1934. The triune God works in three dimensions of human existence: the past work of faith, the present work of love, and the

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76 Meine Begegnung mit der Oxforder Gruppenbewegung, p. 7.

77 Um die Erneuerung der Kirche (Bern: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1934) pp. 32-51.

78 Meine Begegnung mit der Oxforder Gruppenbewegung, pp. 22f.

79 Um die Erneuerung der Kirche, p. 50; Cf. Le "Scandale" du Groupe d'Oxford (Genève: Editions Labor, 1936).

80 Vom Werk des heiligen Geistes (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1935).

future work of hope. The practical interest appears in his popular work, Our Faith,<sup>81</sup> which, in an attempt to awaken the spiritual interest of the common man, has been translated into many languages. He says:

A new hunger for the Word of God is passing through the world -- the English-speaking world no less than Europe and the East. The Word of God is the one thing which is able to unite East and West, the whole dismembered mankind, and to reshape it into one big family of nations.<sup>82</sup>

In the belief that the Group had great value in reviving the Church, Brunner, in 1936, indicated the relation between the two in his writing on The Church and the Oxford Group.<sup>83</sup> He declared that Protestant theology, in its emphasis on the invincibility of sin, was in danger of neglecting the living God. The prophetic and kingly office "must not be hidden behind the witness to the Lord who died for us."<sup>84</sup> And this means that experience has a vital place in theology.

The New Testament teaches no perfectionism in sanctification, but it does teach that the Christian does not only believe that he is renewed in Jesus Christ, but that he experiences this renewal and purification as a progressive reality in such a way that others can bear witness to this as a recognizable fact . . . .<sup>85</sup>

And again Brunner says:

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81 Unser Glaube (Bern: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1935).

82 Our Faith, trans. John W. Rilling (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. VIIIf.

83 Die Kirchen, die Gruppenbewegung und die Kirche Jesus Christi (Berlin: Furche Verlag, 1936).

84 The Church and the Oxford Group, trans. David Cairns (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), p. 53.

85 Ibid., p. 55.

The error of the "theology of Experience" is not that it holds experience in high esteem but that it grounds faith on experience. According to the New Testament teaching faith creates experience and not the contrary. But faith does create this experience, this new thing which is to be perceived in experience. He who teaches otherwise does not remain in the tradition of the New Testament.<sup>86</sup>

The primacy of faith Brunner never renounces. Theology, ethics, experience, all three, grow out of faith; but to say that "faith does create this experience" is a different emphasis from the Brunner of the first American lectures who said the Word of God "can only be believed and cannot be experienced."<sup>87</sup> But the climax and most conspicuous evidence of a complete breach with Barth, under the influence of the Oxford Group, on the possibilities of the Christian anthropology and of relating revelation to human experience, is manifested in his fourth large book, the monumental Man in Revolt.<sup>88</sup> Here faith and experience become so closely related that he says the Bible teaches no other faith than that which is experience, i.e., "a real meeting with the real God."<sup>89</sup> The Word of God lays claim on man only as he recognizes his actual state in his experience.<sup>90</sup> But again he retains the belief that faith is the basis of experience.

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86 Loc. cit.

87 The Theology of Crisis, p. 64.

88 Der Mensch in Widerspruch (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1937).

89 Man in Revolt, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 205.

90 Ibid., p. 206.



Faith is not based upon experience, but upon the Word of God alone, upon Jesus Christ, and the promise of grace which runs counter to all experience. But this being "based upon" the Word, in the sense of being apprehended by the Word, and saying "Yes" to the Word, this faith is certainly also experience, experience of the Holy Spirit.<sup>91</sup>

The Christian message rather than evading this experience of reality actually seeks it. Genuine faith becomes experience for it must be "my" faith, i.e., "the faith of the heart, no mere intellectual belief -- otherwise it is merely theory."<sup>92</sup> Thus faith and experience are identical, and to controvert Christian doctrine the critic must do so from "the point of view of experience."<sup>93</sup> The suspicion that Brunner has been making amends for his severe criticisms of experience in his early writings is confirmed by his own confession.

For the grave injustice which undoubtedly has been done Pietism during the past twenty years, I feel it a duty, as one of those more or less responsible, to make some amends. It is precisely we--the group of "dialectic" theologians who several years back still enjoyed some unity in being fellow combatants -- who have every reason to remember Pietism with the highest gratitude.<sup>94</sup>

This is not a diametrical change, but it is decidedly "some amends." He has criticized religious experience less and less until he has made peace between revelation and faith on the one hand and religious experience on the other.<sup>95</sup>

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91 Loc. cit.

92 Ibid., p. 207. Cf. Vom Werk des heiligen Geistes, pp. 28ff.

93 Ibid., p. 209.

94 The Divine-Human Encounter, trans. Amandus W. Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 39.

95 Cf. Cornelius Van Til, op. cit., pp. 247, 260, 273.

## B. The Period of Personalism

While Reformed theology was experiencing a renewal under Barth and Brunner in Switzerland, Lutheran theology, especially in Sweden, also was passing through a great transition. Brunner, being nearer to Luther than Barth, was invited to deliver the famous *Claus Petri Lectures* in the University of Upsala. The lectures, no doubt, mark the most significant transition in Brunner's development. Until then he had been fighting a battle on two fronts, one against the false subjectivism of modernism and the other against the false objectivism of orthodoxy; but now a permanent "break-through," into the dimension of the personal, is made. Professor Arvid Runestam of Upsala had made the suggestion that "the relation between the objective and the subjective in the Christian faith" be made the theme of the lectures, and Brunner found this the point for which he had been grasping. He reports:

This theme has proved to be an extremely valuable starting point for reflection about the Biblical concept of truth-reflection which led to the insight, important alike for theology and the practical work of the Church, that our understanding of the message of salvation and also of the Church's task is still burdened with the Subject-Object antithesis which originated in Greek Philosophy. The Biblical conception of truth is: truth as encounter (Wahrheit als Begegnung).<sup>96</sup>

This new approach is applied to the doctrine and practice of the Church with such astonishing results that Brunner himself declares that, if his

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<sup>96</sup> The Divine-Human Encounter, trans. Amandus W. Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 7.

thesis is correct, "then indeed much of our thinking and action in the Church must be different from what we have been accustomed to for centuries."<sup>97</sup> This slender volume read by the undiscerning as just another book, is very likely to become a turning point in the interpretation of truth. It is certainly a turning point, the turning point, in the development of the problem of revelation and reason in the writings of Brunner.

One year after these lectures were delivered, partly to escape from the old controversies with Barth and above all with the Oxford Group, Brunner came to Princeton to teach. But here the old fundamentalist controversy in the Presbyterian Church turned out to be as intolerable as the conditions from which he had fled. So the next year, with World War II bursting on Europe, he returned to his beloved Zürich. The trying days of war were filled with practical preaching and renewed efforts to apply the Christian faith to the social order, especially to the peculiar problems presented by war. But all along he was finding time to follow through the theme of his Upsala lectures.

Revelation and Reason<sup>98</sup> was the first result. Here he returns to justify his conflict with Barth by elaborating a thesis that distinguishes between natural theology, revelation in the creation, and historical revelation. Natural theology is the Catholic doctrine which teaches that man in his sin and independent of revelation comes to a valid knowledge of God.

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97 Loc. cit.

98 Offenbarung und Vernunft (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1941).

This, he declares, is what Barth condemns as a "side line" in the Bible, because the main line is historical revelation. This "timeless abstract truth of a natural revelation of God," which one dares to speak "in a low voice and without authority," Brunner joins Barth in condemning. Man has no relation "to God in the cosmos," but there is a relation between the personal God and man in his sin. That is why man is a sinner: he has rejected the revelation in the creation. Brunner argues that the Bible says:

Man is a culpable sinner because he rejects the revelation in the Creation which God gives him; because he "holds down the primal truth in unrighteousness"; and because, in his madness, he transforms that which the Creator reveals into the form of idols. Of himself he can no more perceive this sin than, as a result of sin, he can truly know the revelation in the Creation. It is only through the historical revelation that man comes to perceive both the revelation in the Creation and his sin, which, for this reason, is without excuse.<sup>99</sup>

So Brunner insists that he is not expounding a "testimony catechized out of the heathen," as Barth charges, but insisting on the Biblical doctrine of revelation in creation that furnishes a foundation for human responsibility for sin. Two years later, in his Justice,<sup>100</sup> Brunner tests his thesis by applying it to the problems of the social order.

The Divine-Human Encounter blazed a trail for a complete rethinking of the Christian faith in the light of the principle of "truth as

<sup>99</sup> Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 79f.

<sup>100</sup> Gerechtigkeit (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1943), published in English as Justice and the Social Order, trans. Mary Hottinger (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945).

encounter," but this work was delayed until 1946, when the first volume of a four volume systematic theology appeared under the title The Christian Doctrine of God.<sup>101</sup> The task of dogmatics, Brunner thinks, is to sustain contemporaneity by ever translating the Christian revelation into the "alphabet" of the times. According to this rule, no system of doctrine, past, present, or future, is a final statement of the Christian faith. The task of future theology is to continue this transformation of doctrine, as it is our task to make dogmatics "a mediator in between worldly science and a supra-worldly testimony of faith."<sup>102</sup> By this method the Christian revelation can live in and give life to any scientific world-view that the future holds. Here Brunner stands today planning to attempt the translation, philosophically and theologically, for himself, for the Christian community, and for the world to which the Church must preach her missionary message.<sup>103</sup>

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101 Die christliche Lehre von Gott (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946).

102 Ibid., p. 77.

103 Ibid., pp. 109ff.

## CHAPTER IV

### REVELATION

There is much "speaking into the air" about the doctrine of revelation in Brunner's dialectical theology. American liberalism, reacting against what it has taken to be unthinkable "double talk" and "mystery mongering," has made a caricature of a type of thought that takes the crisis of real human existence as the most significant point of departure in the understanding of God's revelation to man. It is easy to come to such distortions when the real meaning of the term "revelation" is not defined. "There is no religion," Brunner observes, "which does not believe itself to be based upon divine revelation in one way or another."<sup>1</sup> It is the purpose of this chapter, therefore, to present the nature of revelation in the context provided by the categories of dialectical thought.

#### I. THE DIALECTIC OF REVELATION

The term "dialectical" has a variety of meanings. Three of these have had wide influence on philosophical and theological reflection. Heraclitus of Ephesus (fl. 500 B. C.) was the first dialectical thinker. He taught that "God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger." (Fr. 36). He asserted that there is a conflict

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<sup>1</sup> The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934), p. 21. Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1941), pp. 4, 21f.

between these extremes so that "all things take place by strife" (Fr. 46) and "war is father of all and king of all" (Fr. 44), but that beyond this cosmic flux is a "hidden harmony" which is better than manifest harmony (Fr. 47).<sup>2</sup> Hegel (1770-1831), who greatly admired Heracleitus, assumed that all thought is a description of the Absolute, that the rational is the real and the real is the rational. The source of the dialectical movement is in the principle of negativity, which means that, in "a system of movements," the thesis is understood in its relation to its antithesis.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, dialectic is the movement of thought from an assumed point of view (thesis) to an opposed point of view (antithesis), so that the contradiction is resolved in a new insight or aspect of reality (synthesis). These basic ideas, first set forth by Hegel in his Phänomenologie, are attacked in the dialecticism of Kierkegaard, who taught that an existential system is impossible. Reality is a system for God, but it cannot be a system for any existing spirit. "Existence separates," Kierkegaard argues, "and holds the various moments of existence discreetly apart; the systematic consists of the finality which brings them together."<sup>4</sup> Brunner uses dialectic in Kierkegaard's sense, i.e., a contradiction in existence that is finally resolved outside of existence.

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2 Milton C. Nahm, Selections from Early Greek Philosophy (New York: F. S. Crofts and Co., 1944), p. 93.

3 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Die Phänomenologie des Geistes, ed. G. Lasson and J. Hoffmeister (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1928), p. 239.

4 Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 107.

1. Time and eternity. -- With Brunner eternity is not "a long, long time." The difference between time and eternity is not quantitative; but, as Kierkegaard's phrase has it, there is "an infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity." Time is "below"; eternity is "above." The existential situation is a tension between two poles in a world "torn asunder into two spheres."<sup>5</sup> The movement between the two spheres is from eternity to eternity through time. It is a parabola extending in two directions, coming from eternity toward us until it reaches the lowest point, from which, like a screaming dive-bomber, "it strains upward again to return to the region" whence it came.<sup>6</sup> This involves an eschatological thought about time as distinguished from the mathematical, astronomical conception "which has to do with watches and calendars."<sup>7</sup> This existential decisive idea of time is not to be confused with a neutral idea of time.

As each act of the mind is a breaking through (Durchbrechung) of the causal sequence through freedom, so is it also an invasion of eternity into time. The relation of mind to time is always a negation: dissolution (Aufhebung).<sup>8</sup>

Time and eternity are related in the reality of the breaking through (die Wirklichkeit des Durchbrechungs). The breach comes from the other side, from the side of God who raised up Jesus from the dead; "as the one who

5 The Mediator, p. 562.

6 Loc. cit.

7 Ibid., p. 421n.

8 Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1923), p. 103. Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 32: "Einbruch aus einer anderen Dimension."



is restored to the divine world is He attested to the vision of faith."<sup>9</sup>  
 Man lives between time and eternity, between the present age (αἰῶν<sup>Α</sup> αὐτός)  
 and the coming age (αἰῶν μέλλων).

2. Continuity and discontinuity. -- Closely related to the breaking through of eternity into time is the distinction between continuity and discontinuity. Much modern thought has been founded on the belief that by an energizing of the will or the submerging of the self after the manner of mystics a point of identity between man and God is reached. Opposed to this modern monism is the dualistic epistemological principle that severs man from God by the concept of creation as ex nihilo on the one hand and of "the fall" and "original sin" on the other. On this radical distinction Brunner bases every primary doctrine of Christianity, especially the doctrine of the Christian revelation.<sup>10</sup> In place of an unbroken continuum in a closed universe he sets a contradiction between the Creator and the creature.<sup>11</sup> The idea of a continuity between God and the world is relegated to a pagan philosophy that denies God the Creator and worships and serves the creature instead.<sup>12</sup> The only continuity between God and man that can be maintained is that which God restores through his grace. "There is no continuity upwards from man

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9 The Mediator, p. 583.

10 The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 12.

11 Ibid., p. 15.

12 The Mediator, p. 226.

to God," Brunner insists, "but only downward from God to man."<sup>13</sup>

Humanity may be compared to an army in the shape of a wedge, sharp-pointed in the front and widening out backwards almost to infinity. In the vanguard are heroes, leaders, pioneers, men of genius, saints and sages. Behind them is the great army of humanity. Here and there, at times in the vanguard and at times among the masses, is a prophet. He points away from himself, beyond the vanguard, to One approaching on a different plane. They cannot reach him by marching, but he descends down on their level. This is the Christian revelation which descends through discontinuity. Man is unable to cross this chasm to God.

But it pleased God in his mercy to throw a bridge across the chasm between himself and man to blaze a trail where man himself could not go. It pleased God to visit man who cannot come to God. This approach of God to man, this divine condescension, this entering into a world of sin and sinners burdened with their sense of contradiction to him, just this constitutes the mystery of divine revelation and reconciliation in the incarnate and crucified Christ.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from the recognition of this fact the language of the New Testament cannot be understood, for it "uses only such words as express discontinuity with all that man has apart from Christ. Darkness-light, death-life, perdition-salvation, judgment-grace, guilt-forgiveness, sin-redemption."<sup>15</sup>

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13 Man in Revolt (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 520; Cf. "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie," Zwischen den Zeiten X(1932), pp. 505ff.

14 The Theology of Crisis, p. 60; Cf. The Mediator, pp. 102-152.

15 The Word and the World (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1931), p. 48.

3. Immanence and transcendence. -- At the point where Kant's Opus Postumum falls into an "erratic block" in the attempt to pass beyond the immanent God of moral idealism to a God who has reality beyond human consciousness, Brunner finds the relevance of God's transcendent revelation.<sup>16</sup> Kant's personal Christian faith vainly tries to break through the logical rigor of the concept of autonomy but is unable to do so. This brings Brunner to see that there are two possible answers to the question: "Can I know God?" One affirms that we know God on the ground of divine immanence. On the strength of inward and outward experience, it assumes a divine essence in the world. This is the way of interpretation. The other answer asserts that we know God on the ground of divine transcendence. It affirms a self-manifestation of God, penetrating and contradicting the world of human experience. This is the way of revelation.<sup>17</sup> It is the way of revelation that Brunner walks, for he finds the way of interpretation both philosophically and religiously unsound. The religious objections are especially grave. The first objection to this projection of human experience, this essence of existence, this depth of the world and of the human soul is that it is not really God. He is no sovereign Lord; he is a hidden portion, a deification of the world and the self. In the second place he is not really personal. Since he gives no utterance of himself and becomes

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<sup>16</sup> God and Man (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> The Theology of Crisis, pp. 27f. Cf. Man in Revolt, p. 100n.; Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 4.

personal only through man, he is dumb and impersonal. Again, in the third place, such a religion is not based on faith. Faith is an answer to a call, a decision between alternatives; the religion of immanence is neither. Then, in such a religion, man never becomes a personality, for decision is the essence of personality. Man is personal only when he makes a choice between life and death, when his will is broken into by the will of God.<sup>18</sup>

This extreme emphasis on transcendence brought much criticism from American liberalism.<sup>19</sup> Brunner seemed greatly irritated by this "nonsense," but brought some clarity into what he meant. In a note in his first American lectures he requires his readers to note that he was "treating of an epistemological but not a cosmological transcendence . . . that God cannot be known through his active presence in the world. His presence in nature and history is not denied, but it is regarded as hidden, so that what God is, is not revealed."<sup>20</sup> Again in his British lectures Brunner declares his belief in God as sustainer of the world on which he has set the stamp of his divinity and of man who is created in the image of God.

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18 The Theology of Crisis, pp. 29ff.

19 E.g., Eugene William Lyman, The Meaning and Truth of Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), pp. 415-425. This may be considered a "reply" to Brunner's The Theology of Crisis. Ante, p. 7ff.

20 The Theology of Crisis, p. 28. "God's being is transcendent, but God's action is immanent." A statement made by Brunner in a Chicago lecture.

It is just because these things are so, and only for that reason, that real contradiction is possible. Only the man created as the image of God can be a sinner, a contradictor; only the man to whom God as Creator is ever near can be further off from God than any star from earth; only the man in whose reason there is a divinely-caused unrest can so err in his reason as to be no longer capable of recognizing God in His own creation, but only where God manifests Himself to him in the lowliness of the Son of Man.<sup>21</sup>

The religion of transcendence is no development from the immanent to the transcendent;<sup>22</sup> it is an ingression rather than an evolution. "It is not a continuous growth on the horizontal plane of history," Brunner repeats, "but a vertical disruption of the historical process by forces interposed from beneath or above; it is the miracle of revelation. . . ." <sup>23</sup>

4. God and man. -- In Brunner's thought God stands "over against" man. The Holy Other is the Wholly Other. This does not mean that man is "distantly related" to God; but it asserts that God is God and not man, and that man is man and not God. But, again, it is a relation in which God is man's God and man is God's man.<sup>24</sup> God, however, always has the initiative. "The Bible teaches," Brunner explains, "about this God and this man, and about this indissoluble two-sided, yet never interchangeable and a specific sense one-sided, relation between them."<sup>25</sup> It is a being known before the knowing of God, an event (Ereignis) before ex-

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21 The Word and the World (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1931), p. 7.

22 E.g., William Temple, Nature, Man and God (London: Macmillan and Co., 1940).

23 The Theology of Crisis, p. 104; Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 86f.

24 The Divine-Human Encounter, trans. Amandus W. Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 48.

25 Ibid., pp. 49f.

perience (Erlebnis) which brings man to decision. In this relation God is Creator and Lord. He has created man as a counterpart, not as "an independent but as a dependent-independent being." God is then also Lord of man. Luther's emphasis on the will of God to fellowship and Calvin's emphasis on the will of God to Lordship are the two halves of the whole in Brunner's interpretation of God.

The self-communication of God is the unconditional Lordship of God: even while God is communicating Himself to the creature, He attains self-realization in the highest sense, His Gloria. For this reason His self-affirmation fulfills itself in His self-giving, His glory as Lord in the choir of those who lovingly worship Him as the inconceivably loving Lord. Thus God's will to Lordship -- His holiness -- points to His will to self-communication, His love in which His holiness is fulfilled; and His love points back to His will to Lordship as its presupposition.<sup>26</sup>

In this relationship between God and man there are two chief conceptions through which the Christian knowledge of man generally, thus also the boundary between the "natural" and that to which the revelation of Christ informs self-knowledge, is tuned: that man is created in the image of God and that he is a sinner.<sup>27</sup> In this situation he is involved in sin and decision before God who demands both absolute love and absolute obedience.<sup>28</sup>

5. Metaphysics, speculation, and mysticism. -- Repeatedly Brunner sets revelation against all philosophy. Philosophy is grounded on

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26 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 62.

27 "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie," Zwischen den Zeiten, X(1932), p. 507.

28 The Mediator, p. 203.

reason; revelation is the basis of theology founded on faith.<sup>29</sup> Three types of philosophy are distinguished from the standpoint of the Christian doctrine of revelation.<sup>30</sup> Strictly speaking they may be called metaphysics, speculation, and mysticism.<sup>31</sup> Metaphysics is an objective realism that follows Aristotle by taking as its starting-point that which is presented to consciousness as the fact of experience. By following the converging lines toward a common point beyond the boundary of the empirical, it attempts to complete the unity of the system. Two concepts have proven themselves helpful in this undertaking. The first is the concept of causality that argues since every finite existence has a cause, the whole must have a cause. Immanent purposiveness is especially hard to account for apart from reference to the infinite. The second is the concept of analogy. Since reality appears as a graded structure of the realms of being, it argues, there must be a perfect being as the ideal completion of the construction of existence. This is the approach from the object-realism.

The second system is the subjective idealism of speculation. Following Plato, it abandons the spectator view in which man stands over against the world. Man is now the master who searches in the depths of

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29 Philosophie und Offenbarung (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1925), pp. 5-28.

30 God and Man, pp. 41-51; Cf. The Theology of Crisis, pp. 23-38.

31 Cf. Richard Kroner, "Mysticism, Speculation, Revelation," Religion in Life, XV(1946), pp. 360-365.

the spirit for the disclosure of the absolute. He looks for the Logos, the ground, the unity, the connection between all particular facts. Where realism follows the dispassionate, investigation of the observer, idealism has the fire and fervour of mystic passion. This is the approach from the subject-idealism.

The third system undertakes to transcend the antithesis between subject and object. It is not the supremacy of spirit over nature but the hidden unity between both that is sought. It is disclosed primarily in feeling, and God is the unity beyond this bifurcation of life. This is the way of mysticism which follows Plotinus. It may be called also the philosophy of identity. Like realism and idealism it assumes a continuity between man and God; against all three of them Brunner brings his doctrine of revelation which presupposes discontinuity.

6. Objectivity, subjectivity, and the dimension of the personal. --

The category of personal correspondence is the clue to Brunner's statement of revelation. The antithesis between object and subject has dominated Western philosophy since its beginning. Realism with its emphasis on the object, idealism with its emphasis on the subject, the philosophy of identity with its tendency toward making the antithesis a matter of indifference had been thought the only possibilities until existential philosophy discovered the dimension of the personal. It was thought impossible to remove oneself from between the tongs of the two concepts Objective-Subjective.<sup>32</sup> The correlation of the Word of God and faith

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32 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 83.



was forced into a false subordination to this antithesis. This method is valid in science, but the "subject" of faith can be perceived only as one becomes a believer. The objective and subjective distinction has no place in faith.

The counterpart is no longer as in thinking a something, a something pondered and discussed which I infer through the energy of my thinking, but a Person who Himself thus has the initiative and guidance and takes over the role (so to say) which in thinking I have myself. An exchange hence takes place here which is wholly without analogy in the sphere of thinking. The sole analogy is in the encounter between human beings, the meeting of person and person.<sup>33</sup>

In this dimension God does not manipulate man as if he were a thing, and there is no magical manipulation of God. Man is neither spectator nor master; he is involved in passionate decision in acknowledgment of the Lordship of God. Here alone can the truth of God and man really become known. "The revelation of the Divine Person in the God-Man," Brunner declares, "is at the same time the revelation of the originally true, personal being of man."<sup>34</sup>

7. Special, general, and Christian revelation. -- Corresponding to objective realism and subjective idealism are special and general revelation. Special revelation is the characteristic of all popular living religions. By "popular" religions Brunner means the historical and social religions. Being built around the cultus and ritual action,

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33 Ibid., p. 85. Brunner's The Divine-Human Encounter is a brief application of this thesis to every basic doctrine of the Christian faith.

34 Man in Revolt (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 416. Cf. God and Man, p. 67.

they find it necessary to produce a large number of revelations, theophanies, divine oracles, and miracles of all kinds to assure the religious man that his god, or gods, have a personal relation to him. The divine and personal character of the supersensible world is, consequently, manifested in recurring concrete revelations in time and space.<sup>35</sup>

Opposed to the special revelation of popular religion is the general revelation of philosophical religion. Against "realistic" religion speculative and subjective idealism offers a "corrective." Its character of mystical solitude regards the solid character of historical fact as nothing more than illusions of an overstimulated imagination in popular religion that lacks rational and psychological insight. Revelation, in this "higher" relation to the God of speculation and mysticism in the "religion of the educated man," is the emergence of the eternal basis of all phenomena into consciousness, the perception of something which was always true, the growing consciousness of the Divine Presence, which might have been perceived at all times, since it was always there. Revelation as the objective element and religion as the subjective element are everywhere fundamentally the same. The "essence of religion," which shines through the various forms of many religions, is not essentially different when freed from the mere externals: una est religio in rituum varietate. However, because of the hampering limitations of man in his sense-environment, religion is not fully freed from the trammels of the accidental

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35 The Mediator, pp. 21f.; Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 21.

elements of the historical and contingent.<sup>36</sup>

The Christian revelation, Brunner believes, belongs neither to the popular nor to the philosophical types of religion. It is more closely connected with the special than to the general form of revelation, yet it is opposed to both. It agrees with popular religion that revelation is special and concrete, a datum in the world of time and space.

In the Christian religion "salvation" is always indissolubly connected with an historical fact: with the fact of the Incarnation of the Divine Word, with the fact of Atonement by Jesus Christ. Although the time and space element, that is, the element of historical contingency, does not, in itself, constitute a revelation, yet a revelation upon which the Christian faith is based is founded upon this fact alone, and apart from it Christianity itself could not exist.<sup>37</sup>

But, on the other hand, the Christian religion differs from popular religion, since it is not based on a series of events, but upon a single event; it believes that this event took place once for all, that it has uniqueness (Einmaligkeit). "The Incarnation of the Word is in its very essence a unique event," Brunner explains, "and this Incarnate Word can only be One, or it is nothing at all."<sup>38</sup> The Christian revelation -- and of this Brunner never tires in proclaiming -- is, therefore, clinched by two characteristics. First, the concreteness of the revelation marks it off from all philosophical religion of general revelation.<sup>39</sup> Second,

36 Ibid., pp. 22f.

37 Ibid., pp. 24f.

38 Ibid., p. 240. Cf. God and Man, pp. 67f.

39 The Philosophy of Religion, trans. A. J. D. Farrer and Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), pp. 15-25; The Mediator, pp. 224ff.

the uniqueness of Christian revelation marks it off from the recurring revelations of popular religions.<sup>40</sup>

## II. THE NATURE OF REVELATION

The nature of revelation cannot be reduced to an abstract concept; it can be understood fully only in and with the historical fact. However, for clarification, it is considered first as a concept and then as a fact.

1. The concept of revelation. -- Brunner examines the concept of revelation by four considerations: (1) the Biblical understanding of revelation, (2) the reception of revelation, (3) the God of revelation, and (4) the man of revelation. It will be noted that (1) and (3), (2) and (4) correspond.

(1) The Biblical understanding of revelation. The Biblical understanding of revelation is different from that of other religions, although it has similar characteristics with them, such as the opening up of closed knowledge in a mysterious way. But in the Biblical revelation the two characteristic marks of the absolute and the personal, disclosed in the historical process, distinguish the Christian understanding from that of all other religions.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 22-26; The Mediator, pp. 379f; The Theology of Crisis, p. 39; The Word and the World, pp. 11-16; Man in Revolt, pp. 440ff; Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 24.

First, the Biblical revelation is absolute. Brunner digs a deep ditch between the absolute as an idea and the absolute as a person. Our knowledge of the personal God is the absolute revelation of the absolutely hidden, which is completely beyond the natural comprehension of man. Reason can, in part, comprehend the world, but the absolute mystery is supra-worldly, therefore knowable only through revelation. In the Bible this supra-worldly being is God himself. In contrast to the personal God of the Bible is the impersonal absolute idea, which, as a cosmic abstraction, is a mere object which we have "thought up"; but God is no Object, but Subject. He is the absolute Person who is pleased to reveal himself, and in this revelation discloses himself as the absolute Mystery that man never could have "thought of." The absolute idea rises in the realm of immanence, but the absolute Personal Mystery confronts us from the transcendent, from beyond the limits of humanity.<sup>42</sup>

Secondly, Biblical revelation contains a negative presupposition. Here a remarkable dialectic of Biblical thought appears, viz., that between the original and the historical revelation. Between the two man has become blind and is in the dark, so that without the second revelation man "walks in darkness" and is "lost." This negative presupposition is sin, which is a negation of an original revelation of God. It can be a negation only as the positive presupposition is retained, and to remove both is to renounce human responsibility for sin.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 24ff.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 26f. Cf. Man in Revolt, pp. 285ff.

Thirdly, the Biblical revelation is radical "otherness" (radikale Andersheit). This "otherness" of the Biblical understanding of revelation is manifested in three characteristics: The Lordship of God, the transformation of man, and the community of man with his neighbor. Secular knowledge comes into man's sphere and becomes his object, and man becomes lord over it; but God is known as subject, of which man is not lord, but rather who is man's Lord.<sup>44</sup> Again, in secular knowledge man is enlarged, but he remains unchanged; but in knowledge of God the transformation is so radical that it can be described only in such terms as rebirth, death of the old, and the resurrection of the new man.<sup>45</sup> The third element that contrasts Biblical revelation from ordinary knowledge is the deliverance of man from solitude to community. Man may remain in social isolation and have natural knowledge, but knowledge of God is impossible apart from love for one's neighbor.<sup>46</sup>

Fourthly, the Biblical revelation is a communication of life (Lebensmitteilung). It is not merely the intensification of the life that exists, but the transformation of the life that is perishing into the saving, eternal life. By revealing himself God gives man communion with himself and with it participation in his eternal life. Revelation concerns itself with me and God, my salvation and his dominion over me and his communion with me. That is why Brunner insists that "the history

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>45</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 28f. Cf. The Divine Imperative, pp. 188ff.

of revelation is the history of salvation, and the history of salvation is the history of revelation."<sup>47</sup> The change in the negation presupposed in the concept of revelation has become positive, -- but, more than that, the actively negative, the usurping ego yields itself to the Lordship of God. By this man finds freedom again.

Fifthly, the Biblical revelation is unexpected. Just as man has no knowledge of God when he has no love for God, so also God makes himself known by making his love known. And this is that which man never expected, viz., that God should love a sinner. Man does not stand before the Biblical revelation and say: "just as I expected," "just what I thought." God does not "meet the expectations" of an a priori idea about God, but he amazes man with his grace and love. Voltaire's dictum, "Dieu pardonnera, c'est son métrier" (God will forgive, that is his business), Brunner thinks insolent mockery. The most unexpected statement that the sinner can hear is: "God is love."<sup>48</sup> This is the decisive point of revelation, viz., the justification of the sinner, forgiveness of guilt.

Finally, the Biblical revelation is unique (Einmalige). As already stated, this uniqueness is not in all the parts of revelation, but especially in the work of salvation through Jesus Christ, the Unique One (das Einmalige), and specifically through the unique fact of His death

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 29: "Offenbarungsgeschichte Heilsgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte Offenbarungsgeschichte."

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 30ff. Brunner often repeats these ideas in discussion. It seems to be his favorite refutation of rationalism, and it usually comes forth at dramatic moments. Nygren's Agape and Eros is his basic source in modern theology.

on the Cross.<sup>49</sup>

(2) The reception of revelation: faith. Revelation comes from God, but it comes to man. A correlation of concepts again defines the Biblical revelation. First, there is a correlation of the subjective and the objective. Revelation is an objective fact independent of the subjective reception of revelation; but, although it is independent of what man thinks, the subjective fact of illumination is a necessary part of the act of revelation. Jesus Christ is not revelation if he is not recognized as the Christ. "Revelation is a transitive event which goes forth from God and ends in man," Brunner illustrates, "a bow of light with these two poles."<sup>50</sup>

A second correlation is the Lordship of God and communion with God. God's Lordship becomes perfect only in man's freely given obedience which is love, the supreme goal of God in his creatures. The act by which man reciprocates God's love, recognizing him as Lord, is faith. "Faith is the act in which the revelation or self-communication of God is received and in which this is realized in man the subject. Faith is, in a certain initial sense, the goal of revelation."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 32f. Cf. Die Mitte der Bibel (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1938), p. 4; "Christus am Kreuz, unser Heil," in Unser Bekenntnis zu Jesus Christus, by Emil Brunner and others (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1938), pp. 31-52.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 35.



A third correlation is the act of knowing and the act of obedience. Faith is both an act of knowing and an act of obedience, because man cannot know God unless he obeys God. The rational analysis which puts the actus intellectualis before the actus volitivus violates the unique character of the act of reception. Faith is ὑπακοή τῆς πίστεως a Vertrauensgehorsam.<sup>52</sup>

A fourth correlation is submission and trust. The knowledge that it is not good for man to be his own lord, but to recognize God as his Lord, is the very heart of faith. In contrast, the mistrust and rebellion of man is the very root of sin. Man is delivered from sin as God's love conquers his rebellion and unbelief, man's suspicious self-anxiety.<sup>53</sup>

A fifth correlation is the "I" and the "Thou." Faith is not a relation to an idea or a truth or a doctrine, but relation to a person. Faith is fulfilled in the I-Thou dimension, not in the I-It dimension; and all acts of objective knowledge, in the I-It dimension, are merely preparatory, not the perception of faith itself.<sup>54</sup>

A sixth correlation is the personal and the impersonal. Early in Christian history belief in doctrine was separated from belief in a person. Through the long development of the Early Church and the Middle Ages this a priori recognition of the authority of doctrine became asso-

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52 Ibid., p. 36. Cf. Wahrheit als Begegnung (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1938), p. 51.

53 Ibid., pp. 36f.

54 Ibid., pp. 37f.

ciated with the Church. Thus the subject-subject relation became a subject-object relation, which is complemented by caritas. This synthesis was destroyed by the Reformation,<sup>55</sup> yet quickly restored in Protestant orthodoxy after the Reformation. This transformation of faith into the impersonal dimension is the deepest reason for the weakness and changes in Christianity.<sup>56</sup>

A seventh correlation is knowledge (and) faith. Biblical faith is a Glaubenserkenntnis, after the analogy of our relation to another person. Theological knowledge may well go along with an unbroken ego; but the giving of ourselves to God through love involves loving with his love so that we are free from self-absorption (Ichkrampf). Real faith does not cause rebirth; it is rebirth. Although theological knowledge is in order, the confession of doctrine without personal knowledge is fatal.<sup>57</sup>

An eighth correlation is the natural and the supernatural. Faith is truly "supernatural" because it is possible only through the presence of God; but it is also natural since it makes man truly human. Since longing for love lives in every man, unselfish love alone can free him from the unhappiness and inhumanity of sin; and only those who have been seized by divine love in faith can give this love to others.<sup>58</sup>

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55 Cf. Eros und Liebe (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1937); Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, trans. Philip S. Watson (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), Part II, Vol. II, pp. 463-519.

56 Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 38ff. Cf. The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 15-41; The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 31-51.

57 Ibid., pp. 40f.

58 Ibid., pp. 41f.

Finally, faith is the correlation of the surrender of God and the surrender of man. The Biblical understanding of faith, as the Biblical understanding of revelation, is characterized by the unconditional and the personal. All religions know devotion, but this moral sacrifice is only a compromise in which man wants to give much to God but not himself. Mysticism makes the self identical with the divine, and moral-righteousness is the self assertion of the "lordship of man"; but the unconditional surrender of Jesus Christ alone makes possible the self-surrender of man.<sup>59</sup>

(3) The God of revelation. The God of revelation is very different from the God of mysticism and metaphysical speculation. It is not a matter of fact that God and revelation belong together, for the philosophers want to prove God in the process of history, even when they turn away from philosophical speculation to a positive metaphysic. Five basic facts distinguish the God of revelation from the God of philosophers. First, the Name of God indicates a God of Mystery, who demonstrates himself as the personal, i.e., self-communicating, God who established community by his revelation to man.<sup>60</sup> He is no object projected by our thought, but the self-communicating subject who addresses man. He is the mysterious and living God of faith, not the abstract God of philosophy; therefore, he is known only in Biblical revelation, for outside the Bible

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59 Ibid., pp. 42f.

60 Die christliche Lehre von Gott (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946), pp. 121-40. Cf. The Word and the World, pp. 63-67; Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 43ff.

this God has not so much as been heard of. It is a simple fact that this God is just not found among the philosophers and mystics.<sup>61</sup> Second, the Lordship of God and the Biblical revelation belong together. Even before God is revealed as Creator he is revealed as Lord. "In the Bible God is not the Lord because He is the Creator, but He is the Creator because He is the Lord. Israel had learned to know Him as the Lord before she could learn to know Him as the Creator."<sup>62</sup> Third, the holiness of God is closely connected with the Lordship of God. This Holy One is the Wholly Other, who takes himself so seriously that he can be honored only by revealing himself. But this unveiling is a veiling as he makes himself known as the Unfathomable Mystery who can never be fully known by human creatures.<sup>63</sup> Fourth, the love of God against the background of Lordship and holiness, discloses the central mystery of revelation as the relation between the self-asserting holiness of God and his unconditional self-surrender. This uncaused, unconditional love, which no philosopher knows nor can know as a philosopher, is the reason why God reveals himself. Thus love becomes manifest as both the origin and content of revelation. "This," Brunner declares, "is the primal paradox (Urparadoxie) of the Biblical idea of God and of Biblical revelation.

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61 Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 44ff. Cf. God and Man, pp. 38-69.

62 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 45. Cf. Die christliche Lehre von Gott, pp. 140-161. This conclusion, of course, is based on the results of critical study of the order of Old Testament documents; however, it is more profoundly related to Biblical understanding of God. If God is Lord, he must be Creator!

63 Die christliche Lehre von Gott, pp. 161-188.

Only of this God and of this his revelation is there this paradoxical unity of contradictory antithesis and identity."<sup>64</sup> To discover this God by thinking is impossible, since to do so would break all the laws of logic. Finally, the Triune God is the God of revelation, not of speculation, since revelation must always be received in its personal relation to a God whose goal is the God-man (Gottmensch). This God-humanity (Gottmenschentum), which lies at the very foundation of both creation and redemption, is the eternal purpose of God's revelation and God's love.

This is indeed the deepest content of the doctrine of the Trinity, the identity of the God who is to be revealed, who reveals, and who is being revealed (des zu offenbarenden, des offenbarenden und des offenbar werdenden Gottes): Father, Son, and Spirit. God in His revelation is none other than the mysterious God from everlasting to everlasting.<sup>65</sup>

The man of revelation, since he is no mere empty vessel, has to be considered in this personal encounter (Personbegegnung). This is "the other task of theology."<sup>66</sup> "Since God Himself," to use Irenaeus' great statement, "has adopted our own to give us his own,"<sup>67</sup> it is wrong to consider this inquiry as to the receiver of revelation outside of theological interest.<sup>68</sup> The Bible teaches about both the natural and the

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<sup>64</sup> Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 47. Cf. Die christliche Lehre von Gott, pp. 189-209.

<sup>65</sup> Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 48; Cf. Ich glaube an den lebendigen Gott (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1945), pp. 7-119; Die christliche Lehr von Gott (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946), pp. 213-255.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. "Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie," Zwischen den Zeiten, VII (1929), pp. 255-276.

<sup>67</sup> The Mediator, pp. 524f.

<sup>68</sup> Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 49ff.

regenerate man. In fact, the distinction between those without and those in Christ is the only question of man as such.<sup>69</sup> The natural man, as a sinner, cannot know the true nature of sin. That knowledge can be obtained only through God's revelation. However, man does not become a sinner through Jesus Christ, but he comes to understand that he has always been one. Sin is rebellion against the Creator, the attempt to be free, not conditionally, but unconditionally. This striving for unconditional freedom is the root of sin. Through this emancipation other sins arise.<sup>70</sup> But, man cannot completely sever his relation with God, because he is never out of relation with God even in his sin. This act of turning away from God is the primary factor in sin; the state of alienation is sin in a secondary sense.<sup>71</sup> The sinful nature arises from the sinful act, not vice versa; so that "the non-capability (Nichtkönnen) which lies in the nature of sinfulness is considered a guilty non-capability (schuldhaftes Nichtkönnen) and at the same time a non-willingness (Nichtwollen).<sup>72</sup> Sin is, then, the turning away from an original revelation. It is a secondary negation of an original positiveness; but, since sin is an act, it cannot be considered a mere thing of the past, but always a present act of negation.<sup>73</sup> It is from the point of view

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69 Ibid., p. 50.

70 Ibid., pp. 51f. Cf. Man in Revolt, pp. 256-277.

71 Man in Revolt, pp. 145-153.

72 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 52.

73 Ibid., p. 53.

of God's revelation that natural man is to be understood,<sup>74</sup> for even the natural sinful man retains the image of God. The New Testament, to be sure, speaks of the restoration of the image of God through grace, but his nature as image of God is always there even when it is denied.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, through original revelation, man is a responsible creature. Even the heathen recognize this responsibility, though they deny God.<sup>76</sup> And finally, man must be understood from his responsibility, not from his rational nature; because reason is nothing in itself, but only a relation, a relation to God. In the Christian understanding of reason as the conception of the Word of God, the act of reasoning becomes a sign of man's coming from God, even if man denies God. It is then not reason, but the arrogance of reason (Vernunftthochmut) that stands in contradiction to God. The Christian conception of man, therefore, thinks of man as a being in relation to God, not as a self-sufficient being of the humanists.<sup>77</sup>

2. The fact of revelation. -- The idea of revelation leads to the fact of revelation, which is considered in both its variety and in its unity. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days

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74 Man in Revolt, pp. 57-70.

75 "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie," Zwischen den Zeiten, X(1932), pp. 505-532.

76 Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 55f.

77 Ibid., pp. 56f.

spoken unto us in his Son."<sup>78</sup> Brunner thinks that these "divers manners" mean much more than a mere "sign" (Zeichen) of revelation.<sup>79</sup> God has chosen to reveal himself in a different manner in his work of creation, differently through the forerunners, and differently in the Perfector of revelation. This second part, therefore, is concerned with revelation as origin, with revelation in history, and with revelation as the goal of all history.

(1) Revelation as origin: the revelation of creation. Believing himself to be in harmony with the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the Reformers, Brunner teaches a general revelation in creation.<sup>80</sup> It is, to be sure, an impersonal revelation, turned into idolatry by those who do not make the right use of it, but this is because of the perversion of the will of man, not because the revelation of creation is not real.<sup>81</sup> Revelation of creation, again, is to be distinguished from natural theology. Those who, under the influence of the philosophy of Kant and of Ritschl's

78 Hebrews 1:1, 2. Cf. Ibid., p. 59.

79 Loc. cit. Cf. Karl Barth, in Revelation, ed. John Baillie and Hugh Martin (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), pp. 62ff.

80 Ibid., pp. 60f.

81 The Mediator, pp. 268ff; 458-461; 473f., 475, 488, 519ff.; God and Man, pp. 21ff.; The Divine Imperative, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1937), pp. 220ff., 662; Natur und Gnade (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1935); Man in Revolt, pp. 11, 50ff., 62f., 91, 366ff., 369, 387, 527-541; Our Faith, trans. John W. Rilling (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 3, 5f.; On the other hand, see Karl Barth, Nein! Antwort an Emil Bruner (München: Chr. Kaiser-Verlag, 1934), pp. 3-31; Revelation, p. 51; Kirchliche Dogmatik (Zollikon: Verlag der Evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1939), I.ii, pp. 304ff.



positivism, reject a natural theology founded on pure reason are right; but to turn from this Biblical "sideline," which places theologia naturalis beside sola gratia, sola fides, is not to reject general revelation as a presupposition to the revelation of Christ. The Biblical doctrine of the revelation of creation and the natural theology which stands in competition with the Christian knowledge of God are mutually exclusive; for the revelation of creation is a different relation from that of the historical revelation. How so? Because the same God reveals himself under two different forms, the first in which the natural order becomes visible and the second in which the corrupted nature is restored. "Not the revealer, only the form of the revelation is different," Brunner teaches.<sup>82</sup> "Holding down the truth" of the revelation of creation by idolatry and the transformation of truth through vanity is the basis for the guilt of man.<sup>83</sup>

With this it is clear that Holy Scripture indeed teaches a general revelation or a revelation of creation, not a "natural theology." It does not teach that the revelation of Creation, which is given to all, is also adequate for a knowledge of God actually obtained, so that man in spite of sin and in his sin can know God. On the contrary, it is indeed directly due to the sin of man that he suppresses the knowledge which originates in him through God's revelation, so that to him the revelation from God which is given for knowledge becomes the origin of his vain idolatry. The sinful man is such a vessel that the dregs of sin immediately transform the God-given wine of knowledge into the vinegar of vain idolatry.<sup>84</sup>

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82 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 63: "Nicht Offenbarer, aber die Gestalt der Offenbarung ist je eine andere."

83 Ibid., pp. 64ff.

84 Ibid., p. 66. Cf. God and Man, pp. 115ff.

Thus Brunner holds man responsible for sin, but escapes from a theologia naturalis as a basis for a theologia revelata. It is here that Brunner departs from the "two-story" theology of Catholicism. The distinction should not be between natural and revealed, but between objective revelation in its special and general forms and the subjective reception of revelation.<sup>85</sup> Closely related to this teaching is the distinction of the formal and the material of the imago dei, which are driven asunder by sin, so that man retains the nature of reason but not the right intentions of reason.<sup>86</sup> This element that is retained is the law written in the hearts of all men, but they do not know the source of this law. The law they know, but not the giver of the law.<sup>87</sup> Man's perception of the revelation of creation is destroyed by sin, but the revelation itself as an objective fact remains.<sup>88</sup> Sin, therefore, is a perversion of the original, so that the relation between the original and the perversion is not quantitative, but dialectical. Man in varying degrees of perversion stands estranged from the God proclaimed by creation until the special revelation of Jesus Christ restores man to communion with God.<sup>89</sup> God does reveal himself in an impersonal form in creation, and man's perversion of this revelation is the basis for human responsibility and the presupposition

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85 Ibid., pp. 68f.

86 Ibid., pp. 69ff.

87 Ibid., pp. 71ff.

88 Ibid., pp. 73ff.

89 Ibid., pp. 75f.

of the special revelation in Christ.<sup>90</sup>

(2) The historical revelation: promise and fulfillment. Now that Brunner makes room for a revelation of creation, what does he do with "progressive revelation"? And again Brunner is not silent. Revelation in the special sense is to be understood as both promise and fulfillment. Rooting himself in the testimony of the early church, he teaches that there is a unity between the Old Testament and the New Testament; the one is preparatory and the other is complete and final.

The Old Testament is daybreak and dawn which the sun sends before it as it goes forth. Out of the night it ascends. Not that the night evolves into the morning and the day, but that the sun brings the day through it alone.<sup>91</sup>

Through the confusing variety of the Old Testament testimony, all of which is not of the same significance, there runs a unity that centers in the mysteriously inspired utterances of the prophets,<sup>92</sup> who expose idolatry as a perversion of the revelation of creation.<sup>93</sup> This prophetic word is based on the fact of God's revelation in history, and it again becomes an event in history; thus God's word and deed become identical.

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90 Ibid., pp. 76f.

91 Die Unentbehrlichkeit des Alten Testaments für die missionierende Kirche (Stuttgart und Basel: Evang. Missionsverlag, 1934), p. 23. Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 82ff.; The Mediator, pp. 508f., The Theology of Crisis, p. 34; "Die Bedeutung des Alten Testaments für unsern Glauben," Zwischen den Zeiten, 1930, (VIII), pp. 30-48.

92 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 84.

93 Ibid., pp. 84ff.

The words are not ideas, but events that descend from the transcendental.<sup>94</sup> It is a personal word that proclaims God's wonderful deeds in the history of his people. When this personal word becomes an abstract system, as in the fixed teaching of the law, it no longer points to God as promise. Against this system Paul's polemic is directed.<sup>95</sup> The hidden center of the Old Testament revelation is the "Name of the Lord," i.e., the personal revelation of God, in which God says who he is and establishes his covenant with man.<sup>96</sup> God appears in theophanies and often shows his "countenance," but this gradually fades away into a figure of speech.<sup>97</sup> The manifestation never achieves a concrete and unique presence; the "countenance" is something of an unfulfilled promise of an incarnate word of God.<sup>98</sup> The prophetic word points to the future, at first in an earthly sense and then in a supra-worldly hope that God will dwell among his people in a presence of grace. From the war-like earthly ruler of the early visions the Old Testament comes to a climax in the hope for the good shepherd and the suffering servant.

In this form of revelation he will make known his innermost personal mystery; in this "countenance full of sorrow and scorn" he will make his proper name known; this deed of substitutionary suffering shall be his final word of revelation. We stand at the threshold of the New Covenant.<sup>99</sup>

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94 Ibid., p. 87.

95 Ibid., pp. 87ff.

96 Ibid., pp. 89f.

97 Ibid., pp. 90ff.

98 Ibid., pp. 92ff.

99 Ibid., p. 95.

Revelation as promise in the Old Covenant is preparatory to revelation as fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is God's final revelation to man. But how is he related to the revelation before his coming? It has already been said that the revelation of creation or general revelation is impersonal in form and therefore brings no personal word of redemption. Its function is to establish an order of justice that holds man responsible for his sin.<sup>100</sup> But the personal word of God's love and God's mercy comes through the Biblical word as promise and as fulfillment. The relation between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is more complex than the relation between them and the revelation of creation. The distinction is between promise and fulfillment, rather than between impersonal and personal, wrath and grace; but one speaks of promise and fulfillment only when revelation is prophecy and actual event, not when orthodox creed and timeless doctrine.<sup>101</sup> This timeless element is the weakness of the "perfect teacher" of rationalism and the "religious genius" of romanticism. They remain in the realm of immanence and point to a timeless truth. Jesus Christ, as "more than a prophet" and other than primus inter pares is the thrust of eternity into a definite time and place.<sup>102</sup> In the prophet one hears: "Thus saith the Lord"; but in

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100 Cf. Ibid., p. 96f.; Gerechtigkeit (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1943), translated into English by Mary Hottinger as Justice and the Social Order (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945).

101 Ibid., pp. 97ff.

102 Ibid., pp. 99ff. Cf. The Mediator, pp. 72-101; The Word and the World, pp. 13, 41-45.

Jesus it is rather: "But I tell you." In the prophet one hears: "God forgives you your sins"; but in Jesus: "Your sins are forgiven." In Jesus Christ the message and the person are one.<sup>103</sup> The prophetic word has absolute authority, but not the prophet himself; in Jesus authority and person are one. He is "one who not only has the word, but is the word."<sup>104</sup> Again in Christ, revelation and reconciliation are united in the cross, for he is the center of all revelation and the climax of salvation.<sup>105</sup> In the threefold office of King, Priest, and Prophet the cult of the Old Covenant comes to an end and the work of atonement is ended;<sup>106</sup> "the Word," "the Deed," "the Name," and "the Countenance" are united in the person of Christ; and "in him the mystery of God's person is disclosed."<sup>107</sup> But this does not mean that a Christ-metaphysics can be constructed so that the mystery of the deity of Christ no longer remains. We know God only as he is related to us in Jesus Christ.<sup>108</sup> The Word, the Deed, the Name, and the Countenance are objective revelation

103 Ibid., pp. 101f. Cf. The Mediator, pp. 215-220.

104 Our Faith, p. 72; Cf. The Mediator, pp. 222f., 240.

105 The Mediator, pp. 399-535.

106 Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 104-107.

107 Ibid., p. 110.

108 Ibid., pp. 110-113. This is one of the points that troubles the rationalistic orthodoxy of Cornelius Van Til, The New Modernism (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company), pp. 254ff.

to which the subjective faith corresponds.<sup>109</sup>

(3) Revelation in the witness of the revelation. There are three that bear witness to the historical revelation: The Scriptures, the Church, and the Spirit. The living personal God can be known only through a personal meeting, but the Scriptures bear witness to this event.<sup>110</sup> This is not to build on the dogma of verbal inspiration, for Brunner can see nothing in such a belief but an offense against the second commandment: idolatry of creatures, bibliolatry (Kreaturvergötterung, Bibliolatrie).<sup>111</sup>

Orthodoxy had placed the Bible itself, as a book, in the place which should have been reserved for the fact of revelation. It confused the fact of revelation with the witness to the fact. It was necessary that both should be connected, but orthodoxy made them identical.<sup>112</sup>

The authority of the Bible is derivative. Its claim on us becomes clear when it is properly related to the original encounter. This involves three steps. First, the personal encounter between the God who reveals himself and the man of faith -- the revealed Word of God. The second is the proclamation of the prophet and the apostle who turn toward others with their testimony -- the proclaimed Word of God. And the third is the canon of Scripture which contains the testimony of the

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109 Ibid., pp. 113-117.

110 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 110; The Word and the World, pp. 83ff.

111 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 119. Cf. The Mediator, pp. 104f.; The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 111-116, 171f.

112 The Mediator, p. 34.

original witnesses -- the written Word of God.<sup>113</sup> The authority of the Bible is not in itself, but in Jesus Christ to whom it bears witness.

We trust the Bible not because somebody says that it is God's Word, but because we hear God Himself say so. In the Bible we hear a language which we hear nowhere else. Here the secret of God's will is disclosed, whilst apart from the Bible it remains closed.<sup>114</sup>

This written form is for us the medium through which God's Word comes to us.

The witness of the Church. Only a few people come to Christ through the witness of the Scriptures. Many more come through the witness of the Church. Because of the connection between revelation and proclamation, the Church as witness becomes a form of revelation. First, the fact of revelation is "not only the real principle, the ratio essendi of faith and the Church, but also the principle of knowledge, the ratio cognoscendi."<sup>115</sup> The Church is founded upon the historical fact of revelation as promise and as fulfillment.<sup>116</sup> Second, faith in the Christian revelation is the same as entrance into the body of Christ.<sup>117</sup> In the

113 Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 119-134. Cf. Karl Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1944), I.i, pp. 89-124.

114 The Word and the World, p. 93. Cf. The Mediator, pp. 432ff.; The Theology of Crisis, pp. 18-20, 41; God and Man, p. 17; The Church and the Oxford Group, trans. David Cairns (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), pp. 83-88; Our Faith, pp. 10, 85f.; The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 45f.

115 God and Man, p. 113.

116 Ibid., p. 109. Cf. Emil Brunner and Max Werner, Was heisst: Erbaut auf dem Grund der Apostel und Propheten? (Schleithem, 1925).

117 Ibid., p. 110.



uniqueness of the historical revelation God compels "all men who wish to share in this gift to betake themselves to this one place, and there to meet each other."<sup>118</sup> Faith and fellowship are given at the same time; indeed, when rightly understood, they are the same.<sup>119</sup> This excludes the Christian cult of the Superman (christlichen Edelmenschentums) manifested in the individualism of the enthusiasts (Schwärmergeisterei) to the left and the compromise of faith and power characteristic of the mechanistic clericalism of Romanism to the right. The subjectivism of the former and the objectivism of the latter stand alike in contradiction to Brunner's basic doctrine of personal encounter.<sup>120</sup> The Church is a witness to Jesus Christ in a proclamation from person to person.<sup>121</sup> And, in the third place, this is the point at which the Church becomes the ecclesiastical witness, and as such, a form of revelation. Under the influence of Greek intellectualism personal proclamation has been transformed into impartation of doctrine: "Wahrheit als Begegnung" has become "Wahrheit als Idee."<sup>122</sup> It is tragic when the church becomes more interested in doctrine than in the ethical conduct of its members; but, on

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117 Ibid., p. 110.

118 Ibid., p. 126.

119 Ibid., p. 110.

120 The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 15-41; Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 142-145.

121 God and Man, p. 110; Ich glaube an den lebendigen Gott (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1945), p. 124; Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 145f.

122 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 147.

the other hand, a contempt for doctrine is a mystical misunderstanding. There is a place for doctrine in Church proclamation, viz., to express faith and to direct others to Jesus Christ. The Church fulfills its mission only when it unites λόγος and ἐκφορά. <sup>123</sup>

So where the Word of God is proclaimed there is the Church. <sup>124</sup>

"This divine commission," Brunner explains, "this task (Aufgabe), which is given at the same time as the gift (Gabe), this task of giving to others the Word one has received, this office of the preacher, is the root and kernel of the Christian Church."<sup>125</sup> The proclamation which fulfills this divine commission is given in the forms of both sermon and sacrament, i.e., God addresses us through both the ear and the eye, the word and the act, the abstract and the concrete.<sup>126</sup> In the verbum visibile of baptism and the Lord's Supper God speaks in meaningful acts, but the sacramental act has no power in itself.<sup>127</sup> "Baptism," Brunner says, "is not only an act of grace, but just as much an act of confession stemming from the act of grace."<sup>128</sup> And, again, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is no opus operatum. It only represents or brings to

123 Ibid., p. 161; Cf. God and Man, pp. 134f.

124 The Church and the Oxford Group (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), p. 89; God and Man, pp. 121f.

125 God and Man, p. 124.

126 Our Faith, p. 128.

127 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 111; Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 158.

128 The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 178f.

memory the event that once took place.<sup>129</sup>

The witness of the Spirit. But both the witness of the Scriptures and the witness of the Church, powerful as they have been in Christian history, lead to a false heteronomy unless attended by the witness of the Holy Spirit. In the attempt to escape from the autonomous pride of self-sufficient man Protestantism has found refuge in an authoritarianism based on the dogma of verbal inspiration, while Catholicism has expressed the same spirit in the dogma of papal infallibility. This unhappy state of affairs arises from the fatal absence of the belief and the experience of the witness of the Holy Spirit -- testimonium spiritus sancti.<sup>130</sup> Brunner believes neither the testimony of the Scriptures nor the tradition of the Church because he is told that the revelation is true on trustworthy authority, but because he understands through the Spirit that God's word is a word of truth.<sup>131</sup> To believe on any other ground is to turn from freedom and joy to the bondage of authoritarianism.<sup>132</sup> The latter leads to another type of pride that is no better than the autonomy of individualism. The evidence of the Spirit comes only after autonomous man is extinguished and crucified in surrender

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129 Ibid., pp. 178-183. Cf. Die Bedeutung des Abendmahls (Bern: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1933).

130 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 151; The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 23-28; Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 162-165.

131 Our Faith, p. 86.

132 Ich glaube an den lebendigen Gott, pp. 115ff.

to Jesus Christ. Only then does revelation become real and vital.<sup>133</sup> The nature of this revelation of Jesus Christ through the Spirit is similar to an illumination that brings Christ to be in me, not outside me, so that belief and inward experience of the Holy Spirit are one and the same. Only those who have the Spirit can be called the children of God.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, the Christian life is a walk in the Spirit in which man receives all his "concrete commands" from God who gives his guidance as he gives his grace.<sup>135</sup> This alone is the life of past faith, present love, and future hope grounded in God's revelation.<sup>136</sup> Thus is the union of spiritual immediacy and historical mediacy in the paradoxical knowledge of Biblical faith, so that Biblical faith is to be distinguished from orthodox Biblicism by this unity of Scripture and Spirit. The letter of Scripture is not the object of faith but the instrument of the Spirit in the divine revelation.<sup>137</sup> In binding man to the Church and to the Scriptures through the witness of the Spirit the true testimony to the divine revelation is effectual and complete.<sup>138</sup>

(4) Revelation as consummation: revelation in glory. Christian

133 The Word and the World, p. 65; Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 169f.

134 Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 165-168.

135 The Church and the Oxford Group, pp. 79-82.

136 Vom Werk des heiligen Geistes (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1935). The entire work is a profound exposition of this point of view.

137 Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 150ff.

138 Ibid., pp. 152ff.

faith lives not only by the received revelation but also by the expectation of a future final revelation which will bring a complete unveiling of the truth of God and full realization of the truth of man.<sup>139</sup> Although the revelation of Christ is more perfect than that of the Old Testament, it is still a revelation of God "in the form of a servant" in which God is veiled rather than unveiled. It has to be so to leave room for man's free decision, but the "incognito" is not the final thing. If one objects that the Church believes not only in the crucified but also in the risen Christ, he is to be reminded that the resurrection was only a transition into glory, not the vision of glory itself. Only through faith do we know Christ as the glorified Lord.<sup>140</sup> The imperfection of the revelation given us thus far consists in the fact that it is given in faith, not in true and direct vision. And faith, although sure of itself, still has to struggle against uncertainty; therefore it is only an intermediate state.<sup>141</sup> The salvation has been accomplished, yet we still live in an unsaved world and in unsaved bodies. We hold fast the truth of Christ against the contradiction of world experience, for faith believes the certainty in a coming goal which will no longer be believed, but will be seen.<sup>142</sup> The belief in the coming kingdom of God is not added, but it is included in the belief in Jesus Christ. This future is certain,

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139 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 181.

140 Ibid., pp. 181ff.

141 Ibid., pp. 183f.

142 Ibid., pp. 184f.

but its nature is not distinctly known. All we know is that the future of the Lord is a revelation "in power and glory" and a "beholding him face to face." To behold someone is the total comprehension without abstraction. It is not merely perception through the senses, but it is the presence of the spiritual without the abstraction of thinking and the "perceptibility" of the spiritual without the sensory limitation of the natural. This face to face seeing comprises the objective element, i.e., God's majesty and glory, and the subjective element, i.e., man's elevation to perfect divine humanity, in the unity of personal encounter. This face to face vision is not a mystical pouring into one another but in a way in which all strangeness and distance disappears; it is pure exchange, fullness of giving and taking.<sup>143</sup> "We shall know as we are known." This expression stands in need of completion and limitation. In this knowledge God becomes the only active part so that, as all cognition and abstraction of thought cease when we are placed within God, he alone moves our inner selves to knowledge. In this creative movement that comes from God the contrast between object and subject is neutralized, but not the fact of personal encounter; so this is not a mystical identity in which man is no longer a self, but it is a full realization of the revelation of a personal God to man as personal.<sup>144</sup>

The revelation is then the same as the complete transfiguration, the knowing is then — then first — identical with the being, the truth with the actuality. The revelation is the same as the com-

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143 Ibid., pp. 185ff.

144 Ibid., pp. 187ff.

plete redemption and consummation; the solution of the problem of being is the solution of the problem of knowledge, and both are one with the solution of the problem of community -- the being in the eternal kingdom of God, where truth and love are the same.<sup>145</sup>

The unity of revelation. Revelation is history, because the beginning, the middle and the end are not the same. It is the nature of the myth that the beginning and the end are the same, that the movement in time is only a seeming one where the end returns into the beginning and therefore everything starts over again; eternal return. The Biblical teaching is distinguished from religious teachings in that it is the teaching of a history; therefore it is essentially not doctrine but report. This historical character of the revelation is not anything essential or accidental, and the history of salvation (Heilsgeschichte) is not a history of development. The history is the thing itself. God comes to us in history, and to believe in him means to be placed into his movement; therefore the Christian life is not a "condition," but a running toward the goal.<sup>146</sup> Not even the Reformers were able to emancipate Biblical faith entirely from the Greek intellectualism that sought unity in doctrine rather than in history. The unity of revelation is in the deeds of God. Where the unity is made a matter of doctrine the differences even in the Bible are a painful embarrassment; but where it is a question of the history of God, it is not only an embarrassment, but necessary. Otherwise, the history would not be history.<sup>147</sup>

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145 Ibid., p. 189.

146 Ibid., p. 190.

147 Ibid., pp. 189ff.

Between the Old Testament and the New Testament a unity and differentiation exist similar to that between the first and second coming of Christ. The revealer is the same, but not the knowledge of him or the form of his revelation. Therefore it is not interpretation but allegory to read into the Old Testament the same thing as one reads in the New Testament; on the other hand, the interpretation is incorrect if one does not find the same God in the Old Testament as in the New. The center of the Bible and the history of salvation is the incarnation of the Word, Jesus Christ, who is the unity of all revelation. This coordination of the different forms of revelation is without analogy.<sup>148</sup>

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148 Ibid., pp. 193ff.



## CHAPTER V

### REVELATION AND RELIGION

Revelation may have either a legitimate or an illegitimate claim upon the mind of man, and this distinction Brunner is very careful to make. Christians should believe the truth, and this means that all questions which originate from human investigation and human experience must be answered. He refuses to toy with the temptation of a twofold truth; therefore the question of doubt has a worthy place in Christian thought. The question to be dealt with is this: Is it worthy of a reasonable human being to believe in any claim of revelation? This is answered by a consideration of the relation between revelation and the three general forms of reason: religion, science, and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Reason for Brunner includes "every faculty belonging to man as humanus."<sup>2</sup> What every man is capable of knowing Brunner calls "truths of reason," because this is what modern man means when he uses the term. It is, properly speaking, the manner in which the term has always been used.

The word "reason" is used here in its older and wider sense as meaning all truth which man, just because and in so far as he is man, ipso facto knows or could know. Truth of reason in this sense includes not only what we now call rational, logical, mathematical, or

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1 Offenbarung und Vernunft (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1941), pp. 201-214.

2 The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 44.

scientific knowledge, but intuitive, irrational, emotional and even (if there be such) occult insight as well.<sup>3</sup>

The three concluding chapters of this dissertation, then, attempt to give a systematic statement of how Brunner relates revelation to religion, science, and philosophy, respectively.

Religion is examined first, because it "is the human element which stands in the nearest relation with revelation."<sup>4</sup> Three burning questions have been answered in Brunner's writing, viz., revelation and religious experience, revelation and the history of religions, and revelation and the naturalistic theory of religion.

#### I. REVELATION AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Familiar experience distinguishes between the objective fact and the subjective knowing of that fact, and this distinction is maintained in religious experience. It is this presupposition that Brunner challenges as "foreign, even contrary to the Bible."<sup>5</sup> From the standpoint of Christian revelation he calls the whole system into question and reminds Protestantism that the "God-given power of the Reformation lies in the fact that through it the church was enabled to escape from this fatal anti-

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3 The Word and the World (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1931), pp. 12f. Cf. The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934), pp. 105f.; The Divine Imperative, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1937), p. 619.

4 The Philosophy of Religion, trans. A. J. D. Farrer and Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 127.

5 The Divine-Human Encounter, trans. Amandus W. Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 19.

thesis, Objectivism - Subjectivism, and to find the secret of moving both between and beyond these extremes."<sup>6</sup> Real excitement stirs in Christian theology as he takes up the battle cry: beyond subjectivism and objectivism -- Biblical faith!

Throughout the entire history of the Church we see two tendencies, Objectivism and Subjectivism, competing with one another. Behind these two terms, which neither the Bible nor the simple believer recognizes, lie facts of highest importance: errors in faith and in the Church's transactions, corruption of Christian piety and sinful mistakes, which more than once have brought the Christian Church to the very brink of misrepresentation and dissolution.<sup>7</sup>

Revelation is, therefore, to be related to both the subjective and the objective in religious experience.

1. Subjective religion. There are two radical forms of subjectivism: scepticism which becomes a philosophy of the senses and mysticism which is a romantic individualism.<sup>8</sup>

(1) Scepticism. Scepticism follows the ancient maxim of Protagoras the Sophist: "Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not."<sup>9</sup> Gorgias, Pyrrho, Carneades, and Sextus Empiricus in antiquity, Montaigne and La Rochefoucauld in the Renaissance, and now "as a general outlook on life" Krutch, Lippmann, and Aldous Huxley, among the many "modern men,"

6 Ibid., p. 29.

7 Ibid., pp. 21f.

8 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 99.

9 Diogenes Laertius, trans. R. D. Hicks (London: William Heinemann, 1931), Vol. II, p. 463.

present a problem that Brunner attempts to answer.<sup>10</sup> First, the principle of epistemological relativism is easily refuted as a universal principle, since it is self-destructive.<sup>11</sup> This is its logical weakness, but the fact that scepticism constantly survives demands a more searching criticism than this which has been given thousands of times. And this is to be found in the second factor, viz., the inconsistency of theoretical scepticism. Brunner believes that the sceptical position can not be attacked directly because of its elasticity, so he changes his tactics from direct attack to that of "wait and watch."<sup>12</sup> A man may talk like a sceptic, but he will not act like one. Indeed, he cannot act and be a sceptic, for the moment he acts he makes decisions according to some principle of value which he regards as true, even when he decides to "drift."

We may indeed imagine theoretically a purely detached consciousness in which man is a mere spectator, in which we regard our own conduct simply as a natural fact; practically this could only occur as a highly pathological and exceptional case. To be a man, a person, means the impossibility of evading this necessity for practical decision.<sup>13</sup>

The only consistent way of thorough-going scepticism is complete self-suspense (ἑποχή), and "this would bring life to a complete standstill, and so would be impossible."<sup>14</sup> It is at this point, in the third

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10 The Divine Imperative, pp. 569f.

11 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 99. Cf. The Mediator, p. 21.

12 The Divine Imperative, p. 17.

13 Ibid., p. 18.

14 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 100. Cf. The Divine Imperative, p. 17; Man in Revolt, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), pp. 30ff.

place, that the relevance of revelation to the sceptical situation is seen. Doubt is carried about as a form of sin, rather the root of sin, but this doubt is not to be suppressed but overcome. It will be overcome when its true nature is disclosed in understanding it as a form of the arrogance of human reason.<sup>15</sup> It is unbelief and can be overcome only as revelation is posited.

Scepticism could only be overcome, without loss of its element of truth, if there were presupposed an absolute communication of truth which excluded man as agent. It would be a truth that retained the sentence that "all men are liars" -- i.e., that no human assertion as such merits the predicate of "true" -- without thereby involving itself in self-contradiction. Such an elimination of man, however, could not be accomplished by starting from human consciousness, but only in the form of a communication of truth of divine revelation, whereby God should posit Himself as the sole truth.<sup>16</sup>

Revelation alone can deliver us from the self-dissolution of the subjectivism of religious experience found in its ultimate extreme in the Chicago School in America. Brunner thinks that Continental theology (!) never went to such an extreme but that "Troeltsch was a warning sign that Protestantism was not very far distant from a skeptical self-dissolution."<sup>17</sup>

(2) Mysticism. The problem of mysticism is deeply rooted in Christian tradition, reaching back into the Middle Ages. During the Reformation, Andreas Osiander (1498-1552), approaching the views of mysticism, taught that justification through faith is a process of becoming righteous by the divine nature of Christ indwelling the believer. Where Luther

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15 Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 203.

16 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 101.

17 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 36.

emphasized Christ for us Osiander emphasized Christ in us.<sup>18</sup> When Lutheranism hardened into the hypertrophy of orthodoxy, which emphasized fides quae creditur, Pietism protested against this objectivism with a subjectivist emphasis on fides qua creditur, which taught the union of the soul with the divine principle apart from mediation.<sup>19</sup> Through the Protestant gnosis of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782) this subjectivism continued in the Romanticism of Schelling (1775-1854), especially in his Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation, which emancipated revelation from the objectivism of orthodoxy and rationalism.<sup>20</sup> It remained, however, for Schleiermacher (1768-1834), in his modern theology, to take these tributaries of tendencies into a great system of subjectivism. Religion, he said, has nothing to do with intellectualism and moralism; religion is feeling, a point where neither knowledge nor will but undefined feeling unites man to the universe.<sup>21</sup> The spirit of Schleiermacher is preserved in several of Brunner's contemporaries, especially Troeltsch, Otto, Scholz, Görland and Tillich, though their speculative and epistemological explanations of mystical

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18 Reinhold Seeberg, Text-Book of the History of Doctrines, trans. Charles E. Hay (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1905), Vol. II, pp. 369-374.

19 The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 41ff.; The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 32ff.

20 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 42; Offenbarung und Vernunft, pp. 12, 44.

21 Die Mystik und das Wort (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1928), pp. 35-77; The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 43f.; The Mediator, pp. 48ff.; The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 34f.

experience are by no means the same.<sup>22</sup> To this mystical tradition Brunner relates his doctrine of revelation. He finds one cardinal principle in all these thinkers, viz., the principle of identity. Underlying every proposition and the whole mental life of man, above the antithesis between realism and idealism, is God, the idea of ideas; but this is also the point of feeling where the Ego and the All are identical.<sup>23</sup> The inconsistency of this philosophy of identity, Brunner thinks, is exposed as soon as it makes of this religious experience a "definite experience, occupying time," and only in this way is mysticism a way of life. The only logical mysticism "would be a complete submergence in the All, without the slightest interest in the dichotomized life of seeming reality, or in culture or society."<sup>24</sup> Participation in man's historical life and the struggle for truth betrays a profound disbelief in this principle of identity and the philosophy of mysticism. The element of truth in mysticism can be retained only when it is superseded by union with the Absolute "in virtue of a datum which itself belonged to the historical life, i.e., an absence of mediation on the basis of the most perfect mediation."<sup>25</sup> But this must be more than a mere idea of revelation, for this can be attained only by a historical reality.

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22 The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 42, 44.

23 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 100; God and Man, trans. David Cairns (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 43; The Divine Imperative, pp. 25f.

24 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 100.

25 Ibid., p. 101. Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 221.

Only real, historical revelation, a revelation in which that judgment and this union actually take place, and which can only be conceived because it has taken place, could provide the emancipation. In Christian faith the denial of any human power acquires a decisiveness which is not merely critical nor, again, merely sceptical, because it is not merely theoretic but existential, viz., despair.<sup>26</sup>

But the modern systems of subjectivism escape this despair and the logical conclusion of its most radical forms by stopping in the halfway house of modified mysticism. Schleiermacher found the "essence of religion" in this "religious experience" of the subject with the All; but, to avoid the shattering of the rational fabric of science and culture, he made it a "province" of the irrational side within the greater sphere of reason. It is this "essence of religion" that Brunner questions, holding that the common element of religions is found, not in an essence, but in the fact that all attach essential importance to concrete features.<sup>27</sup> And this leads to an examination of the objective factor in religious experience.

2. Objective Religion. The declaration that philosophy of religion, in holding to an "essence of religion," is founded on an understanding that "contradicts every actual religion"<sup>28</sup> is to be interpreted in the light of Brunner's distinction between the subjective and objective or

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26 Religionsphilosophie evangelischer Theologie (München und Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1927), p. 50. Cf. The Mediator, pp. 21-41.

27 The Mediator, p. 23.

28 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 103.



philosophical and popular religions. In an important note he clarified his distinction.

By living popular religions I mean those which may also be called historical religions, that is, all religions which are not essentially individualistic -- like genuine mysticism and "spiritual religion" of a philosophical character -- but which are essentially social. In them the one thing that matters is the cultus and the "myth"; the individual can only be religious at all in so far as he shares in the worship and life of the community; on the other hand, mysticism and philosophically speculative religion -- the "religion of the educated man" -- equally definitely flees from social life and seeks solitude.<sup>29</sup>

It is this concrete historical fact that is the primary datum of all social religions, Brunner insists, and such a thing as the "essence of religion" exists neither in fact nor in the mind of those who constitute the cultus. Brunner attempts to justify this conclusion by contrasting the philosophy of religion that considers this concreteness as accidental with the objective belief of historical religions that regards it as essential.

Objectivity as accidental. The religious philosophies of Schleiermacher and Hegel frankly state that the objective factor is "the occasion that serves to liberate religion."<sup>30</sup> Even Otto and Scholz are unable to escape from this fateful depreciation of the concrete feature in religion. Against this interpretation of religion Brunner brings two caustic criticisms. First, these subjective systems think of the divine as impersonal. They conceive of a "neuter divine sphere," "a universal divine sphere of

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<sup>29</sup> The Mediator, pp. 21f.; Cf. Eros und Liebe, in Neue Schweizer Rundschau, September, 1933, pp. 271f.

<sup>30</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, p. 104.

a neutral character," an "It" to which man transports himself or draws unto himself.<sup>31</sup> The ultimate goal of this religion is the fusion (Ver-schmelzung) of God and man.<sup>32</sup> Second, as a continuation of this line of thought, the failure to fix a boundary between man and God, removes the need for mediation. This clarifies why God cannot be thought of as a person.

For personality implies a limit to my existence and a limitation of the range of my power. What is sought in this case, on the contrary, is the annihilation of personal limits, viz., a state which cannot be mediated.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from personality and mediation Brunner is unable to imagine a statement of the Christian revelation.

Objectivity as essential. Opposed to this "subjective religion" is "objective religion," which sees nothing but atheism in the religion of the mystic. Concreteness is the essential feature of this religion. In contrast to the impersonalism of subjectivism, the gods are thought of as "non-human divine personalities that are self-existent, and have more or less individual characteristics."<sup>34</sup> God is Another, and personality is inseparable from divinity. God and man stand over against each other as two spheres of will and power related by either rebellion or reverence. And, again, in contrast to subjective religion, mediation is expressed in a most significant way by the function of the cultus. Both

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31 Ibid., p. 107.

32 Eros und Liebe, pp. 257-273.

33 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 107.

34 Ibid., p. 105.

personality and mediation are recognized in the two most important elements of the cultus: "(a) prayer that invokes the name of God, i.e., acknowledges His personal existence and power, and (b) sacrifice that attracts or restores His favour (expiation)."<sup>35</sup>

Now, how does the Christian revelation account for this violent opposition between the two types of religion? This question is answered by a consideration of both types as deformations, on the one hand, and of the dialectical resolution on the other. As to the deformation, the opposition may be understood "as a lapse from truth" in which both subjective and objective religion become "partial truths."<sup>36</sup> Subjective religion is deformed in its failure to see the boundary between the Creator and the creature, and objective religion is deformed in "setting up a false reciprocal relationship" that opens the way to ritualistic and moralistic systems of merit which direct action toward some end dependent on God rather than to God Himself. The dialectical resolution in Christian revelation and Christian faith is accomplished by saving the truth of subjectivism in the inwardness wrought by the Holy Spirit and by emphasizing Christ as the fulfillment of the objective religion of cult.<sup>37</sup> Only as we start from a point of view beyond both subjective and objective religion are we able to bring these two disparate phenomena together; only as a divine act of revelation and reconciliation closes

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35 Ibid., p. 106.

36 Ibid., p. 110.

37 Ibid., pp. 110ff.

the cleavage is true integration possible.

For this reason it is the urgent imperative of the hour to search, by means of reflection about the Word of God itself, for this "beyond" of Objectivism and Subjectivism which is the secret of the Christian faith.<sup>38</sup>

Biblical faith is beyond both, because it is personal.

## II. REVELATION AND THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

Romanticism turned religion away from the historical to the metaphysical. Fichte had said: "It is the metaphysical element alone, and not the historical, which saves us."<sup>39</sup> Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Ritschl retained this absolute anchor by making the historical nothing more than an illustration of an a priori idea. It was not until the "religious-historical" school of Ernst Troeltsch that religion returned to the historical, and this time to find itself engulfed in an endless flux of relativity. All absolute claims were called into question.<sup>40</sup> It is this situation that Brunner faces with his doctrine of revelation. His answer involves an examination of (1) the nature of history and then (2) history of religion.

1. The nature of history. Historical relativism does not arise from history as such, but from a particular conception of history. It

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38 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 40.

39 Quoted by Brunner in The Mediator, pp. 24, 29, 36, et passim.

40 H. R. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), pp. 181-217.

may be said to be the offspring of a romantic father and a naturalistic mother, inheriting individualism from the former and evolution from the latter. Brunner interprets the outcome thus:

Both individualism and evolutionism lead to the same issue, viz., the relativistic type of scepticism. If everything is in a state of flux and if nothing transcends individual existence, how are we ever to reach any absolute affirmations of universal validity?<sup>41</sup>

Now, how is this question to be answered? Of course, it is always possible to call attention to inward contradiction of this scepticism, but Brunner, to approach the problem in a more specific way, raises the question of the nature of history. The problem of history cannot be seen at all except at a point beyond history, and when the nature of history is sought two inquiries must be answered. The first is the "why" of explanation, i.e., the inquiry into the cause; but what is explained causally is not understood. The second question that must be answered is the "why" of understanding, i.e., the inquiry into the meaning. To illustrate, if we try to explain Plato as a complex of causes, e.g., race, nation, period, etc., the result is a complex of causes, not Plato. Romanticism suggests individuality as the clue to the understanding of Plato, but this is a conception of nature. Individuality is only a quantitative distinction, not qualitative. Plato can not be understood until he is seen as more than an individual, viz., a personality in decision.

Personal decision is not, like individuality, a mysterious combination of elements of being, but is fundamentally different from everything that we can conceive of as a universal: it is the Creator's call and man's decisive response. Individuality is made

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<sup>41</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, p. 116.

by the Creator; it is an object. Personality is addressed as "Thou" by the Creator. Man is called into existence. And it follows that his life in its specifically human and truly historical quality is lived by way of a definite answer to this call.<sup>42</sup>

History is understood only from a point beyond history, i.e., primordial history (Urgeschichte). This point beyond history and "above" man is the Word of God, and from this point alone can human history be understood, i.e., its meaning grasped.<sup>43</sup> This historical situation of humanity Brunner describes as "the masquerade of history," because the hidden meaning of human history remains in mystery until it is disclosed in the historical revelation in Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup> Until then the historian can see only the smoke and lava, not the crater in eruption, only the tree crashing to pieces, not the lightning stroke itself. To summarize:

The Christian believer sees history as an intermediate realm, a mixture of indefinable character. It is lit up, however, as by lightning by the history which is both primordial and ultimate and which blazes up at its central point. There, i.e., in Christ, the meaning and the absurdity of history, its created unity and its ruin by sin, its attraction to God and its distance from God, its beginning and its end, are visible outside of history.<sup>45</sup>

That is why Brunner conceives of God's relation to history and humanity as that of Creator at the beginning, Redeemer at the end, and as Reconciler in the historical revelation in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 42. Cf. Die Mystik und das Wort, pp. 94f.; Man in Revolt, pp. 63-66.

<sup>43</sup> Man in Revolt, p. 68.

<sup>44</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, p. 126.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

2. History of religion. Just as general history is to be understood at a point beyond history, so also the history of religion, being the "inner shrine of history" and the "soul of all culture" is to be understood from a point which transcends all religious relativity. It is this point that Brunner tries to reach in the Christian revelation. He believes that "the Christian revelation stands related to all religions, not as an individual to other individuals of the same species, but as another genus."<sup>46</sup> The Christian revelation stands outside the sphere of reason and history, and thus beyond all religions. The relativist theory of gradation that attempts to furnish examples of approximations to Jesus Christ is only partly true.<sup>47</sup> Christ is the fulfillment of every religion together with its history. The "law of parallels," therefore, in the history of religion, is as groundless as the "essence of religion" in religious experience. This is seen by comparing the Christian revelation with both primitive and higher forms of religion.

First, primitive religion that has maintained the unity of life is very near to the Christian revelation which says that the cleavage of life ought not be. For this reason Brunner believes that "what is primitive serves perhaps as the best parable of what is 'primordial.'"<sup>48</sup> But the primitive religion diverges soon into two main types: the rational

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 129. Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 267.

<sup>47</sup> E.g., Nathan Söderblom, The Living God (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

<sup>48</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, p. 132. Cf. Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 266.

and irrational. In the rationalization of religion the gods pass from the primitive impersonality of awfulness to the personal forms of the gods of the sky. The less they are attached to nature the less is the "numinous reality." The same is true of the gods of the cultus. As they are rationalized they become protectors of the civil order, so that the will of God becomes identical with the laws of nature and morality. The feeling of divine "otherness" so strong in primitive religion is lost in the spiritualization of the gods. The second branch of primitive religion is irrationalism. It goes in the opposite direction, and abandons the world as far as possible. This mysticism is a "dying to the world" that makes civilization and culture impossible except as the various forms of nature and intellectual mysticism make a compromise with the world. The logical extreme of either branch is the dissolution of the other.

In rationalism is the tendency to law and historical organization, and mysticism the tendency to the infinite and unlimited; in rationalism, the secularization of religion, in mysticism, the whole of life swallowed up by religion; in rationalism, religion attached to the culture and state, in mysticism, the hermit life of the saint and the cloister.<sup>49</sup>

This is not to say that there is no trace of revelation in primitive religions, for in the "essential element" there is what Calvin called a sensus numinis that is derived from the revelation in the creation, but has been distorted by the "confused and sinful human mind." But this multiplicity of divine powers does not become aware of anything

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 137.



possessing universal validity, nor can they be combined with the strict conception of truth in the Christian revelation. "These religions," Brunner believes, "contain no traces of a truth or a bond which is holy and binding for all men, at all times, of an eternal divine Being, and of an eternal will of God."<sup>50</sup>

In the higher forms of religion in history, the claim to revelation along with that of Christianity has become acute, especially since important members of the Christian Church, particularly Nathan Söderblom and Rudolf Otto, have seriously and honestly sought to demonstrate a "law of parallels." Long before the publication of Kraemer's The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World,<sup>51</sup> Brunner, who ranks this classic work "above all"<sup>52</sup> other contributions to the problem, had expounded a similar position in The Philosophy of Religion (1927), and, interesting enough, in a little writing called The Christian Message in the Battle with the Religions.<sup>53</sup> At no time has Brunner made any attempt to treat the subject so extensively as has Kraemer, but he has given critical evaluations at five points that are extremely important, viz., (1) The bhakti religion in Hinduism, (2) the Amita Buddha of Eastern Buddhism,

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<sup>50</sup> Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 222f.

<sup>51</sup> Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938).

<sup>52</sup> Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 215.

<sup>53</sup> Die Christusbotschaft im Kamp mit den Religionen (Basel: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1931). What influence, if any, this had on Kraemer would be interesting.

(3) the religion of Zoroaster, (4) Islam, and (5) Judaism.

(1) The bhakti religion in Hinduism. The popular bhakti salvation is found in the Bhagavadgita (200 B. C.?), the greatest written document of the Hindu religion, and expounded by Ramanuja (c. 1100 A. D.), the prophet of the bhakti religion. According to Söderblom, this religion breaks with the self-glorification of asceticism with its self-salvation in two ways.<sup>54</sup> First, there is "a new path of salvation which does not consist in works, offering, or the exploits of asceticism, nor in knowledge and insight, but in faith, devotion, love towards a living personal deity or saviour, an Ishvara." In asceticism man is lord, here the god is lord. In the second place, religion has lost its professional character. "Gita proclaims a divine fellowship and a salvation compatible with every honest profession." Brunner agrees: "here God is the Lord, the Creator, the Holy, and the Merciful; thus this religion really seems to have the characteristics of a religion of revelation."<sup>55</sup> This is especially true when "Christian faith has been transformed into mysticism,"<sup>56</sup> but not as Brunner understands the Christian revelation. This religion is based on a foundation so different from the Christian revelation as to exclude the idea of "revelation in the strict sense of the word entirely."<sup>57</sup> Among

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<sup>54</sup> Nathan Söderblom, op. cit., pp. 104f. Cf. Rodolf Otto, India's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted, tr. Frank Hugh Foster (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930); The Original Gita, tr. J. E. Turner (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939).

<sup>55</sup> Revelation and Reason, p. 226.

<sup>56</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, p. 141.

<sup>57</sup> Revelation and Reason, p. 226.

the many differences, five are crucial.

First, this is no true monotheism. While this religion is theistic in form, it "constantly overturns into a system of thought in regard to which we should find difficulty in saying whether we ought to call it theopanism, nature-pantheism, or polytheism."<sup>58</sup> So indefinite is this monotheism that there is no attack on polytheism. Second, there is no paradoxical unity in God. God's love, grace, nearness, and the kinship of the soul to God are there, but the paradoxical unity of these with judgment, wrath, unapproachableness, "zeal" and "honour," his absolute "otherness," reconciliation and revelation, and the final goal of nature and history is not to be found.<sup>59</sup> The grace taught here is, therefore, not the forgiveness of sin. Not even the North School (Vada-galais) with its cat rule of irresistible grace, even as the mother cat carries her kitten away from danger, as against the South School (Ten-galais) with the monkey rule which teaches that the little monkey must hold on to the mother, is "the grace that comes to us in the self-acting intervention of God in the history of mankind, but a grace that is discovered upon the mystical 'way' of meditative recollection of man."<sup>60</sup> Consequently, in the third place, this religion is anthropocentric as against the theocentric Christian revelation. Since unity, not community, the "religious

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58 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 138.

59 Ibid., p. 139.

60 Revelation and Reason, p. 271. Cf. Kraemer, op. cit., pp. 168ff.

experience of the saint," not God is at the center, the religion stands in direct opposition to the revelation of grace in Jesus Christ.<sup>61</sup> In a historical allusion Brunner remarks: "We might say that India is in conflict with 'Pelagius' but not with 'Osiander'; with sinful worldliness, but not with a sinful holiness."<sup>62</sup> Fourthly, the bhakti religion teaches a plurality of incarnations, but the Christian revelation is unique. A confusion between the two is possible only when the concrete Christian revelation that is  $\xi\phi' \alpha\pi\alpha\epsilon$  is abandoned for the "timeless truth" of mysticism.<sup>63</sup> Finally, the mysticism of bhakti is "tolerant" by its very nature, but the Christian revelation, by its very nature is not able to adopt this "more tolerant" attitude such as Rethinking Missions, the Laymen's Report on the Jerusalem Conference, recommends.<sup>64</sup> Simply stated: "The God of mysticism has no jealousy, because He is not a will. There is no conflict in this case, because there is no goal."<sup>65</sup>

(2) The Amita Buddha in Eastern Buddhism. Compared with Brunner's interpretation of revelation, Buddha never claimed to have received revelation. His "illumination" is a mystical experience of supernatural character through which he came to understand that all existence involves

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61 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 139; Revelation and Reason, p. 271.

62 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 139.

63 Ibid., pp. 140f.

64 Revelation and Reason, p. 221.

65 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 140.

suffering, that suffering arises from indulging in insatiable desires, and that cessation of desires would bring an end to suffering.<sup>66</sup> But Buddha believed in no God, so it could not be understood as the self-communication of a personal God. Then the fact that Buddha was concerned with instruction in the "right path" renders this "supernatural intuition" an anthropocentric eudaemonism.

If by revelation is meant the disclosure of a divine will of the Lord who, through His self-disclosure, claims man for Himself, and works out His will in him, then Buddhism is the exact opposite of this; both in origin and in aim it is purely anthropocentric; it is the doctrine of the way of happiness.<sup>67</sup>

But the situation seems essentially different in Northern or Mahayana Buddhism. The religion of the Amita Buddha is so similar to the teaching of Luther that Jesuit missionaries found in Japan "the Lutheran heresy."<sup>68</sup> But Brunner sees more differences than the Jesuits saw. From the point of view of Brunner's doctrine of revelation, the Amita Buddha would have at least five serious weaknesses. First, Amita Buddha is mythical, not historical. It is a mythical figure who simply borrows the name of the historical Buddha, not God, the Creator and Lord, who reveals himself in a historical person. Second, it is humanistic, not theocentric. Amita Buddha is a religious hero, who, having achieved Nirvana, has pity on men. He resembles more the Christ of Arius than the

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66 Cf. Robert Ernest Hume, The World's Living Religions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 62.

67 Revelation and Reason, p. 225.

68 Nathan Söderblom, op. cit., p. 154. Cf. Hendrick Kraemer, op. cit., pp. 177-181.

pre-existent God who comes to deal with man on his own level. Third, it is godless. There is no revelation or vision of God face to face at all, but man is simply helped into the Nirvana of nothingness into which his finite personality is absorbed. Fourth, it is impersonal, not personal. There is no personal God, and man as a person is to be extinguished. Fifth, it is eudaemonistic. The ethical interest is that of happiness. This can hardly be what Brunner finds in his beloved Luther or what he means by the Christian revelation.<sup>69</sup>

(3) The Gathas of Zoroaster. The religion of Gathas of Zoroaster makes a more serious claim to parallels of the Christian revelation. Here one God of personal reverence is proclaimed against polytheism. A prophetic historical purpose that is worked out with reference to a people who look for a personal Redeemer, Saoshyant, who in the last day will give victory to them, reveals a sovereign God. His people are related to him through faith, obedience, and personal prayer.<sup>70</sup> "I venture the opinion," writes Brunner, "that there is no point in the whole history of religion where a comparison with Biblical faith thrusts itself on us so much as here."<sup>71</sup> But Brunner points out two chief differences between the religion of Zoroaster and the Christian revelation.

First, the religion of Zoroaster is legalistic.<sup>72</sup> This condition

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69 Revelation and Reason, pp. 225f.

70 Nathan Söderblom, op. cit., pp. 167-233.

71 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 142; Cf. Revelation and Reason, p. 227.

72 The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 141-144; Revelation and Reason, pp. 227f.

results from two factors in his conception of God. One is that God does not stand above his moral law, i.e., that law and religion are not distinguished, so that faith does not go beyond the moral law. With Brunner, making Kierkegaard's distinction between the ethical and the religious, an assumption that God became Lord because He chose the Good is unthinkable.<sup>73</sup> In such a system the good are friends of God and the evil are the enemies of God, but there is no realization that the opposition passes through the individual and that the truth of God presents a crisis to the morally good.<sup>74</sup> The other factor is that, since God stands under the moral law, not above it, there is no conception of forgiveness and mercy. Both God and man are bound to this moral law, and this contradicts the Christian revelation that teaches that God loves the ungodly. Therefore Brunner concludes:

No line can be drawn from such ideas to Jesus Christ the crucified. The idea of vicarious suffering would necessarily shatter the religion of rigid legality, and therefore unlike the prophetism of Israel it is not "a foretelling of Christ."<sup>75</sup>

The second point of difference is that of metaphysical dualism. The priority of the positive over the negative is accomplished only as God is involved in a primal decision in which he makes the law his own. The law stands at the center of the garden, not God Himself whose will is the good and opposition to which is evil.<sup>76</sup> In this line:

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73 The Divine Imperative, p. 53.

74 Man in Revolt, p. 443.

75 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 144.

76 Man in Revolt, p. 130. Cf. The Divine Imperative, p. 53.

He who knows the moral law knows the will of the good god, because the latter is himself not free, as the lord of the moral law, but is himself subject to it. The prophet has no wonderful, incomprehensible, free, redeeming will to communicate; all he does is to assert the sternness and the power of the moral law. Here too, therefore, the very nature of this religion excludes "revelation," in the proper sense of the word.<sup>77</sup>

(4) The religion of Islam. Islam too is moralistic, and also rationalistic; and it clashes with the Christian revelation at two points. First, it is a negation of the Christian revelation. Mohammed lived after Christ and knew some Christianity, but relegated Jesus Christ to the role of a prophet and only a prophet. Even then Jesus ranks below Mohammed. Contrasted with Brunner's emphasis on Jesus as "more than a prophet"<sup>78</sup> this is nothing less than "a rival of the Christian faith."<sup>79</sup> He says:

If we seriously regard Mohammed as a prophet, we must reject the Christian claim to be a divine revelation; but if we take the Christian claim seriously, there is no room for Mohammed. For he has usurped the place that belongs to Another.<sup>80</sup>

The second difference is the conception of revelation. The prophet Mohammed addresses the faithful as "the people of the book." Some forms of fundamentalism which Brunner denounced with such vigor come near to this conception of revelation, but for him this is far from the Christian understanding of truth. For the Christian, he believes, "the Bible is not a divine oracle of instruction; it is the testimony or witness to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ."<sup>81</sup> Revelation of God as a living per-

77 Revelation and Reason, p. 229.

78 The Word and the World, pp. 41-45.

79 Revelation and Reason, p. 230.

80 Ibid., p. 231.

81 The Word and the World, p. 83.



son stands far beyond the revelation that puts a book at the center.

"The nonrecognition of the personal self-communication of God," Brunner says, "corresponds to the nonrecognition of divine grace."<sup>82</sup>

(5) Judaism. Judaism, as distinguished from the revealed religion of the Old Testament, is much like Islam. It is also the religion of a book, but the most serious cleavage with the Christian revelation comes at two points. First, Judaism is also a negation. The Old Testament is not regarded as a promise of which Jesus Christ is the fulfillment, but the Messiah of Judaism is still to come.<sup>83</sup> So as a revelation of a sacred book that rejects the personal revelation in Jesus Christ, Islam and Judaism are agreed, though, of course, the two religions have many differences. Second, Judaism is also a legalism. Judaism, like the religion of the Parsees and Islam, is a legalistic monotheism with a strong tendency toward the rationalism of "the Enlightenment." Briefly put, Brunner claims:

In point of fact, therefore, we are not looking at three religions, confronting one another, but at one religion, a rather superficial form of Christianity confronting two variants of the religion of a rational-moralistic theism.<sup>84</sup>

All three fall within the bounds of reason and humanity, i.e., immanence, and to them all alike the Christian claim to a final and historical revelation that descends from the transcendent, from "the absolutely Holy and

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82 Revelation and Reason, p. 231.

83 Ibid., pp. 231f.

84 Ibid., p. 233.

absolutely Merciful and Loving"<sup>85</sup> is a stumbling-block.

### III. REVELATION AND THE NATURALISTIC THEORY OF RELIGION

Couched beneath the phrase "the naturalistic theory of religion," when Brunner related his interpretation of the historical Christian revelation to the antithetical systems of naturalism and idealism, is the strategic pattern of playing one half-truth against the other in order to show that a third view, which is believed to be the truth itself, is more relevant to the facts involved. But it must be said most emphatically that he does not mean that the Christian revelation is a "combination" of the other two, i.e., a synthesis. It is rather a bursting through from the beyond to reveal the element of truth in both naturalism and idealism as half-truth from which the whole, the truth itself, could never be derived.<sup>86</sup>

1. Revelation and naturalism. Naturalism confronts the Christian revelation with both a psychological and a sociological explanation of religion. The psychological explanation, though it still survives today, is older and more naive. Its technique is to establish a causal connection between the strength of the effect and the intensity of the phantasy reality. Wishful thinking and fear furnish foundations for an explanation of all religious phantasy. David Hume has given classic expression

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85 Ibid., p. 236.

86 Cf. God and Man, pp. 41ff.

to this view, when he says:

No passions, therefore, can be supposed to work upon such barbarians, but the ordinary affections of human life; the anxious concern for happiness, the dread of future misery, the terror of death, the thirst of revenge, the appetite for food and other necessaries. Agitated by hopes and fears of this nature, especially the latter, men scrutinize, with a trembling curiosity, the course of future causes, and examine the various and contrary events of human life. And in this disordered scene, with eyes still more disordered and astonished, they see the first obscure traces of divinity.<sup>87</sup>

Brunner's reply to this naturalistic, psychological explanation of religion is twofold. First, there is agreement to a large extent. This psychological theory, because of the light it has thrown on many religious phenomena, has its own right to exist. The Christian theologian should not take a negative attitude toward such valuable discoveries, especially since they are in essential agreement with the attitude of the Apostle Paul toward religions. Nor should this explanation be confined to religions other than Christianity. Much in the Christian religion is to be explained in this manner. In an extremely irenic passage, Brunner declares:

A whole mass of religious facts can, in actual fact, be explained as due to fear, desire, the longing for happiness, the "myth-forming imagination," and to projections of the unconscious. Indeed, we are particularly grateful for the illuminating light which modern psychoanalysis has thrown on certain religious phenomena.<sup>88</sup>

Second, there is disagreement with this theory, because it overlooks a basic fact in all religions. It has explained much, but the explanation

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87 David Hume, The Natural History of Religion, in The Philosophical Works of David Hume (Edinburgh: Adam Black and William Tait, 1826), Vol. IV, p. 444. Cf. Revelation and Reason, p. 239.

88 Revelation and Reason, pp. 258ff.

is incomplete. For, as Brunner goes on to say:

In all forms of religion, in addition to fear there is reverence; as well as the human desire for happiness there is also real longing for divine perfection; in addition to social usefulness there is also a genuine striving after communion with the deity, and a genuine submission to a higher, holy command; and behind all the rank fantasy growths of affective thought there is an element which cannot be derived from fantasy at all: the knowledge of something which is unconditioned, ultimate, normative, supramundane, supratemporal.<sup>89</sup>

This strange mixture of the "greatness" and the "misery" of man is possible only where an original revelation has been rejected through original sin.<sup>90</sup>

The sociological explanation is much more profound, especially as expounded by Ludwig Feuerbach in his The Essence of Christianity (1841), because it goes beyond the individual to the collective values and needs. God, according to this type of thought, is simply the symbol for humanity as a whole in distinction from the individual nature of man as he now is.<sup>91</sup> Brunner thinks, with Barth, that the only thinker, among those who attempt to give a sociological explanation of religion, who really understood what Christianity is was Feuerbach. To refute him is to refute all the others with ease. At two points Brunner tries his steel on Feuerbach. First, Feuerbach fails in the distinction he makes between the realm of mind and spirit and the realm of natural life. Where pure naturalism denies this distinction, he affirms it; but this is done

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89 Ibid., p. 259.

90 Man in Revolt, pp. 114-204, especially pp. 172-186.

91 Cf. Charles A. Bennett, The Dilemma of Religious Knowledge, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), pp. 27-48.

by smuggling idealistic concepts into a naturalistic system. The empirical individual, according to Feuerbach, is to be distinguished from the ideal, which he interprets as the "species." But Brunner, with his profound appreciation for idealism, fails to be taken in by this superficial and artificial attempt. The "species" turn out to be the "idea" under a new name. Otherwise, the sociological analysis would be absurd. For, as Brunner says:

Man's nature as a species is -- unfortunately -- very different from his ideal nature. The law of morality is something quite different from the expression of the experience of the whole over against the experience of the individual.<sup>92</sup>

The second failure of Feuerbach is the account of the origin of love. He understood that the essence of Christianity is love, and, in a surprising manner, he saw that it is realized only in community. But what is the origin of the love, this community? If he says the "nature" of man, experience mocks him. When he tries to account for it further, the argument degenerates into a "deplorable mixture of the Christian idea of agape, the idealistic concept of the idea and sense-desire."<sup>93</sup> It is an eclecticism of naturalism, idealism and Christianity, but a consistent statement of none. But, from the standpoint of the Christian revelation, Brunner can say:

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92 Revelation and Reason, pp. 246f. Cf. Man in Revolt, pp. 23f.

93 Ibid., p. 248.

It is not I who project my love toward an imaginary God; rather, the God of love meets me -- a man who does not know love either in my own nature or in that of my fellow man -- in Jesus Christ, and through this very love of His He wins my loveless nature, opens my heart, which is turned in upon itself, the cor incurvatum in se, to Him who is Love, and in so doing He also opens my heart to the brother who is at my side.<sup>94</sup>

2. Revelation and idealism. Idealism is much more congenial to Brunner's thinking; indeed, he thinks naturalism, just as materialism to which it is akin, is the philosophy of the half-educated! He thinks that no person can remain a naturalist and be satisfied with the "fear-hope-wish" theory who has seriously studied the impressive systems of idealism with the deeper inquiry into the nature of the human mind.<sup>95</sup> Idealism becomes an inclusive term that includes many systems that, having moved beyond crude sensationalism, attempts to discover the divine through reflection upon the self. The interpretation of Kant, who understood the moral law as a divine command, of Hegel, who knows the absolute Spirit in the finite spirit, of Schleiermacher, who resolves the contradiction of nature and spirit by the feeling of absolute dependence, all these are included. Even the phenomenological interpretations of William James are included.<sup>96</sup> It is certainly superior to naturalism, Karl Barth to the contrary.<sup>97</sup> Brunner's criticisms of idealism bring his own resolu-

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94 Ibid., p. 249.

95 Ibid., p. 252.

96 Ibid., pp. 251ff. Cf. The Mediator, pp. 42-71; The Divine Imperative, pp. 38ff., 152ff., 505ff.

97 Man in Revolt, p. 171.

tion of the problem of revelation and reason into sharp focus. They are two.

First, idealism is unhistorical. Christian revelation, on the other hand, is essentially an historical event. Historical revelation is beyond question the central thing in all the thought of Brunner on the problems of the Christian faith, and it is precisely here that he departs from men as near his own point of view as Paul Tillich. Tillich would be unmoved if the historical existence of Jesus should become improbable, but it is on this historical element that Brunner stakes the very life of Christianity.<sup>98</sup> All timeless and nonhistorical systems, unrelated to historical revelation, consider themselves superior to any faith anchored in a precarious historical event; but in this element, which is the essential character of Christianity, Brunner finds the truly Christian faith. He says:

The Christian faith, therefore, confronts them as something strange, unintelligible, as the offense and the folly of the message of the cross. Call the Christian faith folly, reject it as offense, but do not say that it is that other kind of religion, not connected with history, not related to the event of revelation.<sup>99</sup>

Idealism may explain the religion of immanence, what Kierkegaard called Religion A, but not the Christian revelation, the religion of transcendence, Religion B.

Second idealism is undialectical. As it moves away from naturalism

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<sup>98</sup> Paul Tillich, The Interpretation of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 34.

<sup>99</sup> Revelation and Reason, p. 256.

it becomes involved in an abstraction which rationalizes and depersonalizes religion, and the irrational and personal element characteristic of primitive religion is lost. There is no understanding of God's paradoxical relation to the phenomenal world, so a movement toward the absolute is a movement toward the impersonal. The Absolutely Personal is inconceivable.<sup>100</sup> God's relation to man involves a twofold thesis: original revelation and original sin. In the words of Paul: "Knowing God, they glorified not as God" (Romans 1:21). So religion is the outgrowth of an original, general, universal revelation of God in creation that has been renounced by man in his sinful blindness, a revelation restored by the revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. Brunner concludes his criticism of the naturalistic theory of religion, both that of naturalism and that of idealism with a classic summary:

For this very reason the Naturalistic and the Idealistic theories of religion are equally right and equally wrong: the Naturalistic theory which sees religion only from "below," and the Idealistic theory which sees it only from "above." Naturalism does not know how very much "from below" the all-to-human element in religion is -- it only knows the concept of nature, but not that of sin, which receives a new name, the daemonic. And Idealism does not know how very much "from above" the divine element is, for indeed it does not know the concept of creation, but only of immanence; hence in unconscious arrogance it makes a divine gift into an attribute of human nature.<sup>101</sup>

Because he believes that the Christian revelation is "from above" all religious experience, all the world religions, and all the criticism of religions, Brunner proclaims a message that is distinctively a "missionary theology."

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<sup>100</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 133f.; Revelation and Reason, p. 261.

<sup>101</sup> Revelation and Reason, p. 265.



## CHAPTER VI

### REVELATION AND SCIENCE

Dialectical theology came into a Protestant world torn asunder by the controversies of fundamentalism and modernism over modern science. It came as "heartening news to many a beleaguered evangelical who had found himself groping in a theological no-man's-land between the merely human Bible of the rationalists and the verbally inspired Bible of the fundamentalists."<sup>1</sup> Barth and Bultmann have, for the most part, evaded this problem of relating revelation to modern science not without a docetic danger; but Brunner, with Heim, has faced the issues squarely. Had Brunner kept aloof from such questions the great gulf that separates his thought from fundamentalism, which was at first tempted to welcome his reinforcement against modernism, would not be so deep and wide; but, once it was discovered that his doctrine of revelation meant primarily communion with God himself and not merely communication of truths about God, his dialectical resolution of the problem became viewed with suspicion. He soon left no room for suspicion by his vigorous rejection of verbal inspiration and forthright acceptance of Biblical criticism and evolution. This, to the faithful of fundamentalism, was received as "new modernism," even "a new heresy in the Christian Church," which "has come in the guise

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<sup>1</sup> John Newton Thomas, "The Authority of the Bible," Theology Today, III.2:159 (July, 1946).

of an angel of light."<sup>2</sup> How Brunner, in driving beyond both fundamentalism and modernism, has tried to solve the serious problems that science presents to the Christian claim of revelation is the subject of this chapter. His thought is gathered around four points: (1) revelation and verbal inspiration; (2) Biblical revelation and natural science; (3) historical revelation and historical science; and (4) the miracle of revelation and modern science.

### I. REVELATION AND VERBAL INSPIRATION

The real tension between Brunner and the fundamentalists seems to be centered in the conception of revelation. Holding to the dogma of verbal inspiration, the fundamentalists believe that revelation is a supernatural communication of truth about God; while Brunner, rejecting verbal inspiration, believes that revelation is God's personal giving of himself. One is revelation as communication, and the other is revelation as communion. But Brunner finally makes a place for both in his thought on the problem of revelation and reason, though not in a manner satisfactory to extreme fundamentalism that will have nothing less than verbal inspiration.

1. Revelation as communication. Revelation as communication includes the forms of human reception within the divine disclosure of God.

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<sup>2</sup> William H. Chrisholm, "A New Heresy in the Christian Church," The Sunday School Times, Vol. 88, No. 5 (December 14, 1946), pp. 1155ff.

The form that it has assumed in fundamentalism has been molded through three periods of Protestantism. First, the Reformers had, at times, described the origin of the Scriptures in a manner that furnishes grounds for a dogma of verbal inspiration in Lutheranism and Calvinism. Luther declared that "the Bible is God's Word, written and, as it were, spelled, and presented in letters, just as Christ, as the eternal Word, is presented in human nature"; and again, "One letter, even a single title of Scripture means more to us than heaven and earth. Therefore, we cannot permit even the most minute change."<sup>3</sup> Calvin also said that the Law and Prophets are "dictated by the Holy Spirit,"<sup>4</sup> "who ruled in their mouth as in his own sanctuary."<sup>5</sup>

Second, Protestant orthodoxy, in the two centuries which followed the Reformation, turned these tendencies into a rigid doctrine of verbal inspiration. In Lutheranism, Matthias Flacius (1520-1575), violent opponent to the Melancthonian theologian Victorinus Strigel (1524-1569), maintained the "identity of the external word and the word of God."<sup>6</sup> Johann

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<sup>3</sup> WA, XLVIII, 31, 4; XL,ii,52,16f., as quoted by Paul L. Lehmann, "The Reformer's Use of the Bible," Theology Today, III.3:339f. (Oct., 1946).

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, Commentaries on the Second Epistle to Timothy, in Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1856), p. 249.

<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, Commentaries on the Second Epistle of Peter, in Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, trans. John Owen (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1855), p. 391. Cf. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, I.vi-ix; IV.viii.5,9.

<sup>6</sup> G. Kewerau, in The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, edited by Samuel Macauley Jackson (New York: Funk and Wagnall's Company, 1909), XI.113f. Cf. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, trans. A. J. D. Farrer and Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), pp. 33f.

Gerhard (1582-1637) went so far as to maintain the theory of the inspiration of the Hebrew vowel points.<sup>7</sup> Abraham Calovius (1612-1686)<sup>8</sup> and Johannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688)<sup>9</sup> continued this strict orthodox movement; but David Hollatz (1648-1713), whose own grandson finally adopted the views of the Moravians, brought the period of dogmatic systems to a close with a type of moralistic rationalism.<sup>10</sup> He believed that:

Scripture contains matters of history, chronology, genealogy, astronomy, physics, and politics, and although the knowledge of these is not necessary to salvation . . . not merely the meaning, or the things signified, but the words too, as signs of the divine things, are divinely inspired.<sup>11</sup>

Calvinism, too, but to a less degree, reached such an extreme that the Formula consensus Helvetica (1675), the last doctrinal confession of the Reformed Church of Switzerland, also declared that the Hebrew vowel points were inspired by the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> A great historian has summed up the movement in these words:

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7 Johannes Kunze, in Schaff-Herzog, IV.463. Cf. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 33, 35.

8 Johannes Kunze, op. cit., II.352f.; Cf. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 33.

9 Johannes Kunze, op. cit., IX.373. Cf. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 34f.

10 P. Woolf, in Schaff-Herzog, V.323; Cf. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 34.

11 Quoted by Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 35.

12 Paul L. Lehmann, op. cit., p. 343. Cf. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 274.

The great prophetic age of Protestantism was followed by a didactic age. We can understand the necessity for transition; but it proved a retrogression similar to that from the days of the old prophets of Israel to the great Synagogue!<sup>13</sup>

It is with this judgment that Brunner agrees when he burns Protestant orthodoxy with the accusation of Judaism.

Finally, fundamentalism, after the season of refreshing brought by Pietism had passed, rose to fight modernism in the armor of the old orthodoxy. The specific form of this thought which Brunner combats is that found in the Presbyterian Church, especially as expounded by the Hodge-Warfield-Machen school. A modern statement of this view is sufficient to illustrate this type of verbal inspiration.

All of Scripture comes to us through human instrumentality. If such instrumentality involves fallibility, then such fallibility must attach to the whole of Scripture. For by what warrant can an immunity from error be maintained in the matter of historical or scientific fact.<sup>14</sup>

2. Revelation as communion. Against this tradition of verbal inspiration, Brunner, following the larger emphasis of the Reformers, proclaims what he believes to be Biblical revelation, which brings the Scriptures and the Spirit into a paradoxical unity in personal encounter with God. The word of Scripture, being the word of man, is not in itself the word of God. Indeed, there is no such thing as "revelation in

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13 Reinhold Seeberg, Text-Book of the History of Doctrine, trans. Charles E. Hay (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1905), Vol. II, p. 363f.

14 John Murry, in The Infallible Word, edited by N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1946), p. 4.

itself" (An-sich-Offenbarung), because revelation is the act of God in personal address.<sup>15</sup> Revelation, he reiterates, "is not the communication of intellectual knowledge, of a doctrine about God, but God's own personal Word . . . ."<sup>16</sup> Revelation can no more be identified with the Scriptures as such than Christ according to the flesh can be identified with the Christ according to the spirit.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the effort to do so is a most serious misunderstanding of the faith of the Bible.

The words of the Scripture are human; that is, God makes use of human and, therefore, frail and fallible words of men who are liable to err. But men and their words are the means through which God speaks to men and in men. Only through a serious misunderstanding will genuine faith find satisfaction in the theory of verbal inspiration.<sup>18</sup>

With three of Brunner's choice illustrations the point is made clear. First, revelation is related to the Scriptures after the analogy of the deity and humanity of Christ. The incognito of the revealed word of God is applied to the written word of God. At one place he says:

Hence, the word of Scripture is not in itself the word of God but of man, just as the historical appearance of the God-man is in itself that of a man. The incognito of the purely human appearance is unmasked only by faith, by the testimony of the spirit which enables us to hear the word of God in the mere word of man.<sup>19</sup>

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15 Religionsphilosophie evangelischer Theologie (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1927), p. 13.

16 The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934), p. 237.

17 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 32; The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), pp. 18f.

18 The Theology of Crisis, p. 19. Cf. The Word and the World (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1931), p. 96.

19 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 32.

The analogy puts the dogma of verbal inspiration in the position of denying "the humanity of the Scriptures"! This is Brunner's favorite illustration. But a second illustration is much more simple. The revelation in the Bible may be compared to gold in the ground. Now, Brunner insists, the orthodox and fundamentalist theologians make the gold and the ground identical; but for him it is the gold that is there that is important.<sup>20</sup> A third illustration is extremely clear. It is the modern analogy of "His Master's Voice." Just as the voice of Caruso is heard with the scratching of the needle on the hard disk, so is God's voice heard in such men as Moses, Isaiah, Paul and Peter.

Therefore the Bible is all His voice, notwithstanding all the disturbing things, which, being human are unavoidable. Only a fool listens to the accidental noises when he might listen to the sound of his Master's voice! The importance of the Bible is that God speaks to us through it.<sup>21</sup>

All of these illustrations serve to supplement his favorite illustration found in Luther's introduction to the Old Testament: "The Scriptures are the manger in which Christ is laid." This Brunner repeats scores of times.<sup>22</sup> As the manger is important because it contains Christ, so the Scriptures have value because there Christ, the Word of God, is found.

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20 The Word and the World, pp. 94f.

21 Our Faith, trans. John W. Rilling (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 10.

22 E.g., The Philosophy of Religion, p. 34; The Word and the World, p. 84; The Theology of Crisis, p. 19; Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 276.

3. Revelation as communication and communion. If the critic is not satisfied with this mutually exclusive treatment of communication and communion, neither is Brunner. Less extreme statements are found in his writings of the period of personalism, i.e., since 1937. To be sure his position is not a capitulation to the dogma of verbal inspiration, nor to the claim that the Bible is free from historical and scientific error. What he does is to find a balance between truth as personal encounter and propositional truth. He has not relaxed his criticisms of Greek intellectualism, for in this period he is more drastic than ever on this tradition; but he does make a place for doctrine. After much emphasis in the opposite direction, he says:

Even as we previously said the Word of God is not doctrine, that God in His Word is not doctrine, that God in His Word does not speak 'something' but Himself, so now we must further ask: Does He not speak Himself to us in such a way that He tells us 'something,' 'something true,' so that doctrine after all is also contained in His Word?<sup>23</sup>

This is to throw the cat out the front door repeatedly, only to let him finally come in the back to stay; but here the truth of doctrine is with Brunner's approval. Paul Althaus' criticisms of The Mediator seem to have a part to play in the change of mind, as Brunner is humble enough to say. "The line of absolute withdrawal which Kierkegaard tries to set up as one that cannot be touched," he writes in a significant note, "lies too far behind the lines of actual encounter with Christ to do

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<sup>23</sup> The Divine-Human Encounter, trans. Amandus W. Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), p. 108.



justice to faith."<sup>24</sup> Doctrine as token and as framework is not accidentally but indissolubly and necessarily connected with the reality it represents. The personal Presence can not be had apart from picture of the story of Jesus. No abstract framework contains this Word of God. So he comes to a position yet to be developed.

Doctrine is certainly related instrumentally to the Word of God as token and framework, serving in relation to reality -- actual personal fellowship with God; but doctrine is indissolubly connected with the reality it represents.<sup>25</sup>

It is this turn in Brunner's thought that forces him to take a more constructive view in relating revelation to the truth of the natural and historical sciences. Only an extreme view that would undermine the Christian revelation itself can escape responsibility for the task that Brunner sets for himself.

## II. BIBLICAL REVELATION AND NATURAL SCIENCE

Verbal inspiration comes into a conflict with the claims of natural science that makes them mutually exclusive; but Brunner, interpreting Biblical revelation as he does, believes that this is the result of a misunderstanding on the part of science and orthodoxy. He attempts to bring revelation into a peaceful relation to natural science in the three main

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<sup>24</sup> Revelation and Reason, p. 283, note 21.

<sup>25</sup> The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 111. Here Brunner escapes Alan Fairweather's significant criticisms of Barth in The Word as Truth (London: Lutterworth Press, 1944), which argues that Barth robs the Bible of all value for revelation; the incarnation and the cross of all value for human life; and the idea of revelation itself of any kinship with the idea of truth.

fields of tension: astrophysics, geology, and biology. This he does by frankly saying: "The Biblical world-view, cosmological and historical, has gone for good."<sup>26</sup>

1. Astrophysics. Astrophysics attacks the Biblical world-view of space. Such men as Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo (1564-1641), Kepler (1571-1630), and Newton (1642-1727) started a movement that has proven that the geocentric view of space expressed in the Bible is untenable. This the fundamentalist can deny only by an effort to show that the Bible did not express the geocentric world-view of antiquity; and this Brunner thinks that only a dishonest or very ignorant man can do. Two facts for him are sure: (1) the Bible expresses a geocentric world-view, and (2) this world-view is wrong.<sup>27</sup> This, he believes, is a fact with which the dogma of verbal inspiration finds itself in an impossible position. Orthodox theology had no business to speak with authority here, for this investigation is the business of science.<sup>28</sup> Yet with his own view he can come back to say:

But the ancient view of the world is only the alphabet in which the man of the Bible, who had no other, had to write down the Word revealed by God. We no longer use this alphabet of ancient cosmography; we have a new alphabet, with letters inserted by Copernicus, Newton, and Einstein. But what a fool anyone would be to think that when the old alphabet was destroyed the Divine revelation was destroyed as well.<sup>29</sup>

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26 The Word and the World, p. 98.

27 Revelation and Reason, pp. 277f.

28 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 172.

29 Man in Revolt, p. 423.

Of course, he realizes that the translation of the revelation into this new alphabet is no little trouble, but it can be done. The old truth of revelation is expressed in a new way. It is the same Christ in a new and modern manger!

2. Geology. The Fathers, the Schoolmen, and the Reformers all taught that the world was created about four thousand years before Christ. As recently as the seventeenth century, Dr. John Lightfoot, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, declared, after a profound and exhaustive study of the Hebrew Scriptures, that "heaven and earth, centre and circumference, were created all together, in the same instant, and clouds full of water," and that "this work took place and man was created by the Trinity on October 23, 4004 B. C., at nine o'clock in the morning."<sup>30</sup> But in the next century, Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875), who has been called the father of modern geology, disturbed this delightful dream when he ushered in a new epoch with the publication of his Principles of Geology (1830-1833). Since then the science of geology has expanded the Biblical view of time so far back that the family tree of man, who is a late comer on the scene, is pushed to four hundred million years.<sup>31</sup> This is trouble indeed for the fundamentalists, but not for Brunner. It no more destroys the Christian revelation than it does the life of man as a whole. Just

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<sup>30</sup> Andrew D. White, A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1907), Vol. I, p. 9. Cf. Revelation and Reason, p. 278.

<sup>31</sup> Alfred Sherwood Romer, Man and the Vertebrates (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941).

as men had to adjust the general outlook of life to the new understanding, so must we do with the Christian revelation. But the vital points of Christian faith are not directly affected.

Why should God not have created a far larger space than used to be thought? Why should not the temporal beginning of the world be moved back much farther than men used to think it should? Both points only aroused so much passion because they seemed to endanger the authority of the Scriptures.<sup>32</sup>

The Bible as an authority in natural science is gone, but it remains authoritative for faith. The message of revelation comes through the modern world-view as clearly as through the world-view of antiquity.

As regards science, the fact that the Biblical message is embedded in the world-view of antiquity, not in ours, is of no more significance for the meaning of that message to us than the difference between Shakespeare bound in paper and in leather for my enjoyment of that poet.<sup>33</sup>

So Brunner, having turned his back on verbal inspiration, bids farewell to the Biblical world-view without a tear in his eye. Why should he be the apostle of a lost cause?

3. Biology. No man would defend the view of a geocentric world, and few would hold that the world was created six thousand years ago; but the question of the historical paradise and the fall remains a bitter one until this day. Charles Darwin (1809-1882), in 1859, published his The Origin of Species, in which he maintained that, by a process of natural selection, new species of plants and animals originate and are perpetu-

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32 Revelation and Reason, p. 279.

33 The Word and the World, p. 5.

ated. It soon became "a storm in a Victorian tea-cup"<sup>34</sup> as Christian theologians, in the majority, opposed this threat to the historical view of Adam and the fall; and it is far from a dead issue today. Does Brunner, then, believe that the Christian revelation is relevant in a context of evolution? It is not in the narrower sense of natural selection, but in the broader view that man has a long history, certainly so.<sup>35</sup> How can these things be? Brunner gives a detailed answer, especially in Man in Revolt. The Christian theologian must first of all reject the ancient doctrine of the primitive state, i.e., that Adam was a perfect historical being who lived long ago before he fell into sin. Here Darwin has forced the Church to take her own doctrine of sin more seriously; but the reasons for rejecting the ancient doctrine are much deeper than the Darwinian danger. First, it denies man's personal responsibility for sin.<sup>36</sup> Man is supposed to sin because an individual first man in some fantastic way is singled out by us to bear the responsibility. We escape personal responsibility for sin; but Adam is "you, and me, and everybody."<sup>37</sup> To deny this is to evade responsibility and to dehumanize man. It is here that the revelation in the creation and responsibility

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<sup>34</sup> Charles E. Raven, Science, Religion and the Future (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), p. 33.

<sup>35</sup> The Philosophy of Religion, p. 172; The Word and the World, p. 99; Revelation and Reason, p. 279.

<sup>36</sup> Man in Revolt, pp. 143ff.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 111. Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), pp. 34ff.

for sin come forth as the very essence of Brunner's thought on man. Second, the ancient doctrine of the primitive state is a rationalistic distortion of man's relation to God. The "supernature" of man, in communion with God before the fall, is contrasted with the "nature" of man, as common to fallen man, by a false exegesis of imago and similitudo combined with the Greek idea of the animal rationale.<sup>38</sup> This rationalism, with the rejection of human responsibility for sin, is an impossible barrier to the understanding of the Biblical revelation. "The Primitive State is not an historical period," Brunner reasons, "but an historical moment, the moment of the Divinely created origin, which we only know in connexion with its contrast, with sin."<sup>39</sup> That is why "the Creation and the Fall both lie behind the historical visible actuality, as their pre-suppositions which are always present, and are already being expressed in the historical sphere."<sup>40</sup> Historical explanations for sin, e.g., the biological, the sociological, and the psychological, all have an element of truth; but sin is not seen in relation to revelation apart from this super-historical reference. So he says:

The specifically human element, personal being, is not a fact which can be proved either empirically or rationally, in either its positive or its negative aspects. Every view of man which does not start from the Word of God and from responsibility must ignore precisely the essential element of human existence, its character of decision.<sup>41</sup>

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38 Ibid., pp. 111f.

39 Ibid., p. 111.

40 Ibid., p. 142; Cf. pp. 400f.

41 Ibid., p. 403.

This moment of decision comes as a flash in the growth of every child, and it is then that he understands himself a sinner; and yet there is much preparation behind this sudden act of responsible self-determination.

Therefore, for purely religious reasons, Brunner rejects the historical paradise and the historical fall; so he sees no reason why the Christian theologian should deny evolution on account of his theology. The failure to accept this extreme probability "has done a great deal to shake people's faith in the genuine truthfulness of the teachers of the Church."<sup>42</sup> Natural science has won the battle against the Augustinian ecclesiastical view; the whole picture of "the first man" has been destroyed. There is nothing left to do but to accept evolution, because:

The pitiable comedy which is produced when theology claims that a 'higher, more perfect' human existence of the first generation existed in a sphere not accessible to research, as it retires before the relentless onward march of scientific research, should be abandoned, once for all, since it has for long provoked nothing but scorn and mockery, and has exposed the message of the Church to the just reproach of 'living at the back of beyond.'<sup>43</sup>

Evolution does not touch the truth of revelation; and the statement that man, who is created by God, is fallen and needs this revelation is as valid as ever.

### III. HISTORICAL REVELATION AND HISTORICAL SCIENCE

Rejection of the historical state in paradise eliminates a certain deterministic burden that has made the understanding of Biblical revela-

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 408.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

tion increasingly difficult since the formulation of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. It can be considered "primal history," but it is impossible to retain it as a credible record of scientific history. Perhaps too, Brunner continues, the story of the patriarchs, recorded in retrospect, has been destroyed by historical science.<sup>44</sup> But this does not mean that all that was once considered history must turn out to be "primal history" or primitive mythology and legend. Two historical interests remain, and in many respects purified, by this "reduction" of the preliminary period of the Bible. They are: (1) the history of Israel in the Old Testament, and (2) life of Jesus in the New Testament. As long as these two stand, Brunner emphasizes, historical revelation is not essentially altered.

1. The Old Testament: the history of Israel. Particular revelation in the Old Testament centers in the Old Covenant, which, in the form of prophecy, points toward the coming of Christ. It is true that, since the work of Wellhausen (1844-1918), the order must be changed from "the Law and the Prophets" to "the Prophets and the Law"; but, beyond this, historical criticism has given us the prophets of Israel anew. The Psalms, severed from pseudonymous authorship, reveal a new depth of meaning that was obscured in the rigid scheme of the traditional view. "It is not so much the Biblical record," Brunner says, "as the traditional view of the unity of the Biblical record that we have begun to question

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<sup>44</sup> Revelation and Reason, pp. 286f.



. . . .<sup>45</sup> But the history of revelation is not endangered with these results of historical criticism.

From the orthodox point of view, the fact that sublime ideas stand side by side with the most primitive elements, makes the unity of "the theology of the Old Testament" impossible; but, in the history of revelation, there are no special difficulties; even the book of Judges and certain Yahwistic narratives, that can be understood as an expression of the will of God, who, in his grace and mercy, accommodates the meanest intelligence. So also the prophets and the law work together. He writes:

Alongside of the magnificent freedom and spontaneity of Prophetism, the priestly rigidity is not only an important method of educational discipline, but it is also the necessary pointer toward the Sacrifice and the High Priest, through which alone the system of Temple worship and sacrifice was abrogated, because He had fulfilled its meaning. Even the special features of post-Exilic narrowness and rigidity gain their positive significance in the light of the economy of salvation.<sup>46</sup>

It took the severity of the law, as the "Schoolmaster," to bring us to Christ, the fulfillment of the law; it took the destruction and dispersion of Jewry to establish a point of contact for the Church of the New Testament. Thus the old idea of "Heilsge<sup>✓</sup>chichte," first used by Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), father of Swabian Pietism, to modify the mechanical dispensationalism of Coccejus and Vitringa, comes forth again to combat the view of Protestant orthodoxy. This conception of development, protected against naturalistic interpretation by confining the specific agency of the Holy Spirit to the chosen people, stands forth, not only as

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45 Ibid., p. 287.

46 Ibid., p. 291.

a powerful eschatological view of history, but also as the way to relate historical revelation to historical science. There is no unity of doctrine in the Old Testament, but there is a unity of God's action in history.

This unity, like the unity of the Apostolic witness to Christ, can be grasped only in faith, which presses behind the doctrine and takes account of Him to whom the doctrine bears witness, and of God's action in the process of bearing witness.<sup>47</sup>

This faith, impossible for Judaism and for Protestant orthodoxy, is possible only from the point of view of historical revelation, which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ of the New Testament.

2. The New Testament: the life of Jesus. The Christian Church lives by the faith which declares that "the Word became flesh" and that Jesus Christ was "crucified under Pontius Pilate." "The peculiar fact about Christianity," Brunner declares, "-- and one which gives great offence -- is this: it is absolutely concerned with an external historical fact."<sup>48</sup> So no flight into super-history that abandons this historical fact can save the Christian faith from the difficulties of historical science. Brunner is unwilling to retreat as far behind the battle line as Kierkegaard, who said:

If the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words: "We have believed that in such and such a year God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died," it would be more than enough.<sup>49</sup>

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47 Ibid., p. 292. Cf. The Philosophy of Religion, p. 160.

48 The Mediator, p. 153.

49 Søren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 87.

Such a reduction of the historical fact is not "enough" for Brunner, when he replies:

Not only the historical existence of a man called Jesus, but the credibility of the story of Jesus in its main features, and of the Gospel of the person of Jesus, of His teaching, working, suffering, and dying, belong to the essence of the Christian faith.<sup>50</sup>

How such a broad front is defended against the critical attacks of historical science, especially the new science of Formgeschichte, is elaborated in The Mediator.

First, a distinction is made between "Christ after the flesh" and "Christ in the flesh." The "Christ after the flesh" is common ground for both the believer and the chronicler. He is a "visible fact, being the object of police reports, a subject for the photographer, for the commonplace journalist, and other things of that kind."<sup>51</sup> But, in opposition to Adolph Schlatter (1852-1938), Brunner declares that faith is not enkindled by this empirical perception. Even the most able historian must believe the apostolic witness, and this moves beyond the "Christ after the flesh" to the "Christ in the flesh." But, as Brunner most emphatically states, the most ardent believer knows the "Christ in the flesh" only in the "Christ after the flesh." The historical personality is the essential distinction between Christianity and universal religion, but the so-called "historical Jesus" is only the "necessary presupposition," not the "adequate ground for the knowledge of Christ."<sup>52</sup> So Brunner says:

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50 Revelation and Reason, p. 283.

51 The Mediator, pp. 153f.

52 Ibid., p. 158.

It is the very essence of revelation and of faith that we should become Christians not through the historical picture of Jesus, but through the picture traced by the Gospels in the light of the Resurrection faith which has grown out of the testimony of the apostles, and has become the witness to the Christ of the Christian Church.<sup>53</sup>

But, as the question is sure to arise, how does the testimony of the apostles take one beyond the "Christ after the flesh" to the "Christ in the flesh"? This brings the investigation to another important distinction.

This second distinction is between relative and absolute certainty, the former being related to the "Christ after the flesh" and the latter being primarily related to the "Christ in the flesh." Relative certainty results from the very nature of historical science. Its task is to create a complete picture of the past and to relate it to the totality of natural and historical possibilities. Now, the first, which Brunner calls "the spatio-temporal continuum," is an impossible task. Because of the great variety of the events in time and space, which fill in the spatio-temporal continuum of the imagination with representations which correspond to reality, no more than an approximate picture is possible. But the effort to relate this approximate picture to all the possibilities of nature and history is even more difficult. Man must work with the categories at his disposal, and these are often inadequate for understanding the Christian claim of revelation. Moreover, these categories or "faculties," which Brunner calls the "humane eye," are diseased by sin and prejudiced against the Christian revelation.<sup>54</sup> So this method is never

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53 Ibid., p. 159.

54 The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 157ff.; The Mediator, pp. 160ff.

able to pass beyond relative certainty to absolute certainty. This certainty comes only through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, because the "humane eye" cannot comprehend reality as a whole. Of insight into this reality, Brunner says:

Its depths, the secret of God, are inaccessible to us human beings; they can only be revealed to us through revelation, which cannot be perceived by the "human eye," by everyone who has a "clear perception of all that is vitally alive and a true feeling for that which is genuinely great," but only by those whose inward sight has been illuminated by the Holy Spirit.<sup>55</sup>

The introduction of this new category is a stumbling-block to the modern mind, which insists that with this method historical facts can be asserted at will; but, from the point of view of the history of revelation, this spiritual affinity is a positive necessity. Neglect of this approach in the study of the Scriptures had led to much pseudo-historical construction, which, rejecting the evidence of the New Testament, has excluded that which could have easily been included in the "analogous continuum" from another perspective. The use of this category is, of course, an offense to the scientific mind, and some of this Brunner removes by saying that nothing can be believed, which can be disproved by historical science; but the offense is restored again by the assertion that historical science is limited by faith. On certain historical facts faith does not allow a negative result. So the tension is retained.

Faith, however, knows, for reasons which are accessible to the historian as such, that this inquiry cannot yield a negative result. The absolute certainty of this conviction coincides with the certainty of faith. The one who believes must always defend himself by faith

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<sup>55</sup> The Mediator, p. 161.

against the natural uncertainty of unbelief, the unrest of historical relativism.<sup>56</sup>

For example, if historical science asserts that Jesus never lived, faith cannot live; but the proof of this assertion, Brunner believes, can no more be produced than the proof that God does not exist.<sup>57</sup> Faith, therefore, does not turn away from historical revelation to some general revelation of universal religion.

According to these principles, as Brunner assesses the results of historical science, every essential of historical revelation stands as it did before criticism sifted the facts. A proper understanding of "Heilsgeschichte" enables the Christian to see the unity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and even the deep ditch that Ritschl tried to dig between the New Testament and Church dogma is crossed. The old questions of the harmony of John and Paul, of the Pauline - Johannine faith in Christ and the primitive Church, and of the message of Jesus versus the message about Jesus are all brought into a unity of God's saving activity in the history of salvation.<sup>58</sup> After his many concessions to historical science, Brunner turns out to be surprisingly conservative in his statement of the content of historical revelation, though not in a manner that would please the advocates of verbal inspiration.

The one point that really remains vital for Brunner is the difference between the message of Jesus about himself and the message of the

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56 Ibid., p. 166.

57 Revelation and Reason, p. 282.

58 The Mediator, pp. 170-198.

Apostles about him.<sup>59</sup> The teachings of Jesus in the "Synoptics" are very different from the Apostolic witness to the Christ. But, when understood as the history of revelation, why should Jesus understand himself as his Apostles later did? Had he done so his humanity and the historicity of revelation would appear as an unhistorical phantom. Indeed, only in the context of historical revelation do the results of historical science become meaningful. Here Christ is restored anew; but, had he understood all from the beginning, there would be no "real, historical, divine-human life of the hidden and suffering Messiah."

He would have anticipated the results of history, and in so doing He would have taken from them and their historicity. Precisely because Jesus is the One to whom the Apostles bear witness and not an unhistorical phantom, He could not teach, and ought not to teach, in the same way as the Apostles. For He is the Subject of their teaching, in all that He is, and does, and suffers, whereas His own teaching is only one part of His Messianic life and suffering. He was to live the Messianic secret, not to proclaim it.<sup>60</sup>

Here he agrees with rather radical results, and again is able to retain the essential historical revelation; however, there is some indication that he is moving more and more to the recovery of most of the traditional picture of Christ. This is vitally related to an increasing missionary interest that has taught him that the Christ cannot be contained in just any cradle. He is convinced that no real encounter with Christ is possible apart from the essential message as presented in the New Testament. He concludes:

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59 Ibid., pp. 182-195; Revelation and Reason, pp. 285, 288.

60 Revelation and Reason, p. 289.

The credibility of the Gospel narrative in its main features is the necessary foundation of real Christian faith. The picture of Jesus in the Gospels, unaltered in essentials, is, together with the witness to Christ of the Apostles, the means through which God quickens faith within us, without which, so far as our experience goes, faith never has arisen, nor can rise.<sup>61</sup>

So the historical, just as natural science, does not undermine revelation; and again, to abandon verbal inspiration for the history of revelation, has solved a multitude of difficulties.

#### IV. THE MIRACLE OF REVELATION AND MODERN SCIENCE

The last problem in the relation between revelation and science is precipitated by the Christian belief in miracle. And here Brunner makes no attempt to evade the tension either by rejecting the claims of science or by explaining away the radical offense of miracle. "To believe in revelation means to believe in a miracle," he asserts, "in something that breaks into this world from beyond it. The Christian belief in revelation understands the miracle of revelation in an unconditional, radical sense."<sup>62</sup> His statement of the problem involves the clarification of both (1) the concept of causality and (2) the meaning of miracle.

1. The crisis of causality. The methodology of modern science has been peculiarly afflicted by scientific monism, i.e., the belief that one science can include all forms of knowledge in itself. It has become the task of the scientist, no less than of the man of faith, to

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61 Ibid., p. 284.

62 Ibid., p. 294.



investigate this scientific superstition. Brunner believes that much conflict is avoided when three levels of nature are distinguished, viz., the mechanical, the organic, and the mental. He then attempts to show that this is in harmony with the best investigation of modern science.

He observes:

Even to the critical man of science reality appears to consist of degrees or strata, only one of which is the subject-matter of a particular fundamental science. By their nature the phenomena of life rise above the science of physics, those of consciousness above biology, those associated with spiritual values or normativity above psychology.<sup>63</sup>

The problem is greatly altered when these limitations of the separate sciences are brought into the picture.

First, the mechanical conception of causality is untenable in modern physics.<sup>64</sup> Since the discovery of radium and the formulation of the Quantum Theory, "Pancausalism" has been highly suspect of over-simplification. The "principle of economy" has excluded "openness to reality." This has become especially evident since the formulation of Heisenberg's "principle of uncertainty," which teaches that "a particle may have position or it may have velocity but it cannot in any exact sense have both."<sup>65</sup> This means that the more accurate specification of position is compensated by a greater inaccuracy in the specification of velocity, and vice versa,

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63 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 174.

64 Hermann Weyl, The Open World (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1932), pp. 31-56.

65 A. S. Eddington, The Nature of the Physical World (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), p. 220.

so that high probability is all that can be achieved. A Christian theologian, like Brunner, however does not, because of the "crisis of causality" fall to the temptation to celebrate an easy victory; but he does observe that modern physics has cast forth the closed system of causality where once it lived in axiomatic dogmatism.<sup>66</sup>

Second, the concept of causality is even less secure in organic life. Under the form of natural selection mechanism attempted to dominate biology, but it was soon discovered that it presupposes assumptions that are not legitimate in a mechanistic pattern.<sup>67</sup> Dogmatic mechanism has been forced to see that the nonmechanical exists alongside the mechanical in a manner that cannot be contained in a closed system of causality. Brunner, recognizing the "epoch-making importance" of Bergson's arguments against the mechanistic evolutionary view, says:

We cannot understand even the development of an organism simply from mechanical causes, but only with the aid of a principle of another kind, namely, of that third idea of development, which we call the romantic; through the idea of the organic totality, of the shaping and creative potentiality which is operative in nature itself, of the "entelechy," or whatever we may wish to call this mysterious "something" which co-ordinates the parts into a coherent whole, and gives to each part of this "pre-forming" whole its place and its function.<sup>68</sup>

So, from the point of view of a materialistic mechanist the organic is a "miracle," "something that cannot be integrated within his scheme of thought,

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66 Revelation and Reason, pp. 296f.

67 Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: The Modern Library, 1944), pp. 61f., 67f., 69-73, 186f.

68 Man in Revolt, p. 396.

which he meets with the same instinctive and absolute rejection as reason always does when it encounters miracle."<sup>69</sup> Emergence from a lower to a higher level, in breaking through the causal system, indicates an "open world."

Third, the novel emergence of mind in the sphere of life does not fit into a closed system. Creative freedom and the law of meaning reveal the mind and the spirit of man, and this is a "mystery" to those who think in mechanical or organic categories. The scientist himself lives on this mystery of mind, even while he dogmatically attempts to reduce humanity to a mechanistic or behavioristic pattern. Brunner charges:

If any scientist were to deny this mystery or miracle of mind he would be cutting off the branch upon which he is sitting. The dignity and validity of his science is the dignity and validity of freely creative and normative intellectual life.<sup>70</sup>

But the ultimate mystery of life, even as mental and moral activity indicate, lies beyond the mystery of mind. To this the last chapter of this dissertation is given. But here, suffice it to say, he has tried to follow the best thought in indicating that every level of life -- mechanical, organic, and mental -- points toward an "opening" that does not allow the door of causality to close. The concept of causality, then, can be thought of as simply "the sum-total of all that is humanly possible."<sup>71</sup>

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69 Revelation and Reason, p. 298.

70 Ibid., p. 299.

71 The Mediator, p. 163, note 1.

2. The meaning of miracle. Brunner has said that the transitions from mechanical to organic and from organic to mental are "miracles" in a secondary sense, but this is simply the first stage and does not explain the miracle of revelation. The approach by degrees is made to make miracle more meaningful in the context of modern science. Only the miracle of revelation is miracle in the proper sense. Three factors are involved in this major miracle of the Christian faith.

First, the miracle of revelation is the freedom of God breaking into our freedom. Just as the organic breaks through the mechanical and the intellectual through the organic, so does the freedom of God break through man's intellectual freedom as "offense" and "folly." This is because the ideas of the mind operate in the sphere of the universal, but the miracle of revelation breaks in upon the mind, not as the universal, but as the "Unique Event," (einmaligen<sup>S</sup> Geschehnis).<sup>72</sup> The real conflict then is not between causality and miracle but between the freedom of God and the freedom of man, for the miracle of revelation is a greater offense to idealism than it is to materialism. Therefore, Brunner declares:

All knowledge of ideas, knowledge of the Logos in the immanent timeless sense, in the sense of continuity between our knowledge and the Divine Being, can never be a knowledge of the personal God. Such knowledge is only possible through a personal revelation within time, breaking through the continuity of the Logos connection, by the incomprehensible marvel of revelation in the sense of something which is non-general, non-logical, in an event which is absolutely unique.<sup>73</sup>

Autonomous reason rebels against the miracle of revelation until it returns

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72 Revelation and Reason, p. 302.

73 The Mediator, p. 212.

to its dependence upon God the Creator, and here the most serious conflict exists.

Second, the miracle of revelation includes the true humanity of Christ. Even as the mind uses the mechanical and organic, God includes the lower spheres of existence in the miracle of revelation in such a way that it neither pushes the human element aside nor puts it out of action. On this principle Brunner draws the conclusion that the Virgin Birth is a burden to the Christian doctrine of incarnation. Aside from the textual weakness, he enumerates two theological weaknesses.<sup>74</sup> The first is the argument that natural procreation is contrary to the divine significance of the incarnation. He replies that this biological factor introduces an "explanation" which violates God's secret and undermines the true humanity of Christ. The second is the argument from the doctrine of original sin, which Brunner says is based on the biological error of the ancient world, that in procreation only the male is active. An evaluation of this conclusion would take the discussion beyond the problem of this dissertation, but it is important to remember that "men of like passion" with Brunner do not see that such a conclusion follows.<sup>75</sup> Brunner himself has never insisted on his conclusion since 1927; and, when he comes to the place where it should be mentioned in Revelation and Reason, he simply

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74 The Mediator, pp. 334ff.

75 Karl Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik, II/2 (Zollikon: Verlag der Evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1939), pp. 187-221; Edwin Lewis, A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1940), pp. 180-189.

quotes Scripture and passes on!<sup>76</sup>

Third, the miracle of revelation includes the deity of Christ.<sup>77</sup> True man is completely interpenetrated by true God, and this is the miracle of revelation. All particular miracles are but "pointers" to the central fact, "just as the train of attendants accompanying a king point to the king himself."<sup>78</sup> Even the resurrection from the dead is a result of this miracle, not the reason. However, Brunner concludes:

The divinity of Jesus, it is true, would not be thinkable apart from His resurrection; He who in truth was Son of God had to rise from the dead; death could not hold Him. But it is not this miracle itself, as an isolated event, that is the basis for faith in His divinity. The self-communication of the Risen Lord to His disciples is a "sign" of His divinity; like all His "signs" or miracles, it is the shining forth of His divine Being in the sphere of the natural world.<sup>79</sup>

And this is the miracle of revelation that can neither be proved nor disproved, for it is known only when God impels man to a decision of faith. Revelation, when properly understood, needs not fear the claims of historical or natural science. They can live together.

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76 Revelation and Reason, pp. 303f.

77 Cf. The Mediator, pp. 201-264.

78 Revelation and Reason, p. 295.

79 Ibid., p. 306.

## CHAPTER VII

### REVELATION AND PHILOSOPHY

The problem of revelation and philosophy has always raised the question of the appropriate relation between faith and reason. Gilson's formulation into four relations is definitive.<sup>1</sup> First, "Tertullianism" excludes reason by revelation. Second, "Averroism" regards revelation as a popular publication of the truths of reason. Third, "Thomism" uses reason as a preparation for revelation. Fourth, "Augustinianism" subordinates reason to revelation. According to this classification, Brunner would come nearest to "Augustinianism," because he would reject "Averroism" as no revelation at all and "Tertullianism" as a dangerous tendency toward the collapse of truth. The "two-story Thomism" that interprets reason as a preparation for revelation, as has already been pointed out, he regards as a false and self-sufficient system of natural theology that never leads to genuine knowledge of God. His point of view is more closely related to "Augustinianism," which limits reason by revelation. Of the Christian theologian, he says:

His general solution has never been that revelation had its place within the bounds of reason, but rather that reason had its place within the bounds of revelation, because it is just from the standpoint of faith that the claim, and indeed also the limit, of reason could be understood.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Etienne Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939). Cf. H. R. Niebuhr, in An Encyclopedia of Religion, edited by Vergilius Ferm (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), pp. 660ff.

2 The Philosophy of Religion, trans. A. J. D. Farrer and Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 56.

But Brunner does not ask his reader to accept this as a dogmatic assertion; rather, he takes the discussion through the critical struggle of the problems of philosophy to show the relevance of revelation. Two philosophical problems find a prominent place in his writings. First, the problem of epistemology asks the question: "What is truth?" (Was ist Wahrheit?) Second, the ethical problem asks the question: "What shall we do?" (Was sollen wir tun?)

### I. THE PROBLEM OF EPISTEMOLOGY: WHAT IS TRUTH?

The problem of epistemology is really twofold, because it raises both the question of "thinking" (Denkens) and the question of "being" (Sein).<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of his important Olaus Petri Lectures, he says:

Whenever an individual, a people, or an epoch ceases to take existence merely for granted, two questions at once arise: 'What is truth?' and 'How can we become possessed of the truth which thus is?' The problem, how thinking or knowing is related to being, which more than any other has engaged Western philosophy from its first beginnings down to the present time, is not based upon a misunderstanding as has recently been maintained; it springs necessarily from our very existence.<sup>4</sup>

Brunner's answer to these questions can be made clear only in the light of his classifications of the three main quests for truth.

1. The quests for truth. The search for the real truth is confronted by a vast enigma of things divine. What the naive person has

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<sup>3</sup> Wahrheit als Begegnung (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1938), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> The Divine-Human Encounter, trans. Amandus W. Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 15.



taken to be "reality" turns out to be an "image" which he has made for himself. Once this fact is recognized, it is impossible to avoid research and thought upon the problem of genuine reality.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Brunner takes this observation into the quest for truth. He points out:

Where reason pretends to know God, it creates a reason-God, and that always is an idol. It is on this pretentious trespassing reason that faith declares war. I do not mean that we are not allowed to put the God whom reason knows in place of the living God, who can be known only in the personal decision of faith.<sup>6</sup> ?

First, the quest of realism inquires into the connection of things by passing from one single element to another in an attempt to find the cause and concludes that the connection is the product of the interaction of the single elements. "The whole, or the explicable connection, therefore," Brunner says, "has its ground entirely in those ultimately single elements, and is not independent, but derivative."<sup>7</sup> The systematic elaboration of realism is a metaphysic, which starts from the scientific picture of reality, i.e., reality as perceived through the senses. From a reality that is assumed to be known, ultimate reality is reached by abstracting certain general laws, and projecting them per analogiam into some final principles of being as the being of God.<sup>8</sup> The classic example of this attempt to reach reality is Aristotle's graduated scale of various proportions between materiality and ideal form extended into the actus

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5 The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 56f.

6 The Word and the World (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1931), pp. 33f.

7 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 58.

8 Ibid., p. 61.

purus.

Truth, therefore, to the metaphysician is an aesthetic object, a Weltanschauung. Aristotle, the model and ideal of all metaphysicians, represents this conception of truth and this attitude towards life. Very significantly he calls it βίος θεωρητικός, "world-spectatorship."<sup>9</sup>

Second, the quest of idealism searches for understanding of the relation between what is grounded, the single elements, and the ground. This is a matter of thought that is concerned with the meaning of all meaning, the thought of all thoughts, the idea of all ideas, and the truth of all truths. Such thinking starts not with the part but with the whole in which the part is grounded, and this "thought which we think is a whole which cannot be resolved into parts."<sup>10</sup> In such speculation Brunner sees an advantage over metaphysics, because we cannot pass beyond science except by thought. He says:

Every ascent, including that towards truth, bears testimony to the power of thought. Therefore we can understand that idealism proceeds to the bold assertion that, since the ground of all thought is itself the logos, i.e., the thought of all thoughts, and thus itself an idea and not a thing, so also that which is grounded and which we grasp by thought cannot be a thing. The reality with which we have to do is always that of thought.<sup>11</sup>

Truth, therefore, is concerned with the relation between things and the ground of things; but it is here that the difficulty appears. Critical idealism by an analysis of knowledge, shows that two features are to be found, i.e., "an elaboration of data, perceived by the senses and yet

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9 The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 25.

10 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 58.

11 Ibid., p. 60.

self-contradictory, into a harmonious co-ordination in thought, and also a limitation and control of such rationalizing by an X which is a datum that can never be resolved into a concept."<sup>12</sup> This dualism between sense-perception and rational conception critical philosophy sees clearly, but it cannot overcome the cleavage.

The third quest of truth finds its point of departure and point of contact here. This Brunner calls existential truth, because it no longer seeks for truth with "scientific objectivity or a serene aesthetic outlook on the world, but with the passion of a drowning man who desperately cries for help."<sup>13</sup> This is the real search for truth, where man cries: "What is truth? I must know or I shall die."<sup>14</sup> From the superficial thought of realism, through the profound contradictions of critical idealism, man comes to the threshold of the truth of revelation. Here he understands that if he is to know the truth it must come through the decision of faith, which is "the life-utterance of the total self in its unanalyzable unity."<sup>15</sup> In the existential situation Brunner thinks that not only all truth can be rightly assessed, but that God, who is the ground of all truth, is met as the subject of truth. It is therefore necessary to understand these two kinds of truth if either is to be clearly grasped.

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12 Ibid., p. 62.

13 The Theology of Crisis, p. 25.

14 Loc. cit.

15 The Word and the World, p. 72.

2. The kinds of truth. Only two kinds of truth are recognized by Brunner, because realism apart from an element of idealism is materialism. And this he brushes aside as "the world view of the dilettante in the world of thought," no more than a "lack of thought turned into a system."<sup>16</sup> But this is not to say that there is no truth in the natural order. Indeed, the Christian belief in the creation and the providence of God does not exclude even the broadest conception of the Greek Logos. Translated as "meaning," the whole universe is "logical."

To create or to realize meaning is the specifically human quality, from the simple instrument which is fit for a definite purpose, from the simplest ornamentation of a clay vessel, or the most childlike nursery rhyme, up to the highest technical and artistic achievements. All this, in the Greek terminology, is "logical" -- not only the proof of the Pythagorean theory, or Kepler's laws of the rotation of the planets round the sun, but also the poems of Goethe, the fugues of Bach, the civil code of law, the constitution of the State. The Greek would not fail to add that every plant in its structure, every animal in its instinct, is "logical," as indeed the whole fabric of the universe is "logical."<sup>17</sup>

But such a broad concept excludes the meaningless altogether, for that which is called meaningless, even the speech and actions of idiots and the insane, does not lack agreement with causal law.<sup>18</sup> "Therefore we shall do well," Brunner explains, "to claim the idea of Logos first of all only for an event behind which there stands a Subject who sees, wills, thinks 'meaning.'"<sup>19</sup> Even this must be narrowed down to "reason,"

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<sup>16</sup> Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 341.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>18</sup> Here, apparently unaware, Brunner answers John Baillie's criticism on this point. Ante, pp. 10ff.

<sup>19</sup> Revelation and Reason, p. 312.

because the formal definition does not bring the question of truth to a sharp focus. Only as the normative, the truly meaningful, is compared with the ultimate divine meaning does the formal logical problem become a theological problem. Then, he says:

The meaning of that which is deeply significant is transformed from something which made no claims, and was complete in itself, into something which makes absolute demands. It becomes the ultimate question, the ultimate standard, the ultimate norm, on which everything depends, the norm of the unconditioned or divine truth, of unconditioned goodness, of absolute value.<sup>20</sup>

What is the relation, then between the absolutely meaningful and revelation?

To answer this Brunner distinguishes between the "Logos of reason" and the "Logos of revelation." It is here that the influence of The Gospel of John -- Bultmann's researches should not be forgotten -- is more powerful than at any other place in his writings. By the use of the Johannine Logos, a bold effort is made to push beyond the false self-sufficient synthesis of the Schoolmen and the radical antithesis of the Reformers. Two kinds of truth are distinguished and related.

1. The truth of reason. Rational truth may be described in several ways. As for its nature, it first may be said to be the universal knowledge, which as a part of general revelation, is recognized by all. It is God at work in every human being.<sup>21</sup> But it must be recognized that it is purely formal, which, since "God does not think in a formal manner," cannot be identified with God's Logos, God's eternal

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20 Ibid., p. 313.

21 Ibid., p. 314.

Son.<sup>22</sup> It is rather an abstraction, the idea of the original, which man knows when he is thrown back upon his own thinking.<sup>23</sup> Again, it is immanent truth which makes the natural light of reason possible. "This word of immanence," Brunner says, "in spite of all the variety that takes place within it, is at bottom a static system."<sup>24</sup> So, then, man only knows about the living God of faith, because this world is concerned only with the impersonal sphere of scientific knowledge. Even the humanities, which include persons, ~~are~~ dominated by this basic outlook.<sup>25</sup> All things are at the disposal of the knowing subject and must be brought into the circle of self-isolation. All things are below, nothing is above the ego.<sup>26</sup> But rational truth does have a place in the truth of revelation, because this lower is included in the higher, though not vice versa. In such ideas as the good, the true, the just, God is reflected. We call them "our" standard, "our" norm, but in reality they are a "reflection of His own Being; the idea of truth is simply the way in which God Himself, at all times, in all our mental acts, makes Himself felt as their hidden norm."<sup>27</sup> This is not far from the teaching of Augustine whose use of a Biblical sentence made it famous: "In the Light we shall see light."<sup>28</sup>

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22 Ibid., p. 315.

23 Loc. cit.

24 Ibid., p. 367.

25 Ibid., p. 364.

26 Ibid., p. 363.

27 Ibid., p. 313.

28 Psalm 36:9.

Under the influence of Francis of Assisi, this idea reached lofty heights. St. Bonaventure went so far as to attempt to trace all arts back to the "Lumen Superius," which he identified with God.<sup>29</sup> But just here Brunner departs from the great Augustinian tradition. He claims that the rational Logos only "points" toward God. It is not God himself. Sin has so alienated reason from God that this light too is a reflection. Where St. Bonaventure found what he thought was continuity, Brunner brings forth his famous idea of discontinuity, which to him is the essence of sin. God is the ground of this natural light of reason, but not the subject. In a classic passage, he says:

God is the ground of all knowledge of truth. All truth that we perceive and discover we perceive and discover by virtue of the light that comes from God. Even the perception of the simplest mathematical truth is possible only through a ray from the light of God. God is the principle of all truth. But from this we have no right to infer that in all knowledge God may be known. Knowledge that comes from God is different from the knowledge of God. Mathematical or scientific knowledge comes from God, but it is not the knowledge of God. Even the knowledge of the philosophical idea of the Logos is not yet the knowledge of God.<sup>30</sup>

Thus a discontinuity, which is sin, exists between the Light which God is and the light which has God as its source and origin. Here Brunner meets and departs from the Schoolmen and the Catholic theology founded on their philosophical principles. This may be illustrated by turning to Brunner's discussion of the "proof for the existence of God" and his evaluation of "rational theology."

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<sup>29</sup> Emma Therese Healy, St. Bonaventure's De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam (St. Bonaventure, N. Y.: Saint Bonaventure College, 1939).

<sup>30</sup> Revelation and Reason, p. 318.

The certainty of the proof for the existence of God, he holds, is not so important as the content; for when this is scrutinized it is unmasked as the belief in the revelation in the creation. The cosmological proof, which argues from the finite, relative, conditioned nature of things to the ground of existence, actually presupposes the distinction between the finite and the infinite, the relative and the absolute, the conditioned and the unconditioned, the creaturely and the divine existence. Apart from this presupposition there is no reason to stop the endless regress other than the fact that the thinker becomes tired of probing further. It does not appear worthy of notice in pre-Christian philosophy, and would never occur to a mind that did not believe in the existence of God the Creator. Thus the cosmological argument seems to Brunner to be nothing other than "a rational form of the Biblical idea of the Creation."<sup>31</sup> In the ontological proof, in which Anselm argued that the idea of God as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" necessarily includes existence, "something of the original revelation of God in the human mind" is perceived.<sup>32</sup> It is something transcendent, but it is "an immanent transcendence" which only "points" toward the transcendent God. Even Kant, Brunner declares, only destroyed this to put it forth again in an "ethicized" form.<sup>33</sup> The teleological proof, which emphasizes the purposefulness in the natural arrangement of things, is simply a rational

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31 Ibid., p. 343.

32 Ibid., p. 344.

33 Ibid., pp. 344ff.



formulation of the belief in the wisdom of the Creator in the works of creation.<sup>34</sup> With the cosmological and ontological arguments the teleological argument is a truth of reason that reflects and points toward God.

When rational theology is assessed in the light of the truth of reason, all systems are made to "point" toward God. Even atheism, when it does not destroy all immanent-transcendent ideas of truth, goodness, and perfection by building on sensationalism, appeals to a higher truth of reason, against the "all-too-human" and godless element in all human theology.<sup>35</sup> Pantheism makes the transition from the creature to the Creator so fluid that nature is deified and God is drawn into the natural sphere. It makes us aware of the "dialectic inherent in the Christian revelation of unity and multiplicity, necessity and freedom, dependence and independence, holiness and mercy, reverence and love" by its denial of them!<sup>36</sup> Absolute idealism, which confuses the human spirit and the divine spirit, perceives "the divine self-testimony in the human spirit as such." The Christian revelation, teaching that man is created in the image of God, takes account of this fact in the recognition of the truth of reason as a divine light which points back to God as its origin.<sup>37</sup> In deism the Creator "has said farewell and gone away" to "His own heri-

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34 Ibid., pp. 346ff.

35 Ibid., pp. 348ff.

36 Ibid., pp. 352.

37 Ibid., pp. 352-355.

tage."<sup>38</sup> In agnosticism, in which the emphasis is on "the Unknowable," there is the knowledge that God cannot be known by human effort.<sup>39</sup> And positivism has a true feeling for the "humbug" of all rational metaphysical systems.<sup>40</sup> Finally, theism, "with a slight exaggeration," may be said to be "identical with Christian philosophy" grounded in the natural light of reason.<sup>41</sup> All this and much more, all that man by searching can find out, is included in the truth of reason.

2. The truth of revelation. In the light of Chapter IV, the truth of revelation needs only to be compared with the truth of reason. The truth of reason is immanent, acquired, at the disposal of man; the truth of revelation is transcendent, revealed, and never subject to human manipulation. The rational knowledge is about God; the knowledge of revelation is personal encounter with God.<sup>42</sup> Several sharp distinctions separate the two conceptions of truth.

First, the truth of revelation "happens," while the truth of reason simply "is." That truth comes into being is the very core of Biblical revelation.

38 Ibid., pp. 355f.

39 Ibid., pp. 356ff.

40 Ibid., p. 357.

41 Ibid., p. 358.

42 This is the theme of the famous Olaus Petri Lectures, The Divine Human Encounter.

Truth is something which happens, which God does. Truth and grace can be spoken with the same breath: truth like grace is encounter between God and man; grace and truth came into being in Jesus Christ.<sup>43</sup>

This truth is an event in time, an historical happening, not a "static" idea. It happens and must ever be renewed in an act of communication.<sup>44</sup>

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Second, the truth of revelation is personal, while the truth of reason is impersonal. One is the act in which God communicates himself; the other is the communication of an idea. The truth of revelation is a "Thou" truth in which "God in person" addresses man through Jesus Christ.

In this moment he ceases to be for me a 'someone-something' and becomes a 'Thou.' In that moment in which he becomes 'Thou' he ceases to be an object of my own thinking and transforms the Object-Subject relation into a relation of personal correspondence: we have fellowship together.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from the personal encounter with Jesus Christ there is no knowledge of personal truth.<sup>46</sup> "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Third, the truth of revelation is given, but "in rational knowledge logos and giveñess fall apart."<sup>47</sup> Greek metaphysics "recollects"; the living God "reveals." If God does not give man the truth it is not to be known. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Therefore Brunner con-

43 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 140.

44 Revelation and Reason, p. 370.

45 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 86.

46 Revelation and Reason, p. 370. Cf. God and Man, trans. David Cairns (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 67.

47 Loc. cit.

cludes, "grace and truth are the same."<sup>48</sup>

Fourth, the truth of revelation overcomes the dualism of truth and life. The real and the ideal are found together only in Jesus Christ, who is the ideal become real. To know this truth is to enter into the newness of life. "True life is existing in the love of God" revealed in Jesus Christ.<sup>49</sup> Therefore:

Love which is self-imparting is the content of that Primal Word which was in the beginning, in which we have been created, in which we have our life. This love is life. It is not an attribute added to life but it is life itself. Failure to love is failure to live.<sup>50</sup>

At the place where God's love brings the ideal and the real together, man enters into eternal life. To have this life the truth must be known; to know this truth is to have life. Jesus Christ is "the Truth and the Life."

Fifth, the truth of revelation is a personal encounter, while the truth of reason is enclosed in a circle of self-isolation. In this personal encounter, in which truth comes into being, the role which man has is taken over by God, so that "the monologue of thought becomes the dialogue of revelation and prayer."<sup>51</sup> An exchange, which is without an analogy in the life of thinking, takes place between God and man. The only analogy is that between human beings, in the meeting between person

<sup>48</sup> The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 141.

<sup>49</sup> Revelation and Reason, p. 371.

<sup>50</sup> Man in Revolt, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 494.

<sup>51</sup> Revelation and Reason, p. 371

and person.<sup>52</sup> The truth that thus comes into being is never the "possession" of man; it is always God's truth, because it is God himself.

In faith man possesses no truth except God's, and his possession is not the kind whereby one ordinarily possesses a truth, but personal fellowship. We are beginning to suspect why in the Bible the word 'truth' appears in what is for us a strange context with the words 'doing' and 'becoming.' Faith, which appropriates God's self-revelation in His Word, is an event, an act, and that is a two-sided act -- an act of God and an act of man. An encounter takes place between God and man. While God is coming to meet man He also makes possible man's going to meet Him.<sup>53</sup>

Here, in the personal encounter of faith, the truth of revelation "happens."

Finally, the truth of revelation can be appropriated "only in an act of personal surrender and decision."<sup>54</sup> This final claim arouses all the pride of reason, because the declaration is made that to know ultimate truth one must be a Christian. Committal to Christ becomes a prerequisite to the appropriation of truth. Until then man remains a prisoner behind the walls of "I-castle," and he cannot be freed from his system of defenses until God makes it possible for him to surrender himself to the truth.<sup>55</sup> This knowledge destroys "the separation between being and thought, between theoretical and practical reason."<sup>56</sup> As the discussion has come to this point by an examination of the problem of knowledge in pure reason, it is now necessary to come again by an examination of the problem of

52 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 85.

53 Ibid., p. 74.

54 Revelation and Reason, p. 371.

55 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 72.

56 Revelation and Reason, p. 372.

ethics in practical reason.

## II. THE PROBLEM OF ETHICS: WHAT SHALL WE DO?

The fundamental problem of ethics is: "What shall we do?" (Was sollen wir tun?).<sup>57</sup> The answers to this question are a manifold of moral principles and ethical systems, but these may be reduced to two main alternatives to the Christian answer. These two, however, "cannot be reduced to a common denominator," for each "is able to maintain itself on good grounds in opposition to the other."<sup>58</sup> The first is the naturalistic system of ethics founded on eudaemonism. In common with Christian ethics it is grounded in materialistic concreteness, but it is unable to furnish a foundation for genuine obligation without bringing in an illegitimate element of idealism. The sense of obligation in consistent naturalism becomes an abbreviated form of human experience with respect to that which I find useful or pleasant. Brunner sees little serious ethical reflection in such an answer. He says:

Morality -- as generally understood -- only begins where the natural instinct breaks down, that is, where one "ought" to do what one does not want to do. The choice before the naturalistic moralist is either to deny the existence of such a "sense of ought" or to give up his Naturalism.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Das Grundproblem der Ethik (Zürich: Rascher & Cie, 1931), p. 5. Cf. The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 68; The Divine Imperative, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1937), p. 9. Was sollen wir tun? (Bern: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1936).

<sup>58</sup> God and Man, trans. David Cairns (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 73.

<sup>59</sup> The Divine Imperative, p. 37.

The second is the idealistic system of ethics based on duty for duty's sake. This legalistic ethic opposes naturalistic eudaemonism as an adulteration of the moral imperative with natural desire. On the other hand, it is unable to bring the moral law of reason into contact with the material realities of the world of action without the illegitimate use of naturalistic devices.<sup>60</sup> So, even though superior to naturalism, no satisfactory ethic can be grounded in idealism.

In spite of the powerful impression which the Kantian ethic made in its own day, and continues to make, it can never really satisfy anyone, since it does not fulfil what it promises. It describes the "form" of the "good will," but it cannot say what should be done.<sup>61</sup>

It is very clear that the pattern of thought which rises above naturalism to idealism and from idealism to transcendent revelation is the same in the problem of ethics as in the problem of epistemology. And here again the last battle is between idealism and Christian revelation.

This comes to a focus as part of the famous conflict between Brunner and Barth. In harmony with his rejection of a revelation in the creation apart from historical revelation, Karl Barth denied the work of the law apart from the gospel. He reversed the order from "law and gospel" to "gospel and law," teaching that the gospel must be known in order to know the law. The law is hidden and enclosed in the gospel "as in the ark."<sup>62</sup> Brunner agrees that the law is "hidden and enclosed" in the

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60 God and Man, p. 73.

61 The Divine Imperative, p. 40.

62 Karl Barth, Evangelium und Gesetz (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1935), p. 3.

gospel, but he does not agree with Barth that it is found only in the gospel. He declares that he is in agreement with Luther of whom he said:

He is concerned to establish an antithetical but immovable dialectical relation between the immanent self-understanding and the Christian revelation, corresponding to the antithetical dialectical relation between the natural (and legalistic), and the revealed knowledge of God, or, to use the phrase of Kierkegaard, between the immanent 'religionA' and the 'paradoxical' Christian faith.<sup>63</sup>

The law does not reveal the grace of God alone, but it does reveal the wrath of God. Law and sin belong together, but ~~the~~ dialectical relation to the revelation of grace gives ~~the~~ more than a negative value. It accuses and disquiets the conscience of man. "Precisely that comes from God," Brunner argues, "although it certainly is not God's opus proprium but His opus alienum, just as the wrath of God shows us not the true face of God but the face of God altered by our sin."<sup>64</sup> Against the background of his conflict, Brunner goes on to formulate his answer to the ethical question by first exploring the law and then the gospel. Even as he says:

Hence the work of the law is the opus alienum of God; God as it were goes after man along his path, and leads him to the end of it, before He can show him the other right way, the way of grace, which leads man back to his original being, to his being in the gracious Word of God. That is why there is this order: the Law, and then the Gospel.<sup>65</sup>

1. The law. Natural man, "in virtue of his immanent rational possibilities," can know the law of God, though dimmed and obscured,

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<sup>63</sup> Man in Revolt, trans. Olive Wyon (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 519.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 519f.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 523.



apart from the revelation of the gospel. Without historical revelation man knows that he is under an obligation to obey a holy law. Where there is reason there is law; where there is law there is reason. But there are limitations to this immanent rational possibility.

That which is above the law is also above reason; it can no longer be grasped rationally but can be grasped by faith. Where the law ceases there also rational knowledge ceases, in the sphere of the moral as well as in that of the knowledge of the world.<sup>66</sup>

Brunner emphasizes four important limitations to this moral rational perception.

First, moral rational perception is limited by the incapacity to know the source of the law. Morality is supported by religious convictions, and the disappearance of this element weakens the influence of the conventional utilitarian principles. The law is good, but a certain inability appears when it is not recognized as the law of God. It is just here that law falls into serious embarrassment. It is unable to rise above law to God, the source of the law.

It lies in the nature of the reason as reason that it cannot burst through the framework of the law, and thus cannot acknowledge a Law-giver, without becoming uncertain in its judgment. The God whom the reason can grasp is actually the court which promulgates the law. Beyond that one may speculate or postulate, but beyond that, purely through reason, man cannot discover any further certainty.<sup>67</sup>

The idea of the good is known, but the "moral idea of the good is no more God than is the theoretic idea of the true."<sup>68</sup> But it does not follow

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66 Revelation and Reason, p. 325.

67 Ibid., p. 326.

68 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 71.

that this moral rational idea has no reference to God, for by means of the moral rational perception even the heathen know the ordinances of God, "even if they do not know the One who created them."<sup>69</sup>

The second limitation of the rational moral perception is the incapacity to know the depths of evil. The common man outside the Biblical revelation knows something of evil, because the consciousness of guilt and sin breaks through the irrational depths of the soul. Indeed, his understanding of evil is more profound than that of the philosophical ethics that thinks of evil simply as the absence of the positive. Of the great philosophers, Kant first, and after him Schelling, arrived at a point where evil could be seen in its profound depth. Kant made a distinction between the actual man, who, fettered by the world, is bound and determined by outside causes, and the rational intelligible will, which is completely free and identical with the idea of the good.<sup>70</sup> The contradiction between will and law he called "radical evil." (das radikale Böse) and goes on to say that the best interpretation of the fact is the myth of the fall. But Brunner believes that this would not have been possible outside the Christian tradition, for only faith can look upon the fact of evil with "unprejudiced realism."<sup>71</sup> Under moral law man legislates his own law, and this principle of autonomy obscures the true

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69 Man in Revolt, p. 520.

70 The Philosophy of Religion, p. 70. Cf. Immanuel Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1934), pp. 15-49.

71 Revelation and Reason, p. 329.

nature of evil. Brunner declares:

We flatter ourselves that evil does not ultimately affect or lay hold upon us at all. Seriously understood, sin is the contradiction of the divine will, so that the innermost self and the good have really fallen into isolation from, and opposition to, each other: it is severance from the ground of existence and therefore not merely a matter of a man's mental attitude, but of his personal existence.<sup>72</sup>

Revelation alone discloses this cleavage, and faith alone can bridge it.

The third limitation of rational moral perception is the abstract nature of the moral demand. Man cannot reach a truly personal relation with God or with his neighbor. They are considered "cases" or "occasions" for the performance of moral duty. The moral law of reason is unable to love in the suprarational sense of agape which is the center of the Christian revelation. Brunner describes the relation as follows:

Our relation to him is a legal one, he is "a case" of general law. The law isolates, the legalistic relation to another never lets me see him himself, go over to him, identify myself with him -- and that means, in short, love him. Love alone could break through the barrier between "me" and "thee." But, as Kant has proved, there is no such thing as love in a legalistic ethic. Love cannot be commanded to appear.<sup>73</sup>

Legalism and rationalism are unable to cross over from immanence to transcendence, from the abstract to the concrete, from the impersonal to the personal.

The fourth limitation of rational moral perception is the impotence to create the good will or to overcome evil. The law can convict of sin, but it cannot deliver from the power of sin. Rational moralism is unable to see this. But the Christian revelation does not exclude preaching

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72 The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 88f.

73 God and Man, p. 78.

morality; it simply has more than "mere morality." The law is impotent to create true love for God and our neighbor, because love, being the only commandment, cannot be commanded. Therefore, law can never give what in the strict sense is genuine morality, i.e., love.<sup>74</sup> For Christian revelation this love is the ultimate good. Brunner is very clear, when he says:

My duty to do good is precisely the sign that I cannot do it. It is true, as Kant showed, following the Stoic line or argument, that the imperative of obligation is the principle by which I come to know my moral freedom, i.e., my responsibility. But it is at the same time -- and no philosopher has recognized this -- the ground on which I become aware of my lack of real freedom. For the good that I do, because I ought, is for that very reason not freely done, and therefore not really good.<sup>75</sup>

Man can do the good only when he is no longer under the law but under the grace of the gospel given through revelation.

2. The gospel. The law becomes "the point of contact" (Berührungspunkt) and at the same time the point of opposition between the law and the gospel. Stripped of the gospel, law is the naked demand of God manifested as the "categorical imperative." The law may be known apart from the gospel, but the gospel always contains the law. This is in harmony with Brunner's basic principle that the higher contains the lower, but the lower does not contain the higher. The relation between the two is dialectical. What then is the dialectical relation?

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74 Revelation and Reason, pp. 331f.

75 God and Man, pp. 78f.

First, the law is the means by which man is brought to repentance. The demands of the law make man conscious of his need of the gospel of the grace of God, for until then he feels that he has all that he requires. Brunner proclaims:

This possession must be struck out of his hands before he will throw himself into the saving arms of love. It is only the poor man who is willing to receive a gift, and it is only the guilty man who is thankful to be pardoned. Before man has become poor and guilty, he does not reach out for the grace that is offered to him. If your cup is full, you do not want it to be filled.<sup>76</sup>

It is the law that creates this emptiness that prepares man for the gospel of forgiveness. The law "kills"; the gospel then "makes alive."

Second, the gospel is the fulfillment of the law. This it does in three ways.<sup>77</sup> Above all, Jesus Christ alone does what the law requires. He loved his neighbor as himself and God with all his heart, even to the death of the cross. Again, he took the curse of sin upon himself and tasted death for every man. Finally, in the death of the cross he reveals the meaning of the good: self-giving love. The law knows nothing of this love that comes by revelation. Here the law is fulfilled in love, because:

It reveals itself as fathomless love, which does not love those who are worthy of love, but the unworthy, which does not love in order to satisfy its own desire, but love gives itself.<sup>78</sup>

Kant is quite right when he says that "love cannot be commanded"; and yet it is the only thing that must be commanded, since it is the only

76 Revelation and Reason, p. 335.

77 Ibid., pp. 335f.

78 Ibid., p. 336.

thing that is good. Thus the answer to the ethical question: "What shall we do?" is: "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."<sup>79</sup> This is the "new commandment."

How the love commandment works out in social ethics is elaborated in The Divine Imperative, Justice and the Social Order, and many tracts for the times, but here it is impossible to go beyond three basic factors. First, the personal act of revelation of God changes Man's life from himself as center to God as center. Goodness is not something of his own, but the gift of God, which comes from outside himself, in Jesus Christ, the Word of God. The circle of self-isolation is broken. In the revolution of God's personal revelation God is no longer in his orbit; he is in the orbit of God.

Therefore he is no more a fixed star shining by its own light, as he before imagined himself to be, but a star with borrowed light. And with that he has become completely dependent upon God, he is no longer God's partner. That is the great conversion, the folly of autonomy and self-sufficiency has gone.<sup>80</sup>

The antithesis is no longer between vice and virtue, but between sin and faith. The relationship to God is no longer conditional, but unconditional.

Second, the personal act of revelation changes the legalistic relation of slavery to sonship. God no longer confronts man with a claim that leaves a bad conscience, but as one who is "for us." In faith man is free, for in faith God's will is done of man's free will. The freedom

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79 I John 4:11

80 God and Man, pp. 82f.

man attempted to usurp independent of God he now finds by dependence on God.

Freedom is redemption from "the curse of the law," thus not only from guilt but also from unrest, from dis-peace. He alone can have peace with God who no longer strains after God, but who lives in and on God. Peace springs out of a relation with God which is secured by God Himself, that is the relation of Divine sonship through the gift of God; it is the life in the word of God, which He speaks to us and in us by which he contradicts the bad reality: "Peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."<sup>81</sup>

Man has learned that freedom does not exist outside the structure of the love of God. In possessing his life in God's Word he is free from himself and from the world.

Thirdly, his new relation to God expresses itself in a new relation to the world and to his neighbor. He has been made free from the world only to return again to the world. It is precisely this fact that is wrought by the act of revelation: man no longer moves from the world but into the world. He has been reconciled to God and now he has the ministry of reconciliation. As a child of God he is now sanctified, and all life has become holy in his eyes.

The delimitation of a sacred zone of life alongside the secular sphere, of a religious form of action alongside the secular, the distinction between "duties towards God" and "duties towards man" or "duties within the world," which is characteristic of all non-Christian religion, has been abolished. All that is secular is holy, and all that is holy is secular.<sup>82</sup>

God has called man out of the world only to send him forth again to redeem the world spiritually and materially by the revelation that makes the spiritual material and the material spiritual.

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81 The Divine Imperative, pp. 78f.

82 The Divine Imperative, p. 189.

The problem of revelation and reason arises because of the contradiction of sin in the human heart and in the world, and it is resolved by God's personal act of reconciliation and redemption. Historical revelation is the event by which God reconciles the world unto himself and commits unto man the ministry of reconciliation. That is why the history of revelation is the history of salvation and the history of salvation the history of revelation. (Darum ist Offenbarungsgeschichte Heilsgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte Offenbarungsgeschichte.)



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