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BIBLICAL AUTHORITY ACCORDING
TO EMIL BRUNNER

By

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A Thesis

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem Stated

The appeal to authority is one of man's basic appeals in his search for truth. In one sense the history of man is a record of his attempts to find the ultimate, that which is authoritative and can serve as a rule and guide for life. The efforts and progress in both philosophy and science have borne this out. This fact is also true in the realm of religion. From the beginning of mankind, his religious beliefs have served to supply this basic psychological desire in one way or another.

From the inception of the Christian era, and especially since the Protestant Reformation, this appeal has been applied to the Bible. The doctrine of biblical authority has been a subject of controversy in nearly every generation since the canon was completed. From the time of Astruc to the present, the authority of the Scriptures has been so major a controversy that it can be called the theological football of modern theology.

This at once suggests that there are many and antithetical concepts concerning the problem of biblical authority. This is true in both the qualitative and quantitative emphases; for the question of the authoritativeness of the Scriptures includes not only what parts are authoritative, but to what extent are these parts, or the whole, the infallible and unequivocal Word of God.

The problem at hand will include a consideration of the realms in which the Bible is authoritative. For example, is its authority to be applied to the spiritual realm only or to the scientific as well? And are its statements to be applied in their minutest details or the essential message only?

By biblical authority is meant the extent to which the Bible is considered the final court of appeal and ultimate truth in those matters with which it deals. In determining this extent it is necessary to understand the relation which revelation and inspiration sustain to biblical authority. Revelation is what God does in disclosing Himself to man, while inspiration is what God does in man for his acting in response to this disclosure. Thus inspiration is a mode of revelation. Since revelation and inspiration are concerned with God's communicating with man in and through the Bible, the way and the extent in which these are effected influence the authoritativeness of the Bible, for biblical authority is

dependent upon the degree that these take place.

One of the contemporaneous theologians whose treatment of the Scriptures is attracting widespread attention in theological circles is Emil Brunner. It is the purpose of this thesis to discover what is his view on biblical authority as it is revealed in his writings. Since Brunner has not written anything directly on this subject, at least in so far as has been brought to the attention of the writer, this study will necessarily be a deduction from his writings on other subjects. The problem, then, as it relates to the man under consideration is to find out by his use of the Scriptures what is his particular view or views. In what way and to what extent does Brunner's view of this basic appeal to an authority as it is applied to the Scriptures aid in the search for truth? Here is the problem of this thesis.

B. The Problem Delimited

The very nature of the subject under consideration makes it necessary to set bounds, for it is at the heart of the whole system of Christian theology. The doctrine of inspiration figures very largely in a discussion of biblical authority. Yet it is only one phase of the problem. Writing on the topic of inspiration,

Westcott suggests that the subject matter of inspiration is really infinite.¹ In a subject which involves so vast an amount of literature, one must by-pass the major portion of it for the purposes of this study. Therefore, the treatment will be limited only to those aspects which have direct significance to Brunner's position and to background material for understanding his point of view.

It must be frankly admitted that it is difficult to understand the exact point of view from his writings. One of the many things which Brunner has in common with Barth is the complex style of writing. This is in part due to the difference between the thought background of Germany as compared to that of America. Yet even the Germans do not count it easy reading. What a German student said of Barth can also be said of Brunner, namely, that "he had read both Kant and Barth and that he had found the former easier to understand."² Max Strauch said, "Whoever undertakes to read Barth discovers that he must split his head."³ One of the outstanding seminaries of America began to use one of Brunner's writings for a

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1. Westcott, B.F., Introduction to the Study of the Gospels, pp. xiii and xiv.
2. Rolston, Holmes, A Conservative Looks to Barth and Brunner, pp. 25,26.
3. Ibid. p. 26.

text in a theology class, but after a number of weeks abandoned it because both the professor and the students felt it was too difficult and involved to be understood. This study recognizes this difficulty.

C. The Validation and Significance of the Problem

One of the three major emphases of Protestantism has been and is the authority of the Scriptures. It is of great importance that the measure of this authority is understood. There have been various attempts within Protestantism to displace this authority with that of another. One of these has been to place human reason and understanding based on "scientific advancement" over and above the Scriptures. The Bible was made to fit into a pattern of reasoning based on premises apart from biblical revelation. Emil Brunner is one of the chief exponents of a return to the biblical record for one's basis or reasoning. As Rolston says:

"Barth, aided by able collaborators, particularly Brunner...challenges the whole development of modern theology from Schleiermacher to the present time. ...They call for a return to the great doctrines of God's Word. It is not, however, a return to what now passes as Reformation doctrine, as Bible doctrine. Traditional theology, they charge, has imprisoned God in its narrow formulas, even as Liberal theology has ignored him."¹

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1. Rolston, op. cit., p. 14.

There are some who feel that both conservatives and liberals will find something greatly needed.

Again the problem at hand takes on meaning when it is realized that this rather recent approach to the Scriptures is gaining attention and acclaim by many leading scholars in America as well as abroad. A new attitude and approach will mean that new and different ways of dealing with the problems of the society of the world and the society of the church will eventually follow. The working out of views of the Scripture has vast ramifications. Westcott had this in mind when he said,

"...beside fear of errors in detail, there is another consideration which must be deeply felt by everyone who writes on Holy Scripture. The infinite greatness of the subject imparts an influence for good or for evil to all that bears upon it."¹

The attitude which one has toward the Bible influences every phase of his theology. What one believes about the purpose and content, what he believes about the writers, what he believes about revelation, in short, what a person believes about biblical authority will in a large measure determine what his whole system of theology is. Since Brunner is one of the chief exponents of a school of thought which is greatly influencing theological views of the present generation, it is important that one

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1. Westcott, op. cit., p. XIV.

understand his basic tenets regarding biblical authority.

D. The Method of Procedure

The plan of treatment of the problem will be to proceed from the general aspects of the problem to the specific. This will be done by first considering various views on biblical authority and then examining Brunner's own writings. The fact that he has not written specifically on this subject nor on inspiration in itself indicates that there must be interpretation of Brunner all along the way.

The study will be divided into four chapters, which will be developed as follows:

The first chapter will be a historical survey of the views of Scriptural authority from the time of the Reformation.

The next chapter will deal with specific influences on Brunner involving his education and his relation to Barthian school of thought.

The third chapter will be the main body of the discussion. It will present the findings from Brunner's writings and from critics of his writings. The nature and extent of his view of biblical authority will be the main considerations.

The last chapter will be a summary and an evaluation with an attempt to indicate some of the

implications of Brunner's system or point of view.

E. The Sources of Data

The primary source for the material to be presented in this study will be the writings of Brunner. Other sources include the criticisms of Brunner that are available and selected writings from the endless volumes on inspiration, biblical interpretation and introduction, and histories of Christian doctrine.

CHAPTER II
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A. Introduction

This survey will be limited to the period from the Reformation to the present time. The following chapter will set forth the various views maintained in regard to biblical authority during this time reference. There are two primary reasons for beginning with the Reformation. First, the Reformation brought a new emphasis to the authority of the Scriptures; and so any consideration of one who follows the Reformation period must be done in view of the Reformation principle. Second, Brunner is constantly referring to the Reformers and Reformation doctrine. Therefore, it will be helpful in understanding Brunner to go back to the Reformation. However, one cannot deal only with the Reformation because later views and factors influenced Brunner as well as did the Reformation. His point of view needs to be considered in the light of these later aspects also, such as mysticism, pietism, and modern criticism. In this presentation, some of the problems involved in forming a doctrine of biblical authority will become evident.

It is the purpose of this chapter to furnish such background material as will aid to clarify the issues involved by observing what attitude different individuals had and by showing some of the chronological changes. This will aid in understanding Brunner's position, for no point of view can be adequately understood without having some understanding of its historical relation.

While there are no clearly marked times of change in the varying views, nearly all have ardent adherents today, for the sake of convenience and clarity, this historical aspect will be divided into three periods: the Reformation period, the Post-Reformation period, and the Modern period. Some attention will be given to the problem of inspiration, for it is clear that no treatment of biblical authority can escape struggling with the problem of inspiration. The two are inseparable. We need, therefore, to understand clearly what is involved in the problem of inspiration. Dods says,

"The problem in regard to inspiration is, to adjust truly the Divine and the human factors. The various theories which have been framed and held differ from one another regarding the proportion which the human element in the process and in the result bears to the Divine."¹

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1. Dods, Marcus, The Bible, Its Origin and Nature, pp. 106-107.

In our consideration of the historical survey of biblical authority, this same problem will assert itself again and again.

B. The Reformation Period

The Protestant Reformation has been characterized as the Biblical movement.¹ This is indicative of the place which the Bible held in the great movement of the early sixteenth century. It is universally recognized that there were reformers before the Reformation. A study of these men shows that they held a very high regard for the Scriptures. They recognized a unique power in the Bible. This is characteristic also of those who have become known as "the Reformers." One writer points out that the Bible held the predominant place and appeal for authority among the Reformers by contrasting the Reformation to Scholasticism and Mysticism in the following way:

"Scholasticism was an attempt to climb into heaven by laborious intellectual effort. ...Mysticism, on the other hand, tried to make, or find, heaven in the heart. ...To enter heaven's gate men needed the key at whose touch the bolts would fly, the solid leaves roll back, and the seekers after salvation pass from the thick darkness into the glad, inspiring light of God. ...This is indeed the lesson of the Reformation. ...The Bible, and the Bible alone, delivered the

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1. Urquhart, John, The Inspiration and Accuracy of the Holy Scriptures, p. 122.

nations, led out the Church, gave it light, freedom, spiritual beauty, manly strength and temporal prosperity."¹

One main cry of Protestantism against the Roman Church was that the Pope could not be the authoritative interpreter. Protestants held that to do so would be putting the Pope in the place of the Bible. Chillingworth argued;

"If I should pretend that I should submit to the laws of the king of England, but should indeed resolve to obey them in that sense which the king of France should put upon them, whatsoever it were, I presume every understanding man would say, that I indeed obey the king of France, and not the king of England."²

So then, if the Pope has the sole right to interpret, it is he who is obeyed and not the Scripture. Rather, the Reformers advocated that the Pope and also the Roman Church were subject to the Scriptures, not the Scriptures to them.

There are some who hold that the Reformers simply changed from one external authority to another. Gibson says that this is an entire mistake. He holds that while they gave up the idea of an infallible Church, what they put in its place was "the perpetual presence of Christ Himself with His people, the witness of the Spirit with the word responded to by the Spirit-guided soul."³

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1. Ibid., pp. 116-117.
2. Sheldon, H.C., History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. II, p. 69.
3. Gibson, J. Monro, The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture, p. 109.

1. Luther.

As observed in Luther, Protestantism began with a very profound reverence for the Scripture, but without any precise theory or statement on biblical authority. It is true that Luther was rather free in his treatment of some of the books of the Bible. He granted that some parts evince greater or fuller inspiration than others. Yet Luther's final position was that "the Bible is superior not only to St. Peter and St. Paul, but even to all angels and to the humanity of Christ himself because he declares that the word he speaks is not his own but His that sent him."¹ In interpreting the Scriptures, Luther held that what urges Christ is Scripture, and what does not stand this test is not Scripture. He rejected the allegorical method, but held that Christ is the man whom everything in the Scripture concerns.

Though it is true that Luther exercised freedom in the rest of the Scripture, yet he held to their being an infallible authority. This is seen in his own statement:

"If anyone should press thee with expressions which speak of works, and which thou canst not bring into accord with the others, thou ought'st to say, since Christ Himself is the treasure whereby I am bought and redeemed, I care not the slightest jot for all the expressions of Scripture, to set up by them the

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1. Smith, Henry P., Essays in Biblical Interpretation, p.78.

righteousness of works and to lay down the righteousness of faith. For I have on my side the Master and the Lord of Scripture, to whom I will keep, and I know He will not lie nor deceive me,--and let them go on in their hostile cry, that the Scriptures contradict themselves. At the same time it is impossible that the Scriptures should contradict themselves, save only that the unintelligent, coarse and hardened hypocrites imagine it. ...In the Word thou shouldest hear nothing else than thy God speaking to thee."¹

2. Zwingli.

The Swiss Reformer was generally less bold in dealing with the Scriptures than was Luther. He allowed some inaccuracies in historical matters. He maintained that the Scriptures came from God and not from man, and that the Scriptures as the Word of God were to be held in the highest honor.

3. Calvin.

Calvin was not as free as Luther in his criticism of the Biblical writers and probably less free than was Zwingli. Sheldon says that Calvin seems to have been inclined to the theory of verbal inspiration.² He held that the testimony of the Spirit through the Scripture is superior to reason.

In a confession of faith drawn up by him for the churches in France he speaks of the Bible as that

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1. Urquhart, op. citp. pp. 125-126.

2. Sheldon, op. cit., p.78.

"on which our faith should be founded, as there is no other witness proper and competent to decide what the majesty of God is, but God Himself."¹ In referring to II Timothy 3:16,² he says,

"...we know that God hath spoken to us, and are fully convinced that the prophets did not speak at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare. ...The Law and the Prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will and pleasure of men, but dictated by the Holy Spirit. ...This is the first clause (of the text) that we owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God; because it has proceeded from Him alone, and has nothing belonging to man mixed with it."³

This statement is indicative of the verbal inspiration point of view, which maintains that the writers were so inspired with the message of God that their writing was the very Word of God, and that in obeying the divine urge to write, they were miraculously kept from error though there is evidence of difference in personality and style. It is obvious that such a view holds the Bible to be completely authoritative in every sphere in which it speaks.

4. Summary

There were others of this period who set forth

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1. Urquhart, op. cit. p. 78.
2. "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God..."
3. Urquhart, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

the theory of verbal inspiration in such unequivocal terms that they emphasized even the vowel points. They went to such lengths as to hold that the writers were mere mechanisms in the hand of the Holy Spirit and so the Scriptures were authoritative to the minutest degree.

In summing up the view of the Scriptures among the reformers in general, Gibson quotes from a number of the documents of the period and then draws the following conclusion:

"From such authorative documents of the Reformation as these it is abundantly evident that there was no shifting from the external authority of an infallible Church to the equally external authority of an infallible Book, but an appeal first to what the Scriptures manifest themselves to be to the devout soul, and next, as the supreme authority, to the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man."¹

William Tyndale, who first translated the Scriptures into the English language told a priestly opponent, "If God spare my life I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

In the years that followed poor artisans and peasants appeared before judges, priests, and kings with no weapon save some knowledge of the Scriptures. They emerged from the conflict more assured than ever that it was the final authority which all of life must take into account.

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1. Gibson, op. cit., p. 112.

"The Church of the Reformation sprang from the Scripture, and was wise enough to know, and loyal enough to acknowledge that, in the fullest acceptance of it as the Word, not of man, but of God, lay its strength and its life."¹

C. Post-Reformation Period

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to follow a strictly chronological order in writing a history of biblical authority; for many forces were at work and just as many views of the Scripture were evident. Thus for a survey of this period, which will be considered roughly as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, only a few of the major movements will be given attention.

1. The Federal School.

This school was an attempt to bring together various groups of Protestantism which appealed to the Scripture and agreed that the Scripture was a divinely given system of truth which was the same substantially in both Old and New Testaments. Similarities in the covenant relationship of the Old were applied to the elect in the New. The members of this group held that the Scripture could contain nothing unworthy of God. The tendency was toward a strict verbal inspiration theory and so completely authoritative. They rejected

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1. Urquhart, op. cit., p. 130.

the allegorical method and an historical view was given some consideration. Smith says that it is difficult to overestimate the influence of this school on the Protestant Churches, both in Germany and Great Britain in the seventeenth century.

2. The Rise of Reason.

There were constant attacks on the orthodox position. One of them was that the philosophers were demanding that human reason had rights and that these should be given respect. It is evident that a relation of revelation and reason was coming into view, for there was a growing respect for the concept of a progressive revelation, a development in revelation which went hand in hand with the successive stages of human history. The exponents of this cause claimed that much of the Old Testament had a rational basis and was not merely the giving of oracles from God. While orthodox scholars insisted that the Old Testament is the direct work of God, yet from some quarters questions were being raised about the human element in the Scripture.

3. Pietistic Influence.

The Pietists called attention to the Bible as

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1. Smith, op. cit., p. 97.

a book of religion rather than a book on theology. The Bible was considered by Francke and others as the fruit of religious experience, not of mechanical dictation. They claimed that religious experience is a movement of the heart toward God and our fellow men. The Pietists held that only the regenerate could really understand the Bible.¹ Their emphasis was that the Bible should be studied for edification rather than for dogma. While this attitude did not strictly depart from Scriptural authority, it made room for questioning the importance of some parts, since not all parts were equally valuable for edification. In fact, "Semler, who is called the father of German rationalism, was of Pietistic training, and in fact a truly religious man."²

4. Beginnings of Historical Criticism.

In the middle of the eighteenth century voices were being heard which questioned the accepted pattern and treatment of such things as date, authorship, and the mode of composition of each book, especially the earlier Old Testament Books. There was an emphasis on the human element in the writing and make-up of the various books. Sodergron puts it pointedly when he says,

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1. The Pietists took the declaration of Paul, I Cor. 2:14, "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit because they are spiritually discerned" at face value. This led to some extravagant exegesis.
2. Smith, op. cit., p. 118.

"Inspiration regards the Bible as a divine book; Criticism regards it as a human book."¹ It was in this period and by this approach that the seeds and first sprouts of the idea of a progressive revelation appeared.

Regarding the Bible as primarily a human book as indicated above lessened the appeal to it as a source of authority in matters of Christian life and practice.

D. The Modern Period

The main trend of theological thought through the last century and over into the first few decades of the present century concerned the development of historical or higher criticism. Concerning this period, one writer says,

"The nineteenth century witnessed a very thorough application to the Scriptures of the same methods of historical and literary criticism to which all ancient documents were subjected. The result was the discovery of the composite character of many books, the rearrangement of the Biblical literature in the probable order of its writing, and the use of the documents as historical sources, not so much for the periods they profess to describe, as those in and for which they were written."²

The most prominent influences of the critical approach may be summarized as follows: (1) The theory of a strict verbal inspiration has not held a prominent place in the thinking of most theologians. Some feel that it has

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1. Sodergren, C.J., Is the Bible Alive and Is Jesus God? p. 56.
2. Coffin, Henry Sloane, Some Christian Convictions, p.12.

scarcely any exponents left.¹ (2) The tendency is to take into account more the personality of the writer and more of the historical environment. That is to say, recognition is given to natural factors which condition the supernatural elements in revelation. (3) It has tended to make Bible scholars rely more on the general scope of Bible teaching and to view it less as a collection of Divine oracles. (4) It advocated the conception of revelation as progressive and educative and therefore not an absolute standard in all respects. (5) It emphasizes the historical Jesus rather than an eternal Son of God. (6) The tendency is to lay great stress on the ethical standard of the Bible as grounds for the divine authority. (7) It tends to discount the Scripture as² the basis for authoritative appeal.

This period cannot be passed over without mention of some of the more radical views of criticism. There were those who would and did discard many of the canonized books as being at all authoritatively from God. At some time or another nearly every portion of Scripture came under this kind of treatment by some critic.

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1. Sheldon, History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. II, p. 292.
2. For a fuller treatment of the points listed see especially Coffin, op. cit., p. 12, and Sheldon, op. cit., pp. 292-293.

There were still others who held that everything needed to have a naturalistic explanation. Some accounted most of the gospels as pure myths. In short, the authority of the Bible was highly questioned in this period both in extent and nature.

Concerning the contribution of higher criticism toward determining the authority of the Scriptures, Coffin has the following to say:

"In a sense each Protestant Christian is entitled to make up a Bible of his own out of the books which record the historical discoveries of God. ...Unless a book commends itself to his own spiritual judgment, he is under no obligation to receive it as the word of God. ...If, then, the authority of the Bible depends upon the witness of the Spirit within our own souls, its authority has definite limits."¹

This statement represents the attitude generally held among advocates of higher criticism of the past century.

Another rather prominent attitude toward the Scripture was "that the inspiration of the Bible is similar in kind, if not in degree, to the 'inspiration' of a Shakespeare, a Dante, or a Goethe."² In other words, the sacred writers had only an inspiration of inflated natural genius which they applied in the writing of religious literature.

It must be remembered that though the Bible has

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1. Coffin, op. cit., pp. 64,71.
2. Sodergren, op. cit. p. 7.

undergone severe criticism within the past century by a large number of theologians, there were many who have held to older and orthodox views of inspiration and authority. Some of the views were modified to some degree.

F. Summary and Conclusion

It is evident that the reformers made the Bible the basis of authority for the Church. The degree which they trusted the Scripture as authoritative is not completely clear from their own writings. That some of them could discard portions of the Bible "as straw" indicates that though they held it in such high esteem, they did question certain parts of it as being ultimately the very Word of God. This struggle to determine the relationship between the human and the divine elements in order to form a view of Scriptural authority has not ceased even to the present time.

While the tendency of the Reformation period and for a century following was to adhere to a rather strict, dogmatic view of the Bible as being the very Word of God and so completely authoritative, the tendency in more recent times has been to emphasize the human element, thus granting many errancies both in historical interpretation and textual content.

Though there is no complete, clearly marked, specific time dating when the breaking away from one

view of biblical authority to another is evident, yet in general this chapter points out a certain evolution in the process. The profound reverence for and the strict authoritative acceptance of the Bible in the Reformation era was gradually weakened in the couple of centuries which followed through the influence of the Pietists and the Rationalists. The Pietists maintained that the Bible was not a book of theology but a book of religion, and therefore it should not be studied for dogma. The Rationalists laid the foundation for historical criticism. During the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries this critical attitude held the field. To be sure, there were many protests, many who did not follow this point of view, but in the main the scholars viewed the Bible as mainly human, and therefore its authority very definitely limited.

By tracing the historical development briefly, this chapter gives a background of the influences which play upon the formation of a view of biblical authority. This will aid in understanding Brunner, for he has inherited these influences. This is observable by his referring to the views held in the time period herein covered. These influences are general in nature. It will be the purpose of the next chapter to point out the more specific and immediate influences upon Brunner's thought in relation to biblical authority.

CHAPTER III

SPECIFIC FACTORS INFLUENCING BRUNNER'S THOUGHT

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A. Introduction

There is a sense in which man is the sum total of his experiences or influences. It is beyond question that any person's thinking is considerably molded by events which occur about him and to him, and by persons with whom he is brought in contact, either personally or through their writings. One cannot reach an adequate understanding of any person or his thinking totally apart from the time or place in which the person lived or lives. For this reason, the present chapter is included in this study of Emil Brunner.

This chapter will not attempt to deal exhaustively with the converging streams of influence upon Brunner's thought. That is not necessary for the purpose of this thesis; and, furthermore, it is a highly impossible task. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to set forth certain direct or specific observable factors which have aided Brunner in arriving at his theology. The previous chapter was concerned with the historical or general background which would be of value in understanding Brunner and his view of biblical authority. This chapter will be more specific in character dealing with the more immediate factors of influence which in turn will furnish material

for understanding his concept of biblical authority.

B. His Education

The information concerning Brunner's education is very limited. There is very little reference to it in his own writings, at least those available in English. But the predominant theological education of his student days, which even yet prevails in many places, was that of modernism or socialistic liberalism. He was schooled in the thought of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and other leaders of modern theology. Man was considered the measure of all things. Reason was the determining factor of truth. In his preface to Revelation and Reason, Brunner seems to have this very attitude toward reason in mind when he says,

"It is no accident that there are plenty of books with the title of Reason and Revelation, but there is none with the title of Revelation and Reason. ...The reversal of this order, suggested by the title of this book, is the necessary consequence of a theological outlook which understands even the man who has not been gripped by the Christian message--and his reason--from the standpoint of the Word of God, as in my book Man in Revolt. We begin our inquiry with revelation and then work outwards to reason."¹

In another place he says,

"Here lies the real cause of man's antagonism to faith. ...The enmity does not come from reason as such; but it is born from our claim that reason is the measure of all truth. The source of antagonism against faith is the pride of reason."²

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1. Brunner, H. Emil, Revelation and Reason, p. ix.
2. Brunner, H. Emil, The Theology of Crisis, p. 43.

Emil Brunner well understands this boast of reason, for he was schooled in it.

His training is reflected in his attitude toward biblical criticism. In attacking a certain critical historical view of Jesus, he says,

"Lest we open the door to misunderstandings let me say that I myself am an adherent of a rather radical school of Biblical criticism, which, for example, does not accept the Gospel of John as an historical source and which finds legends in many parts of the synoptic gospels."¹

This is at least an indication, if not a hangover, of his liberal training.

Different writers recognize Brunner's liberal theological education. Horton points out that like Barth,² Brunner was trained as a liberal Protestant. Another writer indicates the kind of academic atmosphere in which Brunner was trained by the following:

"Emil Brunner...was brought up in the home of a university professor. Philosophically he was influenced by Bergson, and breathed in the liberal theology as he studied in Union Theological Seminary in New York City having received the Francis Brown Scholarship."³

Here in his education is seen one of the waters which make up the stream of Brunner's thinking.

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1. Ibid., p. 41.
2. Cf. Horton, Walter M., Neo-Orthodox Conceptions of Biblical Authority in Current Religious Thought, p. 24, Vol. VIII, no. 3, March 1948.
3. Kuroda, Andrew Y., The Doctrine of Revelation in the Theology of Emil Brunner. A Thesis, pp. 19-20.

C. Conditions in Europe

One has only to pause for a moment and recall the happenings in Europe from 1914 to 1918 and the years following to realize that they played an important role in the mind of thinking individuals. The more recent war has again emphasized this. This role is pointedly stated by one writer in his comment upon the influence of the time. He says,

"The tragedy of the World War brought with it disillusionment as to the power of social idealisms, and a deep sense of the futility of human exhortation."¹

Again the effect of the war of 1914-1918 is noticed in the following:

"In the pre-war era, every triumph of science and invention seemed to demonstrate the rationality of the universe and the power of mind over matter. ...Man spake fast and it was done; he commanded and things stood fast. But now it appears that the delusion of power was from the same cause as Chanticleer's delusion that his crowing made the sun to rise. The world had appeared to be responsive to our ideals because it was moving automatically, for the time being, in the direction that we wanted; now it has suddenly gone into reverse, and all our crackling expostulations cannot stop it."²

There was a growing sense upon men during the war that a tragic destiny had laid hold of them, from which they were unable to free themselves. This event more than any

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1. Aubrey, Edwin Ewart, Present Theological Tendencies, p. 74.
2. Horton, Walter M., Contemporary Continental Theology, p. 88.

formal logic disproved the idealistic philosophy which was so prevalent. Barth tells us that he was thrown into a profound "embarrassment" trying to preach his liberal social gospel in wartime, while big guns just over the horizon in Alsace were punctuating his exhortations with ironical comment.¹ One thing which he discovered was that he could no longer, with honest conviction, "explain God by identifying him with any contemporary social movement or tendency, or with anything temporal or human."² Brunner, as well as Barth, had come to the same conclusion. They had come to doubt that human society was on an upward march toward the Millennium. Rather it seemed that society, and even the Church, was headed toward perdition.

The close of the war did not bring an end to this feeling of a need for a new evaluation of the tone of theology. Rolston speaks of the terrible years which followed the war "when the shams of life were torn away and men ceased to find peace in the easy optimism of the prosperous days before the war."³ Aubrey compares the postwar situation in Germany with that in Denmark after the Napoleonic Wars in Kierkegaard's time. Both had been

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 97.

2. Ibid., p. 98.

3. Rolston, Homes, A Conservative Looks to Barth and Brunner, p. 145.

severed of some of their territory. Both were under financial strain. They went through internal political dissension. Both had part of their country placed under international control. Then he makes this observation:

"May not this parallel have something to do with the attraction which Barth's philosophy (and it may be added, Brunner's philosophy, for he was the systemizer of the Barthian movement) had for the Germans after 1918? The note of desperation and apocalyptic longing gained a new relevance."¹

The main emphasis up to this point in considering the conditions in Europe has been on the social situations. Their influence has been related to certain theological emphases, but the purpose mainly has been to indicate the social conditions. Now the consideration changes mainly to the theological scene.

"All human perplexities are ultimately theological,"² once remarked Cardinal Manning, and there were plenty in Europe at this time. The revolt against the optimism of modernism was in a great part caused by the breakdown of the social and cultural life. Men like Brunner set out to reanalyze the foundations of theological teaching. The war had made them realize that the goodness of man was not so good. Their attention was

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1. Aubrey, op. cit., pp. 73-74.
2. Cf. Keller and Stewart, Protestant Europe: Its Crisis and Outlook, p. 139.

presently called to the Bible. They read with the eyes of shipwrecked people whose everything had gone overboard. The Bible appeared in a new light. It began to speak to them. It was out of this experience that Barthianism¹ sprouted and grew.

The theology of crisis began as a reaction against the ineffectiveness of modern Christianity. That it was ineffective was especially in evidence during the war and following when "faith in the basic soundness of man with the Spencerian idea of inevitable progress"² was seen to have had its props knocked out from under it.

Another very specific influence on the theological front, especially to the Barthians, was one which did not come as a result of the war, but simultaneously with it. This was the dissemination of Kierkegaard's works in German. There is no question but that the sociological conditions of the time supported the acceptance which these writings received. As Aubrey points out, "the tragedy of the World War brought with it disillusionment as to the power of social idealisms, and a deep sense of the futility of human exhortation"³. Kierkegaard offered a new approach to the situation. Reference is here made

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1. For a more detailed discussion of this beginning see the quotation in Kuroda, op. cit., pp. 17-18.
2. Aubrey, op. cit. pp. 58-59.
3. Aubrey, op. cit., p. 74. See also reference to Aubrey on pp. 32-33.

to two writers who recognize this influence. These could be multiplied many times. In speaking of the crisis theology, Aubrey says:

"While most histories of nineteenth-century philosophy ignore Kierkegaard his influence was fairly steadily felt in Germany and culminated in the translation in 1907-1911 of his complete works. This edition revived the interest in his views and was followed by a rapidly accumulating series of studies of his thought."¹

After discussing Kierkegaard, Horton says,

"Certainly the translation of his works from Danish into German, begun shortly before the war, must be described as one of the determinative influences upon contemporary philosophy and theology."²

That Brunner was influenced considerably by Kierkegaard is apparent from the many references to him in Brunner's writings. In one of his more recent books Brunner refers to him in the following manner:

"In Soren Kierkegaard the Protestant Church possesses a philosopher of first rank, whose thought is not yet adequately known in spite of some fifty years of the study of his works; far less is it fully utilized. But Kierkegaard does not stand alone, although he stands head and shoulders above the rest."³

Kierkegaard called attention to the sinfulness of man. This was in contrast to the accepted view of his day and of Brunner's early theological views. An investigation of the validity of this claim of Kierkegaard led Brunner not only to examine his own theological thought,

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1. Aubrey, op. cit., p. 73.
2. Horton, op. cit., p. 91.
3. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 394.

but to a consideration and investigation of the biblical point of view.

The social conditions in Europe with certain new theological insights were great aids and motivations in getting Brunner to re-view his theological positions. The thought that Christianity had failed in relating itself adequately to the times, led to this re-view. This investigation prepared the way for his theology of crisis.

D. Karl Barth

Though reference previously has been made to Barth, this section is especially reserved for his influence upon Brunner. To indicate the tremendous influence of Barth in present theology, attention is called to the following statements:

"Karl Barth is unquestionably the most discussed personality in the theological world today."¹

"One is hardly considered well-informed today in Europe unless he can discuss Karl Barth."²

"Barth by the boldness and uncompromising severity of his mind, stands out among his contemporaries like a tall, bare measuring rod. One can see how diversely they (continental theologians) are related to one another by observing how diversely they are related to him."³

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1. Rolston, op. cit., p. 18, a quotation from Dr. Pauck.
2. Ibid., p. 18, a quotation from Federal Council Bulletin, December 1930, p. 21.
3. Horton, op. cit., p. xx.

Horton makes a statement which indicates Barthian influence. He says, "Brunner began his career as a theologian with something like a sudden conversion to Barthian principles. ...under Barth's guidance (he) became an enthusiastic advocate of the theology of the revealed word of God."¹ Karl Barth had come to hold the Bible in a much more authoritative light. He saw that the Bible was the only source disclosing the revelation of God. "Barth never tires in his attempt to call theology back to the scriptural standard,"² says Rolston. His influence was an important factor in causing Emil Brunner to see the Bible in a new light. Previously the Bible could rather easily be set aside, and only the views of criticism be considered. However, if the Scriptures are the source of knowledge of God, then they demand study and re-study. This Brunner was led to do.

In discussing Brunner's philosophical theology, Aubrey points out that it is Brunner's debt to Barth that the latter showed him that the essential root of all significant reflection is the crucial question: how is man to be justified? It is the ancient Pauline question. Brunner places, primarily as a result of Barth's influence,

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1. Horton, Neo-Orthodox Conceptions of Biblical Authority in Current Religious Thought, p. 24, March 1948.
2. Rolston, op. cit., p. 133.

the doctrine of justification by faith at the center of his thinking.¹ A consideration of this doctrine drives one to the Bible. Barth's influence on Brunner's attitude toward the Scripture, then, is readily seen.

In the preface to his The Divine Imperative, Brunner says that he is glad to admit that he has learned much from Karl Barth.²

One has only to read Brunner to discover that Karl Barth wielded, and wields, a great influence upon him. After the war Barth and Brunner had adjacent parishes in Switzerland. It must be understood, however, that Brunner is no puppet of Barth. This is apparent from their well-known point of disagreement.³ Commentators and critics alike recognize that Brunner is one of the chief exponents of Barthianism.

E. Summary

This chapter shows some of the main specific influences which converge upon Brunner's thinking. He was trained in a liberal theology, where man was made the measure of all things. The emphasis was that there was an upward trend in society, the kingdom of God was going

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1. Aubrey, op. cit., p. 90.

2. Cf. The Divine Imperative, p. 11.

3. For a discussion on the point of dissension, see David Cairns, Introduction in God and Man, pp. 18-32.

to be brought in by man's doings. Brunner acknowledges an acceptance of much from biblical criticism. However, he is at odds with many of its conclusions.

The shattering of the feeling of self-satisfaction caused by the war resulted in driving Brunner and others to a re-examination of their theological foundations. This examination led directly to the Bible. The war had pointed its finger of accusation against the message of the Church. God was not to be identified with any social movement. The theory of the essential goodness of man failed. It looked as though even the Church was headed for perdition rather than the Millennium. The people longed for some more sure word from God.

The Russian novelist, Dostoievski, said that only by suffering is life brought to its highest possibilities. The meaning of life is found only by suffering.¹ It seems this was necessary in Europe to bring men like Barth and Brunner to the source, for it was in such a situation that their attention was directed to the Bible. The theology of crisis began emerging.

Coupled with these extraneous conditions came the spread of Kierkegaard's works. These had a decided influence on Brunner. But undoubtedly, the greatest single factor influencing Brunner is that of Karl Barth, the master theologian of this generation and a very close friend of Emil Brunner.

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1. Cf. Aubrey, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

CHAPTER IV

BRUNNER'S POSITION ON BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

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A. Introduction

Showing the new emphasis on the Bible in Barthianism, with which Brunner is identified, Horton says:

"Before Barth, the Bible was to many liberal Protestants only a great piece of historical literature, behind which they were dimly aware of 'something like the tremors of an earthquake or like the thundering of ocean waves against thin dikes'; since Barth there is a breach in those dikes, and the Bible has once more become to us what it was to our fathers, a personal Word from a living God, speaking directly to our present state."¹

If the Bible is a "personal Word from a living God," then it speaks with authority. The main concern of this chapter will be to discover how certainly the words of the Bible are this "personal Word" and so authoritative, as held by Brunner.

In order for God to be known, or for a Word from Him to be known, revelation is necessary. One's view of this revelation as given in the Bible plays a large role in his determining whether one believes that what the Bible says is authoritative, and in what realms it is an authority. Therefore, this chapter will begin with a study of Brunner's view of revelation. It will proceed by

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1. Horton, *Contemporary Continental Theology*, p. 219.

pointing out Brunner's distinction between the Word of God and the word of man in the biblical account. To clarify further Brunner's position of biblical authority, his views on the relation of the views of the Bible and the views of science will be discussed. Furthermore, his use and treatment of various passages of the Scriptures will be considered.

B. General Principles Involved in Brunner's View of Biblical Authority

1. Brunner's Concept of Revelation

Revelation is what God does in disclosing Himself to man. Brunner speaks of it as the central concept of theology.¹ It is the central pillar on which the whole structure of Christian theology must rest.² Brunner holds that the base of the Christian Church and of real revelation is the Scriptures, for "the Scriptures alone are God's word."³ Therefore, his concept of revelation is directly related to the Bible.

a. The Need of Revelation.

Brunner maintains that revelation is necessary for man to know God. This is true because of the distance between God and man; there is a qualitative difference between God and man. This view is in contrast to modern

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1. Cf. Brunner, *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 18.
2. Cf. Horton, *Contemporary Continental Theology*, p. 219.
3. Brunner, *The Theology of Crisis*, pp. 18-19.

liberal theology which maintains that there is no great difference between the two. In liberal theology "Christian experience", mysticism, and reason are considered sufficient for determining a knowledge of God. To Brunner these attempts to bridge the distance are delusions, for feeling and experience lie wholly on this side of the line between time and eternity.¹ The only possibility of traversing this distance is by the Word, that is, the revelation of God.

Again Brunner emphasizes the need of a revelation by pointing out that history would be without meaning apart from it. He says:

"...there is no possible philosophy of history. Philosophy consists in interpretation on the basis of a unity, of a universal, of some principle. The notion of a history of the world as a unity is a bastard begotten of Christian faith and rationalism. Christian faith knows nothing of any history of the world in the sense of unity. Its unity is not historical, but that which belongs at once to...primordial history, and... the consumation of history, i.e., history not as moved by forces within itself, but within its relation to a creative and redeeming God. ...what is of interest is the lightning-flash in history of what lies behind history, the effective self-assertion of a factor that by its very nature does away with history, viz. the reality of divine revelation."²

Professor Brunner holds that the Bible is a record of how this distance is bridged. This record gives meaning and unity to history.

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1. Cf. Lowrie, *Theology of Crisis*, p. 167.
2. Brunner, *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 126.

b. The Nature of Revelation.

(1) It is a movement from God to Man.

Rolston speaks of the Barthian belief in two different worlds, that of time and that of eternity.

"Between these two there is an infinite qualitative distinction. Revelation to them is a downward movement from God to man. The Word of God is God's revelation of himself to man."¹

The idea here is that it is not reason which discovers God, but rather that God must take the initiative if man is to know God. It is not man seeking God, but God seeking man.

"Revelation always means that something hidden is made known, that a mystery is unveiled,"² says Brunner. However, with the biblical revelation it was not merely hidden. He says, "the Biblical revelation is the absolute manifestation of something that had been absolutely concealed."³ Because of this the biblical revelation is a means of receiving knowledge differently from ordinary methods. Brunner puts it this way:

"Hence it (biblical revelation) is a way of acquiring knowledge that is absolutely and essentially--and not only relatively opposite to the usual human method of acquiring knowledge, by means of observation, research, and thought. Revelation means a supernatural kind of knowledge--given in a marvelous way--of something that

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1. Rolston, op. cit., p. 185.
2. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 23.
3. Ibid., p. 23.

man, of himself, could never know. The absolutely mysterious is not only partially hidden from the natural knowledge of man; it is wholly inaccessible to man's natural facilities for research and discovery."¹

The reason why such knowledge must be a movement from God to man is that man has accessibility only to what in principle is called the "world." The kind of knowledge spoken of here lies outside this "world" realm. That is, it is supramundane. "To say that it is supramundane, and that it can only be known through revelation, really means the same thing."² The very nature of this knowledge or mystery, then, is such that it never will be known except through revelation. Further evidence that it is of such nature is the very fact that man cannot perceive it of himself, but that he can receive tidings of it through revelation. This indicates that it is something above and beyond this world.

If, then, man is to know anything of this unconditioned mystery, it is essential that it comes to man, for it cannot come from him. Brunner stands with Barth in his assertion that "God is unknowable by men; and yet we may know what God knows, if we accept his point of view,"³ namely his revelation. The Bible, according to Brunner, records, among other things, this movement from

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1. Ibid., p. 23.

2. Ibid., p. 23.

3. Aubrey, Present Theological Tendencies, p. 84. Quoted from Barth's Romans, p. 155.

God to man.

(2) It is a Personal Revelation.

The Scriptures testify of Christ. This is the very purpose of their existence, for only through the Bible can we understand Christ. The function of the Bible is to point to Him, not to serve as a divine oracle.

Brunner points out the fact that revelation is personal when he contrasts the Christian's faith in his Scriptures to that of the Hindu or the Mohammedan. He says:

"The Koran as well as the Indian holy books are divine oracles, text-books of revealed wisdom, law and rites. But for the true Christian the Bible is not a divine oracle of instruction; it is the testimony or witness to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The revelation of God is not a book or a doctrine, but a living person. The relation between the Scripture and this person is clearly one of subordination: 'Search the Scriptures...and they are they which testify of me.'"¹

To show that this is the Reformation doctrine, Brunner appeals to Luther in the following way:

"To use the words of Luther: 'Christ is the King and Lord of Scripture.' He, perhaps the most congenial interpreter of Scripture the Church has ever had, asserted the subordination of the Scripture to Christ, in such well-known utterances as these: 'The Scriptures are the crib, wherein Christ is laid'; 'If our enemies uphold the Scriptures against Christ, we on the other hand if necessary uphold Christ against the Scriptures'; 'The Scriptures are apostolical and canonical in so far as they teach Christ, and no further'; 'It is for Christ's sake that we believe in the Scriptures, but it is not for the Scriptures' sake that we believe in Christ.'"²

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1. Brunner, *The Word and the World*, p. 83-84.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Brunner recognizes that the Church has not always maintained this clear vision of the relation between Christ and the Bible, this emphasis upon revelation as being a personal revelation.

The Scriptures "are not in themselves the revelation," says Brunner, "but only so far as and because they have this meaning (Christ is the Revelation), just as the words that constitute a sentence are not true in themselves, but in virtue of their single common meaning in the sentence".¹ The words of Scripture are spread out to make the meaning of the one Word, Jesus Christ, clear. This is the purpose of both the Old and New Testaments.

This emphasis is recognized by Lowrie when he says, "It is characteristic of the Barthian Theology that it thinks predominantly of the Mediator as the Revealer", and that "revelation is to be regarded also as an act, as a deed."² This act, this deed, finds its fullest expression in Jesus Christ.

Brunner again states this principle in a recent writing, where he is distinguishing between Truth and truths. He says:

"God does not reveal this and that; he does not reveal a number of truths. He reveals Himself by communicating Himself. It is the secret of His person which He reveals, and the secret of His person is just this,

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1. Brunner, Philosophy of Religion, p. 152.
2. Lowrie, Theology of Crisis, p. 152.

that He is a self-communicating will; that God is Love. ...This is a knowledge which stands beyond all analogies of philosophical theology or religious conceptions of God. It has no parallel whatever. That God is, in Himself, self-communicating Love--this is the doctrine of the Bible alone."¹

Another way in which Dr. Brunner puts this same emphasis is found in his book, Revelation and Reason:

"In the Bible God and revelation are so intimately connected that there is no other revelation than that which comes to us from God, and there is no other knowledge of God than that which is given to us through revelation. ...The real content of revelation in the Bible is not 'something', but God Himself. Revelation is the self-manifestation of God. The real revelation, that is, the revelation with which the whole Bible is concerned, is God's self-manifestation."²

It is this personal concern with which the Bible deals mainly; it is only remotely concerned with the impersonal aspects, the natural knowledge which can be gained apart from a supernatural disclosure. What the Bible reveals concerning this main emphasis is authoritative.

Another note in relation to this personal revelation is that it is a revelation, a happening, in history but not of history.³ Christ is the "central point" of history, but history does not contain Him. He is over, above, and beyond history. This is stated in the following quotation:

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1. Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation, pp.37-38.
2. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, pp. 23,25.
3. Cf. Rolston, op. cit., pp. 188-189.

"Revelation, therefore comes into history, but is not of it. History is from beneath. Revelation is from above. Revelation precedes history, determines history, is manifest in history, but is distinct from history. Revelation means that God reveals Himself."¹

Therefore, Brunner recognizes the right of the historian to deal only with that part of the life of Jesus which is of history and in history, the historicity of Jesus. But, on the other hand, the historian is not qualified to speak of that which is in history but not of history. The historian may prove that Jesus was crucified under Pilate, but he cannot prove, or disprove, that the Son of God bore humanity's sin. He can investigate the empty tomb, but he can tell little or nothing about the nature of the body of the risen Christ.² This takes us into the realm of faith which will be treated under another heading. However, it is here brought to one's attention that the authority of the Bible's personal revelation is beyond natural means of proof, and lies rather in the realm of faith.

(3) It is a Veiled Revelation.

One of the characteristics of revelation is that, in a certain sense, it is veiled. Brunner says:

"The revelation of God can never be a true revelation without being, at the same time, a disguise, ἀκένωσις. 'God Incarnate' means that the Mediator, when he appeared in history, was true man. The Son of God

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1. Rolston, op. cit., p. 190, quoted from McConnachie's The Significance of Karl Barth. p. 119.
2. Cf. Rolston, op. cit., pp. 195 ff.

incognito walked among men."¹

Furthermore, he says that this veiling is also true of the Scriptures: "What I said of God Incarnate is true of the revelation in the Bible; to be a real revelation it must be veiled."² He characterizes this veiling in Scripture by saying that the Word of God in the Scriptures is not the same as the words of the Scriptures anymore than the Christ according to the flesh and the Christ according to the spirit are the same. Yet God speaks through the words of the Scriptures.³

This veiling is further evidenced by the fact that not everyone who reads the Scriptures discovers the Word of God. As one writer puts this view:

"The Bible has a disconcerting way of mirroring our own purposes and if our purpose is not serious or if it is contrary to the Biblical purpose it is the same as a closed book to us."⁴

In describing this viewpoint, Rolston calls attention to a number of Scripture passages which clearly illustrate it. Reference is made here to two only. First, there is the incident described in John 12: 28-29:

"Then there came a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him."

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1. Brunner, The Theology of Crisis, p. 18.
2. Ibid., p. 19.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 19.
4. Fox, K. F., The Barthian Conception of the Bible, a thesis, p. 16.

The record clearly points out that the voice was not given for Christ's sake, but for those standing near. And yet it had no significance to many in that audience. To them it was only a meaningless, thundering noise. Still others surmised that there was a supernatural element in it, but there was no divine message mediated to them. Only a few believers were able to receive the message when the voice of God spoke.¹

The second incident is in relation to Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Later when the Apostle relates the incident,² he points out that those who were with him did not understand the voice that spoke to him. In the description of the experience it is said that they heard the voice.³ Obviously he is saying that the voice had no meaning for them. They neither saw the risen Jesus nor did they receive a message from Him; they saw only a blinding light and heard a noise.⁴

So it is that the message of the Scriptures, the revelation of God, is hidden from many. It has no meaning for them. This brings us to the necessity of faith. Says Brunner, "Faith only can pierce the veil. 'Flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee.'⁵" One is now led to the

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1. Cf. Rolston, op. cit., p. 186.
2. Cf. Acts 22:5 ff.
3. Cf. Acts 9:3-8.
4. Cf. Rolston, op. cit., pp. 187-188.
5. Brunner, The Theology of Crisis, p. 18.

next point of this study, namely, faith. Revelation demands faith, for revelation can be received only by faith. So then, according to Brunner, the authority of the Bible lies in the realm of faith.

(4) It is a Revelation Received Through Faith.

Human reason has its place in the world, but God is not understandable by human reason. Faith is the only way in which to reach God. Revelation, according to Brunner, is described as "the objective aspect of faith. It is that which makes faith possible. So that faith is not generated from within; it is forced upon us from without."¹ In his Die Mystik und das Wort, Brunner says,

"Only at one point is God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, the Saviour."² Aubrey further explains this view of Brunner's by saying:

"Christ embodies for reason all the difficulties which revelation engenders: paradox, contradiction. But for faith he is the resolution of the paradox, the abolishment of the contradiction. ...Faith cannot be placed within the laws of thought, hence the God who is reached by reason cannot be the God of faith."³

Lowrie has a word here which will help in understanding this concept:

"That he (God) actually speaks, no man can know but the man to whom he speaks, who recognizes God's voice

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1. Aubrey, op. cit., p. 97. The reference is to Brunner's *Philosophie und Offenbarung*, pp. 22,24.
2. Ibid, p. 97.
3. Ibid., pp. 97-98.

by faith. Only such a man will be able to believe that God speaks also to other men and has spoken in time past."¹

Speaking of the object of this faith, Brunner says:

"Faith is not in relation to 'something,' to an idea, a truth, or a doctrine--not even a 'divinely revealed' doctrine--but it is wholly a personal relationship. ...The sole object of faith is Jesus Christ, God in His personal revelation. ...Faith is 'solely our relation to Jesus.' ...Every 'word' from God means Himself. ...faith is the humble acceptance of that. ...One who is our absolute Lord; faith is personal communion with God..."²

Faith, then, is the criterion for receiving the revelation, the Word of God. The inner meaning of the Bible can only be understood by faith. Therefore, faith is essential if the Bible is to be authoritative, for its authoritative message can only be comprehended by faith.

(5) It Includes a General Revelation.

For his belief in a general revelation, Brunner appeals to the Bible. He maintains that the Scriptures unmistakably teach a revelation in the Creation, or a general revelation.³ However, he distinguishes between a "natural theology" and general revelation. This revelation does not lead one to an experimental knowledge of God. "Biblical and natural theology...are bitterly and

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1. Lowrie, op. cit., pp. 164-165.
2. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, pp. 36,37.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 59,65.

fundamentally opposed."¹ He points out that only the Christian faith is in a position to see aright this revelation. The only basis for being able to speak of the general revelation in the Creation is the testimony² of the Bible. Therefore, the Bible is the authority for such a revelation. No other source speaks with certainty in this respect.

c. The Relation of Revelation to Inspiration.

Brunner does not commit himself to any theory of inspiration. He does not define clearly what he believes as to how the revelation of God is channeled through man. What one writer says of Barth, is true also of Brunner in this regard, he "makes no account of 'in-³spiration.'" While he does not make much of a positive statement about inspiration, he does have something to say against the traditional view of verbal inspiration. Brunner says that of all the misunderstandings of revelation and faith, the most disastrous mistake was the ortho-⁴dox concept of verbal inspiration. He holds that the idea of Biblical infallibility is impossible in the light of the work of higher criticism.

He says that the older theologians were confused

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1. Ibid., p. 61.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 62.

3. Lowrie, op. cit., p. 162.

4. Cf. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, pp. 7-12.

in their development of the doctrine of revelation. He adds:

"Their error consisted in the fact that they believed that they had dealt adequately with their task when they had developed a doctrine of the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. They did not understand that the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is not the revelation, but one of the forms of revelation, the incarnation in written form..."¹

He goes on to say that even the Bible points beyond itself when it speaks of revelation. Therefore, the Bible is not a verbal record of revelation per se. It cannot be taken word for word as the revelation. So then, in Brunner's distinction between revelation and inspiration, it can be concluded that the Bible carries a certain authority because it declares a revelation, not because it possesses inspiration. He does admit that the writers were inspired. However, their inspiration was not such that it kept them from error.² The Bible has the Word of God, but not all of its words are the Word of God. This will be discussed further under another heading.

d. Summary of Brunner's Concept of Revelation.

Brunner bases his concept of revelation on what the Bible declares. However, he does not take all that it says to be the revelation. His main criterion for

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1. Ibid., p. 12.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 128.

determining the revelation of God is its testimony to Jesus Christ.

If man is to know God, to have personal communion, God must reveal himself, for man possesses no means of discovering God. Revelation, therefore, is a movement from God to man. The purpose of the Old and New Testaments is to show this movement accomplished in Jesus Christ, the self-manifestation of God. This revelation of Christ is accomplished in the Old Testament by pointing to a fuller revelation. In the New Testament, the testimony of the Apostles witnesses to this fuller revelation. He emphasizes the fact that the revelation of God is not a revelation of things, but of person. This revelation is veiled, and faith only can pierce the veil. Therefore, the authority of the Bible is not in the realm of natural knowledge, or knowledge that is accessible by natural means, but in the realm of faith-knowledge. Faith is the act by which the revelation of God is received, and it is the only means by which it is received, for only by faith can man know that God speaks.

Dr. Brunner maintains that general revelation can be understood only on the basis of the Scriptural record. Natural theology is without authority.

He does not hold to a view of inspiration which says that the Bible is infallible. Instead, he recognizes fallibility. While he does not state definitely his view

of inspiration, he rather vehemently discards verbal inspiration and says that the Bible is not to be taken word for word as an authority. The reason for this is that there is a difference between the Word of God and the word of man in the Bible. This brings us to the next point in this study.

2. Brunner's Distinction Between the Word of God and the Word of Man.

Some mention has been made in the previous discussion about the Word of God and the word of man in the Bible. The purpose of this treatment is to present Brunner's thinking on this point more fully. This topic deserves special treatment because it takes one to the very heart of the problem under consideration in this study, namely, Brunner's view of biblical authority,

Man's word is not God's Word.¹ This is an axiom of the Barthians. The Bible and the Word of God² are not the same.

a. The Bible as the Word of Man.

"The words of the Scriptures are human," says Brunner.³ God makes use of human, frail, and fallible words of men who are liable to err. Again he says, "the Bible is the human, and therefore not the infallible,

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1. Cf. Rolston, op. cit., p. 72.

2. Cf. Brunner, The Theology of Crisis, p. 19.

3. Ibid., p. 19.

witness to the divine revelation."¹ Speaking of the human element of the Bible in another place he says:

"It is full of errors, contradictions, and misleading views of various circumstances relating to man, nature, and history. It contains many contradictions in its report of the life of Jesus; it is over-grown with legend, even in the New Testament. Some parts of it are written in very helpless, colloquial, and even faulty language, while others again rise to the level of the greatest works of literature."²

These quotations indicate how definitely the Bible is considered a human book. There is no attempt to defend it from errors and contradictions. The form of Scripture is definitely of man.

b. The Bible as the Word of God.

The Bible contains the Word of God. It reveals God. It is the bearer of God's message. It is the Word of God only in so far as it points beyond itself to the speaking subject--God. It is this Word which gives the Bible its authority.

Brunner distinguishes between Truth and truths. The latter, in the plural, means truths about the world. But Truth means "God Himself in His self-communication to man."³ The Bible is not an authority in the realm of truths, but it is in the realm of Truth. More will be said on this matter under a later topic in relation to

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1. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 276.
2. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 155.
3. Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation, p. 35.

biblical authority.

The Word of God in Scripture is seen by the testimony of the Scriptures to the Word of God. Brunner appeals to the Reformers here:

"For Luther and Calvin, those living exegetes, it was clear that the Scriptures are human testimony to divine truth, and that therefore the authority of the Scripture is not direct, but indirect."¹

That there is this testimony in the Bible to the Word of God shows that the Word is there, even though obscured by human language. The Prophets and the Apostles heard the Word of God directly. They testified to this Word. "The Word of God is found in the testimony to it of those to whom God has spoken,"² says Rolston in characterizing this concept. This Word in their words is what gives the Bible its authority. It is this content of the Scripture which³ gives it its authority, not the form of Scripture.

c. The means for Determining the Difference Between the Word of God and the Word of Man.

In considering Brunner's concept of revelation, it was pointed out that faith is essential to receiving the revelation. Faith responds to God's Word, and this faith is God's free gift.⁴ But faith is only one of the means for determining this difference.

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1. Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation, p. 35.
2. Rolston, op. cit., p. 71.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 75.
4. Cf. Brunner, The Word and the World, p. 76.

Brunner feels that higher criticism is an aid in discerning between the two. This aid is accomplished primarily in a negative way. While higher criticism, with its scientific investigation, cannot penetrate the Word of God, it does help to point out what is not the Word of God by showing error and fallibility, in short, what is the word of man. He says:

"He who would know what constitutes the word of God in the Bible, must devote himself to Biblical criticism. And, let it be understood, to searching, fearless, radical criticism. For it is really the will of God that we shall hear His word and not mistake ancient cosmology and Israelitish chronology for the word of God."¹

The third means for determining the difference between the Word of God and that of man, is the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. Brunner is clear on this, as is seen in the two following quotations:

"Whence do I know that this word is truly God's Word and therefore the truth? ...Have I a criterion by which to determine what can and what cannot be God's Word? ...In the New Testament this question is answered just as unambiguously as the question of the meaning of God's Word. The answer is: it is God Himself who tells you that the Gospel Word, which comes to you from outside, is His Word. He testifies to the truth of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit. This the old theologians called the testimonium spiritus sancti internum."²

Again he says:

"The doctrine of the Holy Spirit seeks to express just this: that even to hear the Word of God, to accept

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1. Brunner, The Theology of Crisis, p. 20.
2. Brunner, The Word and the World, pp. 62-63.

divine truth, is not man's act or man's possession: it is the act of God, and His gift from moment to moment. ...Even where innermost certainty is at stake...the movement which leads to certainty is not man's but God's. This is the meaning of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and in it the doctrine of the Word of God is completed."¹

Dr. Henry comments on Brunner's position in these words:

"But how differentiate the testimony of the Spirit and that of the written word? Simple! Wherever...Brunner finds higher critical and scientific objections to the Bible the Spirit will be silent."²

Thus it is seen that there are three main criteria for distinguishing between the Word of God and the word of man. They are faith, higher criticism, and the Holy Spirit, and the greatest of these is the Holy Spirit.

C. Specific Applications of These Principles

1. Biblical Authority in Relation to Scientific Matters.

It has been pointed out that Brunner differentiates between Truth and truths. The topic now under consideration has to do with subject matter which lies within the latter classification. Or, again, it is that which deals in the realm of the words of man.

a. The World-View of the Bible.

There are many attempts today to show that the Bible's view of the world does not conflict with views

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1. Ibid, p. 81.

2. Henry, Carl F. H., Notes on Brunner's Reason and Revelation, p. 13.

of science. Brunner does not concede such to be true.

He declares:

"It is both ridiculous and disgraceful, when the theological apologetic which for two hundred years fought against Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton, in the name of the Bible, now that the matter has been decided against it, maintains that there is no conflict at all. There is no doubt that there is one: the Biblical view of the world, like that of the ancient world as a whole, is geocentric. The modern science of astrophysics proves that the geocentric view of the world in the Bible is untenable."¹

Brunner points out that the Bible's view of time, as well as that of space, is untenable. Regarding the Bible's view of time, he says,

"The literal words of the Bible leave us in no doubt; in this neither Luther nor Calvin nor the other defenders of the theory were deceived, namely, that according to the view of the Bible the world is six thousand years old."²

Because of what science has found, it is impossible to return to the view of the world which is found in the Bible and is common to the rest of antiquity.³

Brunner completely rejects the story of an original good creation such as the Bible declares.⁴ He rejects the historicity of the Genesis account of the creation of the world.

According to Professor Brunner, Biblical Christianity does not deny evolution,⁵ but evolution

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1. Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, p. 278.
2. Brunner, *Ibid.*, p. 278.
3. Cf. Brunner, *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 5.
4. Cf. Van Til, *The New Modernism*, p. 175.
5. Cf. Brunner, *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 112.

denies the Bible point of view concerning the origin and early history of man. He stoutly defends evolution. He says:

"...the view that even man must be regarded as forming part of this series of evolution--has for a long while past left the stage of plausible hypothesis behind, and like the teaching of Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton, has become scientific truth, with which all honest theology has to come to terms."¹

Again, it is seen that he does not accept the account of man in Genesis as historical. He says,

"We know that most of the Old Testament pre-history is mythology, not history, and that there is no unbroken chain of witnesses from Adam and Noah to Christ."²

Because Brunner does not hold to the historicity of the creation account as it is recorded in the Bible, he is able to say,

"It is quite as possible to be a Christian with the new world-view, say with the teaching of Darwin, Einstein and Planck, as it was to be religious with the Babylonian three-storeyed universe."³

b. The Limitations of Science.

Scientific criticism cannot touch the testimony of the Scriptures that Jesus Christ is the Word of God. It can neither add nor take anything away from this⁴ testimony. Science is not Brunner's basis for knowledge about God. He emphasizes that it cannot enter the realm

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1. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 279.
2. Brunner, The Word and the World, p. 99.
3. Pearce, The Terrible Crystal, p. 65.
4. Brunner, The Word and the World, p. 104.

of God-truth. Therefore, science cannot give the answers where "human disorder has become most apparent--namely in the sphere of human relationships, the sphere of ethical, social and political problems."¹ Science is limited to the realm of world-truths, world facts. But in this realm, Brunner would say, it is ex cathedra.

2. Biblical Authority in Relation to the Old and New Testaments.

The purpose of this particular topic is to consider Brunner's attitude toward various parts and aspects of the Bible which have not been dealt with previously. It has been pointed out that he does not consider all parts of the Scriptures to be of equal value in discovering the Word of God, and some parts are very definitely deprecated and therefore, for Brunner, not authoritative. The following discussion will illustrate this.

a. Comparing the Old and New Testaments.

Brunner says that the concept of the nature of man is not the same in the two testaments. The Old Testament concept is that which distinguishes man from the rest of creation, that man has the image of God. The New Testament is concerned with man's actual relation to God through Jesus Christ, that the image of God is lost

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1. Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation, p. 37.

through sin and can only have it restored through the revelation of grace in Christ. He goes on to say:

"According to the language of the Old Testament the fact that man has been made in the image of God consists in the fact that he is subject, according to the usage of the New Testament this consists in the fact that man allows himself to be determined by the Word of God, and thus loves Him who loved him first. The Bible gives us no direct information upon the relation between these two conceptions, which are so very different from each other."¹

The revelation and concept of God are not the same in the Old and New Testaments, yet both testify to the same God.² He also asserts that the doctrines of the New Testament writers differ from those of the earlier writers. It has been proved by critical research that there is no doctrinal unity between the two.³ Even though the revelation of the Old and New Testaments differ, yet it is only in the connection between the two that revelation can be understood.⁴

b. The Question of Authority in the Old Testament.

Brunner admits that "the words of God which the Prophets proclaim as those which they have received directly from God...constitute a special problem." But he contends that "here we are on the Old Testament level of revelation, where the Word of God is not yet a personal

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1. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 54.
2. Ibid., p. 197.
3. Ibid., p. 293.
4. Ibid., p. 22.

reality and the testimony to a personal reality."¹

The Old Testament cannot be taken as an authoritative statement as it stands because the doctrinal differences are great, and any attempt to get a unified view is mocked by the contradictions. If one were to attempt such a feat he would only knock his head against a wall.²

c. The Question of Authority in the New Testament.

Brunner speaks of the difference between the doctrine of Jesus and of the Apostles. He claims that even though the teaching of Jesus is a part of the Apostolic tradition, yet it can be separated sufficiently, even if not with absolute certainty or meticulous exactitude, to recognize it apart from the Apostles' interpretation. For example he says:

"As a result of critical research we must, and may, formulate the following statement: Jesus Himself gave His teaching as Matthew, Mark, and Luke record it, and not as it is recorded by John. Between the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel...there is a great, and indeed, a radical difference. In my opinion this is the most important result of the whole work of Biblical Criticism."³

So far as he is concerned, The Gospel of John is out as far as giving a literal record of Jesus' words and acts.⁴

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1. Ibid., p. 122, footnote.

2. Ibid., pp. 191-192.

3. Ibid., p. 288.

4. Cf. Ibid., pp. 112, 288.

The record of John is not to be accepted as an historical source, and even the Synoptics have many legends in them.¹

While there is a difference in the doctrines of the Synoptics, Paul, and John, yet they do have one thing in common, namely, Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God. All their testimonies and their differing conflicting doctrines point from varying angles toward this goal,² though none of them actually reaches it. However, though they do not reach the goal, they share in the authority of the Word, for they are the means through which the Word is given.

Brunner does not feel this variance interferes in the least with the authority of the Word. In summarizing his view he says:

"And yet our final judgment, as a whole, must be this: It is only in the manifold variety of these witnesses and testimonies, and indeed precisely in this great variety, with all its contradictions--a variety which transcends all theological systems--that the witness to Christ in all its fulness and completeness, is attested."³

D. Summary

This chapter has been a study in Brunner's position on biblical authority. It has proceeded by considering his view of revelation, the distinction between the Word of God and the word of man in the Bible, a

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1. Cf. Brunner, The Theology of Crisis, p. 41.
2. Cf. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 129.
3. Ibid., p. 130.

discussion on the problem of science and the Bible, and pointing out Brunner's attitude toward different parts of the Scriptures. Along with this, attention was called to the relation of these topics to his over-all view of biblical authority. The major findings are summed up in the following points.

1. In order for man to know God, he must have a revelation from God. This revelation is in the Bible.
2. The Bible points to one great revelation, God's revelation in Christ. The Bible is of secondary authority as compared with Christ, for its authority is derived from Him. The authority of the Scriptures is dependent upon their revealing Christ.
3. The Bible is not a revelation of doctrine, but a revelation of a person. It does not present a system of Divine doctrine, but a Divine Person.
4. The Bible is the bearer of God's message, but this message of revelation is veiled. Faith is necessary to pierce the veil. So then, the nature of the Bible's authority is in the realm of faith, for faith only can receive the Word of God.
5. The Bible is the source of authority for a general revelation.
6. The words of the Bible are not the Word of God, but the words of man. These words, however, contain and reveal the Word of God. The Bible is the medium through which

God speaks.

7. Not all parts of the Bible are of equal value in determining the Word of God.
8. There are many errors and contradictions in the Scriptures because they are written by fallible man.
9. The Word of God is heard in the Bible through the witness of the Holy Spirit.
10. The Bible is not an authority in matters of science, but it is an authority concerning God and His self-communication to man.
11. The Bible is subject to error in historical fact and scientific knowledge. Therefore, one can easily accept the theory of evolution as a fact, though it is contrary to the Bible's point of view.

Brunner reconciles all the matters which higher criticism and science have "disproved" in traditional Christianity by saying that these things do not belong to the central object of faith--the Word of God. They belong to the form of the Bible, the earthen vessel, the words of man. Therefore, he holds that nothing essential is lost by these claims.

In concluding this summary to his view of biblical authority, it can be done no better than by letting Brunner speak for himself:

"So far as the Bible speaks about objects of worldly knowledge, it has no sort of authority for our teach-

ing. Neither its astronomical--cosmological nor its geographical, picture of the world, nor its zoological, ethnographic or historical assertions are binding for us, whether found in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Here on the contrary free room must be given to rational and scientific criticism. ...The Scripture is an unconditional authority in so far as the revelation, Jesus Christ himself, comes to expression therein. Scriptural teaching as such, however, is only in a conditional sense the norm of our teaching, although it is the unconditional source or ground of it. Critical thought about the adequacy of Biblical teaching or witness, as an expression of the revelation to which it witnesses, remains necessary for us; final appeal to a Scripture text is impossible. Therefore, all Christian teaching is and remains a venture of faith, in every case."¹

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1. Horton, Neo-Orthodox Conceptions of Biblical Authority in Current Religious Thought, p. 27, Vol. VIII, No. 3, March 1948. The quotation is from Brunner's Dogmatik, Vol. 1, p. 24.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

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A. Summary

The purpose of this thesis has been to discover Emil Brunner's view of biblical authority. The writer undertook this particular study in order to better understand a view of the Bible, represented by Brunner, which is gaining many adherents in the present generation, and to discover for himself some of the problems and issues involved in determining one's attitude toward the authority of the Bible.

In order to discover certain factors influencing Brunner's view of the authority of the Scriptures, the first two chapters dealt with background material. The first chapter was an historical study, tracing the views of biblical authority from the time of the Reformation up to the time of Brunner. It was found that the Reformers made the Bible the basis of authority for the Church. Following the Reformers, the tendency was toward a strict authoritative acceptance of the Bible. In the couple of centuries which followed, this strict authoritative attitude was gradually weakened, especially through the influence of the Pietists and the Rationalists. In the last century and over into the present century, there was a strong emphasis upon the human element of the Bible, granting many errancies both in historical interpretation and

textual content. This served to lessen the appeal to the Bible as an authority in theological circles. Higher criticism had destroyed any authority of the Bible for many people.

The next chapter showed some specific influences which shaped Brunner's point of view in regard to the authority of the Scriptures. He was educated in liberal theology. This is reflected in his positive acceptance of much of the higher critical attitude toward biblical authority. The war in Europe shattered the theory of the essential goodness of man, and of God's being identified with any social order. This caused Brunner to re-examine his theology, which in turn led him to the Bible. He read the Bible in a new light. And finally, a most important influence was that of Karl Barth, who really led Brunner to see the message of the Bible.

The last chapter was concerned with the heart of this thesis, a study of Brunner's position. It was found that he maintains that the Bible has a limited authority. It is not an authority in matters of science. Where it speaks in this realm, it is very erroneous. It is a thoroughly human document and therefore subject to error and contradiction. This element of error and contradiction is not limited only to matters of worldly knowledge, science, but it is also seen in the witness of both Old and New Testaments to the revelation, Jesus Christ.

The text of the Bible does not present a uniform teaching of God's revelation. He distinguishes between the Word of God and the word of man in the Bible by saying that the words of the Bible are man's, but within this framework of words, or better still, beyond it, is the Word of God, His self-revelation. Therefore, he considers the Bible as the "final authority," as the primary source or witness, for receiving knowledge of God and His revelation in Jesus Christ. The Bible is made the Word of God to the individual, apart from its errors, by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures testify to Jesus Christ, and in so far as this is done in them, they are an absolute authority.¹ This, in summary, is the character of biblical authority according to Emil Brunner.

B. Evaluation

No attempt is made here to evaluate every item listed under Brunner's view of biblical authority. Instead, this evaluation is limited to that which surrounds the main core of his point of view, which may be stated thus: the words of the Bible are not the Word of God, but only that is the Word of God which truly testifies to Jesus Christ, who is the climax of God's revelation. It is authoritative only in this respect. Much of the Bible is purely man's words, and therefore it contains many errors and contradictions.

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1. For a more detailed summary of his point of view, see the Summary to the last chapter.

Because of this view Brunner is able to accept many things which are not according to the biblical point of view. Among them is his acceptance of the theory of evolution, which he recognizes as a scientific truth that has become a part of the world outlook of every educated person. The whole-hearted acceptance of this position is indicative of his unwarranted acceptance of other points of view which are far from final proof, but accepted by certain scientists and scholars of higher criticism. He speaks of contradictions between various Scripture writers without giving sufficient evidence to support his statements. While on the one hand he accepts certain questionable tenets such as evolution and the unhistoricity of the Gospel of John, he refuses to allow orthodox theologians any such rights in their point of view. For instance, he will not concede to orthodoxy that the Bible does not present any particular, binding view of the world of space and time.

Brunner believes that the Bible in itself is not God's Word, it is no revelation but only points out the act or event of God's revelation, i.e., it shows God's working. In other words, because the Bible testifies only to the act of revelation, it is not to be taken for an authority in its interpretation of this act, or acts. However, it must be borne in mind that it is the meaning of these acts or events upon which everything depends.

In the Scriptures, the meaning can hardly be separated from the events. Brunner fails to get this relation. The interpretation, the meaningfulness of the events are not separated in the Scripture; that is, the interpretation is not something which is superficially added, but it is that which makes the revelation significant. Therefore, it is to be understood that the Bible is a revelation in itself, as well as witnessing to a Divine revelation. That is, there is such a thing as revealed truth as well as a revealed act.

Who is to be the final judge on what in the Bible is the Word of God and what is not? According to Brunner, each individual makes this choice for himself, after he has rejected, of course, what science and higher criticism have "proved" to be false and contradictory. Having done this, then that is the Word of God to each individual which speaks to him, which the Holy Spirit applies. This strikes at the heart of the weakness of his view of biblical authority; for if such is the case, then there is no objective Word of God which can be proclaimed as the truth from God. To accept Brunner's position is to postulate an unanswerable problem: What is the Word of God in the Bible? To this he would say that it is impossible to say precisely what is the Word of God.

Again, if one were to accept Brunner's attitude that the testimony of the Apostles is not to be taken as

literally true, one could easily dismiss the idea of the resurrection and similar teachings of the Scripture which are part and parcel of the Christian faith. While Brunner accepts these, another person using the same criteria for deciding what is to be accepted might conclude something radically different. Such a person might on the same basis accept a different view of the resurrection and say that the record in the Bible speaks to him as folly, not as the Word of God.

It appears to this writer that Brunner is trying to hold to two positions, modern liberal theology and conservative evangelical theology. This attempt to reconcile the two, or to hold on to both, causes him to be straddling inconsistencies, for in some cases where he attempts this reconciliation, they are not reconcilable but antithetical.

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