

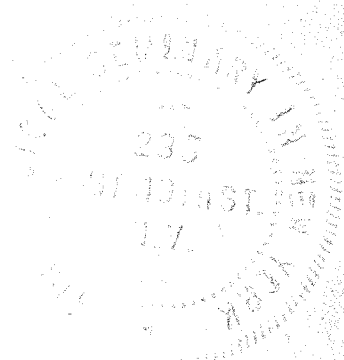
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THE DOCTRINE OF MAN IN THE  
WRITINGS OF EMIL BRUNNER

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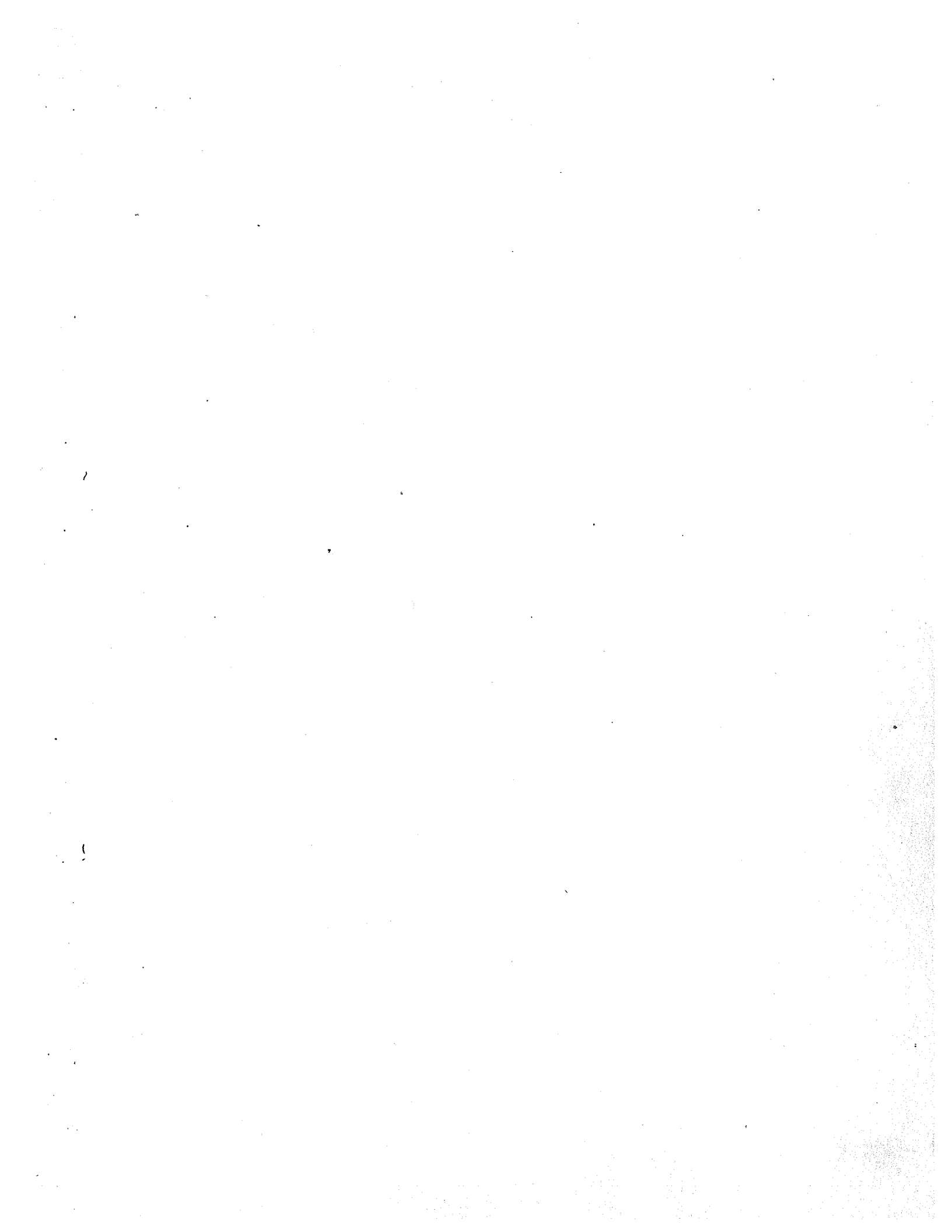
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN IN THE  
WRITINGS OF EMIL BRUNNER

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem

What is man? This baffling question has been the great enigma of the ages. Centuries before Christ the Psalmist was aware of this problem; for, as he gazed in awe at the wonders of the universe, he exclaimed: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"<sup>1</sup> Many years later Socrates confronted the same issue; consequently, he maintained that the most worthy subject for philosophers is not nature but the mind of man. What is man and what can he become-- that is the ultimate question of philosophy. Ever since the time of this great thinker, minds have continuously wrestled with this unique and complicated enigma of human experience. And even in this day, when many of the mysteries of the universe are being solved, the question still remains: What is man?

Many solutions to the problem of man have been suggested during the present century; but none has attracted more attention in Christian circles than the viewpoint set forth by the

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1. Psalms 8:4.

Barthian school of theology. It is the purpose of this study to consider this view as it is disclosed in the writings of one of its outstanding exponents, the eminent Swiss theologian and philosopher, Emil Brunner.

As Brunner himself suggests, the aim of anthropology is to throw light on the mystery of man, namely, the contradiction between what he is and what he ought to be. Anyone who honestly confronts the testimony of human experience cannot doubt that man is a responsible being. He has a sense that something is expected of him, and that if he acts contrary to that standard he will not be held guiltless. And yet it is also evident that he fails to conform to the standard which is written upon his heart. If anyone, therefore, could determine the nature of responsible existence, whence responsibility comes, and why man is in actual and continuous conflict with his sense of responsibility, he would find the key to the mystery of man. "Why is it that man always has this responsibility, and is also aware of it, and yet again that he is in opposition to it, and is not rightly aware of it." That is the problem of anthropology. The following pages will contain a discussion of Brunner's determined attempt to find the solution of this eternally significant question.

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 152.

## B. The Significance of the Problem

The problem under consideration is important for two reasons. In the first place, it is consequential because of the prominence and prestige of the Barthian school of theology, of which Brunner is the chief interpreter. Statements by leading theologians and students of theology during the past several decades indicate that the theology of crisis exerts a considerable influence on modern thought. For example, Rolston remarks:

"No voice in generations has so stirred Protestant thought. . . Barth, aided by able collaborators, particularly Brunner, the systematizer of the movement, challenges the whole development of theology from Schleiermacher to the present time." <sup>1</sup>

Ernest T. Thompson suggests that Barth and Brunner are "the most stimulating, the most important theological thinkers of our day." <sup>2</sup>

McConnachie describes Barthian theology as "the greatest spiritual movement of the century." <sup>3</sup> Moreover, the power of the Barthian

movement is evidenced by the amazing rapidity with which it has spread throughout the entire world. After traveling to various parts of the globe, Dr. Mackay made this significant statement:

"The so-called Barthian movement, it is no exaggeration to say, has been the greatest single influence in Christian thought in recent decades." <sup>4</sup> The great effect of this movement upon modern theology, evidenced by these facts, justifies the study of the viewpoint of Emil Brunner, its chief expounder.

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1. Rolston, Holmes, A Conservative Looks to Barth and Brunner, pp. 13,14.
2. Ibid., p. 15.
3. Ibid., p. 17.
4. Mackay, John A., A Preface to Christian Theology, p. 22.



The second reason for undertaking this discussion is the physical and spiritual urgency of the present world situation, a situation which demands a reinterpretation of man in the light of truly Christian principles. Those who once claimed that man is the measure of all things, that he is the master of his fate and the captain of his soul, have been sadly disillusioned. No longer can they sing, "Glory to man in the highest." Humanism has been powerless to stem the tide of war. The humanist myth has been exploded, and it has been replaced by the view which Berdyaev calls "bestialism." Consequently, man has been dehumanized and materialized; and he

"faces the threat that nothing shall be left of himself, of his personal and intimate life, no freedom for his spiritual life or his creative thought. He is submerged in huge collectives, subject to non-human commandments. It is demanded of man that he give himself up without reserve to society, the state, the race, and the nation." 1

The corpses found at Dachau and Buchenwald are grim testimonies to the implications of this viewpoint. And now scientists remind us that the atomic bomb, utilized by a few people, may be the means of wiping out entire cities and nations. Humanity and civilization face a grave crisis; and unless man is reinterpreted rightly, in the light of the Eternal, there is nothing which can save the human race from utter destruction.

Because of its misinterpretation of man, so-called Christian theology, which should have a positive and constructive

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1. Berdyaev, Nicholas, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, p. 6.

message for the needy world, is confronted with the possibility of degeneration and consequent oblivion. For, as Brunner observes, "if once man is made the measure of all things, no rational idea, however absolute it purports to be, can ward off the final dissolution of theology."<sup>1</sup> When theology sets man upon the throne of the universe, it ceases to be theology, and it deteriorates into an impotent anthropology. There is no doubt that the so-called Christian message and theology will cease to be significant unless it sets aside all the sentimental views which emphasize man's goodness and divinity, and explains Christian experience in the light of the stark realities of life. It is imperative, then, that Christian theologians interpret man in terms of true Biblical faith if the Christian Church is to survive and play a vital part in meeting the present crisis and in shaping the world of tomorrow.

This is the gigantic task to which Brunner sets himself. Having lived in a continent which was ravaged by war, and having seen the impotence of the Christian Church in the face of it all, he is acutely aware of the crisis which confronts Christianity and mankind. He realizes the inadequacy of the solutions which have heretofore been offered, and consequently undertakes to interpret man in the light of Christian revelation. The present exigency for such an understanding of man justifies the study of the problem at hand.

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1. Rolston, op. cit., p. 22.

### C. The Problem Delimited

It is at once obvious that this discussion cannot contain a full treatment of the subject under consideration; for, in one way or another, Brunner's anthropology involves his entire system of theology. Consequently, this study will be concerned only with those aspects which are directly related to his doctrine of man. Nevertheless, the material which is not treated directly will be kept in mind as the background for a proper understanding of Brunner's anthropological views.

Moreover, it must be admitted that a correct interpretation of Brunner cannot be fully guaranteed. For, in the first place, the writings of Brunner are difficult to comprehend. A German student once remarked that "he had read both Kant and Brunner, and that he found the former easier to understand." <sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the expounder of Brunner's beliefs is troubled by the fact that his theology is not a closed system, but a "theology on the wing." Therefore, at times it is perplexing to know when Brunner is stating a position which is different from a previous one, or when he is attempting to elucidate a former statement. And when Brunner does change a statement, it is exceedingly hard to determine the implications of such a revision in relation to the rest of his theology. With these difficulties in mind, then, the following discussion will attempt to portray honestly the view of

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1. Rolston, op. cit., p. 25.

this great Swiss theologian with respect to the fundamental essence of man.

#### D. The Method and Procedure to Be Used

Except for a brief essay in a recent anthology, Brunner nowhere gives a full treatment of the subject of man. Therefore, it will be necessary to choose from his various works those statements which pertain to his conception of man, and on the basis of those remarks formulate his anthropological views. The discussion will progress both logically and psychologically.

The study by chapters will proceed as follows:

1. A discussion of the basis of Brunner's doctrine of man, pointing out the reasons why he considers Christian revelation the ultimate authority on the subject. This will involve a presentation of the insufficiency of scientific psychology and the adequacy of the Bible in providing a proper understanding of man.
2. A description of the origin and original state of man. This chapter will attempt to answer the questions, "From whence did man come, and what was his initial condition?"
3. A portrayal of man's state of apostasy, including the origin, nature, and effects of his sin.
4. A brief consideration of regeneration and its effects upon the sinful personality.
5. A summary and evaluation of Brunner's position, showing both its points of weakness and its points of strength.

E. Source of Data

The primary source of the material which will be presented herein will be the writings of Brunner himself. However, interpretations of both Barth and Brunner, though they be few, will also be consulted.

CHAPTER II

THE BASIS FOR BRUNNER'S DOCTRINE OF MAN

## CHAPTER II

### THE BASIS FOR BRUNNER'S DOCTRINE OF MAN

#### A. Introduction

Any person desiring to formulate a doctrine of man must first decide what the final authority of his beliefs shall be. Should he found his opinions on naturalistic psychology, or on idealistic psychology, or should he overlook psychology altogether? Should he go to the Bible exclusively in order to find a sound view of man? What should be his attitude toward the babel of voices, each of which is endeavoring to impress upon him the truth of his own peculiar concept of man? In a word, he must decide on the presuppositions which he must inevitably accept if he is to attain any knowledge concerning the nature of humanity.

It will be the purpose of the following chapter to set forth Brunner's decision with respect to this basic problem and the reasons behind his choice. In order to accomplish this, the first section will present a critical survey of the views of metaphysics and scientific psychology, revealing their inadequacy; and the second part will show the sufficiency of Biblical psychology and its relation to other areas of knowledge and experience.

#### B. The Crisis in Natural Psychology

Although psychology claims to be purely empirical and

thus free from philosophical presuppositions, it can be easily shown that each of the three distinct types of psychology has its corresponding metaphysical axioms. For, in order to examine the soul, one must presuppose that the soul can be examined, and that consequently it must be of a certain nature. This conception of the soul is in turn based on a definite world view. Thus naturalistic or behavioristic psychology, for instance, conceives the soul and psychological realities as objects among objects, which can be studied in the same manner as the phenomena of nature--through empirical observation. Such a psychology is based on the naturalistic view of the universe. Likewise, every psychologist, as soon as he begins looking for the soul, makes certain presuppositions concerning its character and its relation to nature. Every system of psychology, therefore, is of necessity based on a corresponding philosophical postulate.

According to Brunner, "the most general definition of psychology might well be as follows: 'Psychology is the doctrine of the subjective, or of the subject.'<sup>1</sup>" Now then, because of the nature of the case, there are only three possible philosophical views concerning the nature of the subject and its relation to the object; the system of naturalistic realism or objectivity, in which the subject or soul is subordinated to the object; the system of idealism or subjectivity, where the object is subordinated to the subject; and the system termed pantheism or identity, in which

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 139.



the subject and object are considered as two modes of an unknown unity. Therefore, if it is true that each psychology must have a corresponding metaphysical presupposition concerning the nature of the subject, and that psychology is by definition the doctrine of the subjective, then every psychological system must have at its basis one of the three possible philosophical views with respect to the nature of the subject--either naturalism, idealism, or pantheism. Each respective psychology has a corresponding metaphysical parent, whose weakness it unavoidably shares. If, then, it can be shown that each of these three basic philosophical views is faulty, then it must also be admitted that all the systems of psychology founded upon them are likewise fallacious.

At this point it is in order to examine each of the three fundamental views of philosophy in order to discover their limitations and the consequent shortcomings of the scientific psychologies which are built upon them.

1. Naturalism views man as a part of the world, as one who is composed solely of material elements. His mental and spiritual life are explained either in terms of a secretion or as a kind of electromagnetic effect of his brain. When the naturalistic psychologist investigates man, he thinks of him as a perceptible object among objects. His behavior is attributed to the result of a causal series, a result which cannot be avoided. The system of psychology founded on this philosophical view refuses "to recognize a subject, a self, a soul. It can therefore be excellently

defined as a psychology without a soul." <sup>1</sup> It is thus incapable of dealing with a soul that thinks, feels, and wills; it can only examine thinking, feeling, and willing. Naturalistic psychology cannot account for the concepts of creative synthesis, apperception, totalities, or consciousness of relation. Man is reduced to an automaton; he is helpless with respect to the control of his actions, and therefore is not responsible. But the very existence of penal law testifies to the fact that man is responsible for his deeds. Naturalism, then, fails to coincide with the witness of experience. It does not describe man as he actually is, in the very act of existing. It theorizes about man, and its theories are shown to be false by the observable realities of life.

2. Idealism maintains that the soul is the subject and therefore cannot be thought of as object. The subject cannot be made objective, because it is the investigator in the process of investigation. The idealist suggests that

"the investigator who thinks that he can find the soul as an object obviously forgets that it is the soul to which he is indebted for finding what he does find, and consequently that it never lies before him as an object, but all the time stands behind him as a unity that gives meaning and order to the whole process of investigation, the unity which constitutes the source of this unity of meaning. To say that the soul is subject implies inexorably that the soul cannot be conceived as object." <sup>2</sup>

But if this is true, then an idealistic psychology is a contradiction in terms. For it affirms that the soul is subject, and yet it

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 140.

2. Ibid., pp. 141,142.

studies the soul as an object. How can a thing be the subject and the object at the same time? Moreover, the psychology based upon idealism has difficulty in distinguishing between individuals, since the transcendental self or the subject is absolutely identical in all persons. Because of this predicament, it is forced to define the soul negatively, insisting that the difference between human subjects is due to the limitations of each person. Idealism is also unable to explain adequately the relation between the mind and the body. Likewise, it cannot account for the fact that man is in conflict with himself. As Brunner points out,

"All it does is to substitute two principles for the 'contradiction': a 'higher' and a 'lower' principle in man; this simply destroys the unity of personality as well as the responsibility for the 'contradiction.'" <sup>1</sup>

Thus idealism and the psychologies founded upon it fail to correspond with the observable facts of life; they are incapable of painting a true and complete portrait of man.

3. Pantheism asserts that ultimately the subject and object are identical. The human soul is the microcosm; the universe is the macrocosm. It "regards the soul as the hidden unity of the body, and the body as the total expression of the soul." <sup>2</sup> This system of identity cannot, however, differentiate man from the rest of nature. It is unable to point out that which is specifically human. Furthermore, it evades the problem of personal existence, because it cannot account for man's sense of responsibility. Thus

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 152.  
2. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 143.

pantheism, like the other two views, contradicts the testimony of experience and is unable to give the seeker after truth a satisfactory solution to the problem of man.

Each of the foregoing philosophies and psychologies, then, has its respective limitations. Each expresses only a partial truth and needs the truth which is found in the others in order to form a well-rounded picture. The crisis in psychology becomes evident at this very point. For, although each psychology needs the truth presented by the others, yet it cannot be synthesized with them, because each is based on philosophical presuppositions which are by nature and definition contradictory. It is impossible to combine idealism and naturalism, just as it is impossible to mix oil with water. As David Cairns puts it, "each of these types of psychology is in fundamental contradiction with the rest, and yet none is able finally to refute the others."<sup>1</sup> Any attempt to formulate an eclectic system is foredoomed to failure. This, then, is the crisis of psychology, a crisis which cannot be avoided. "It lies in the nature of the case itself, in man himself, whether he be the investigator or the investigated."<sup>2</sup> This crucial point in psychology is as old as psychology itself; it is permanent, because it has its roots in the permanent crisis of human nature.

Although the three basic systems of psychology are

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 12.
2. Ibid, p. 146.

fundamentally contradictory, they share the same fundamental error: each is the expression of a mystical monism which makes man one with God. In them there is no place for a God who creates, who loves, who speaks, and who forgives. Man is treated as an individual unity, one who needs nothing which he does not already possess. These psychologies recognize no necessity for a transcendent God with whom man must seek a right relationship. But, as a matter of fact, man is not a self-sufficient unity; for in the very core of his nature there is contradiction and schism. Furthermore, his humanity exists precisely in the fact of his relationship to a transcendent God. Therefore, because of the fundamental error which makes man one with God, natural psychology is incompetent to give a true interpretation of the basic nature and ultimate destiny of man. Whatever else scientific psychology can contribute, its conclusions concerning the true essence of humanity are inevitably fallacious. ". . . Natural psychologies, seen from the standpoint of faith, are like broken arches pointing to a keystone which is no longer there."<sup>1</sup>

### C. Biblical Psychology Meets the Crisis

#### 1. Its Definition

Brunner defines Biblical psychology as the "doctrine about the soul on the basis of Christian or Biblical faith."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 14.
2. Ibid., p. 138.

It is the view concerning man's basic nature and final destiny as it is presented in God's Word.

## 2. Its Adequacy

### a. It is Realistic

The great insufficiency of natural psychology lies in the fact that it deals with man abstractly rather than in the very act of existing. It tries to explain man's actions in terms of one rigid principle. It theorizes about the basic unity of man; whereas, as a matter of fact, man is the victim of a disrupting influence. Scientific psychology, without regard for the facts of experience, takes for granted that the human personality is fundamentally one. As a result, it is powerless to help man, who is facing a real crisis.

On the other hand, crisis in human affairs is a central concept in Christian psychology. If man were not in the state of confusion and contradiction, the message of Christianity would be meaningless. The Bible does not endeavor to rationalize the conflict of man; it recognizes that the crisis in human affairs is not accidental, but fundamental. Unlike natural psychology, Biblical psychology does not inform man that he is well when, as a matter of fact, he is dying. Realizing the nature of man's illness, it prescribes the remedy which will restore him to mental and spiritual health. Thus Christian psychology confronts the reality of existence and is prepared to solve the problems of man. Whereas the insufficiency of scientific psychology lies in the

fact of its superficiality and its failure to cope with the actual problems of life, the adequacy of Christian psychology inheres precisely in its frank recognition of man's conflict and its honest attempt to face it.

b. It Is Theo-centric

As has been suggested heretofore, natural anthropology recognizes no need for a transcendent God. As a result, it is forced to avoid the problem of responsible and personal existence. For if there is no God, there is no basis for maintaining that man is accountable. But that man is responsible cannot be doubted, for otherwise the trial at Nuremberg would be a mockery. If it is true, then, that man is responsible, he must be responsible to someone; he is, in fact, responsible to God. Therefore, if one would understand the basis for man's responsibility, its goal and its fulfilment--in short, if one would understand man--he must recognize the reality of God and know the essential qualities of His character. Biblical psychology is especially competent to meet this requirement. For everywhere it presupposes the existence of God, and its pages reveal the nature of His being. Because of this, Christian psychology is capable of providing an adequate view of man. It is able to explain the source and goal of his responsibility. Because it reveals God, then, it is also competent to reveal the mystery of man.

3. Its Appropriation

Biblical psychology is based on revelation, and revela-

tion is the communication of God to man. In revelation God tells man what he cannot otherwise discover. Therefore, the statements of Christian psychology must be accepted by faith. They do not claim to be capable of rational proof. However, they do not contradict reason, nor do they conflict with one's knowledge of life and its experiences. In fact, true reason and observation uphold the validity of the statements of revelation. For instance, Biblical psychology informs us that man is in contradiction, that there is a conflict between what he is and what he ought to be. The truth of this proposition is obvious when one honestly considers the data of experience. But before one is able to detect the evidence which justifies the claims of revelation, he must accept them as truth by faith.

It is at this very point that natural psychology takes issue with Christian psychology, for it claims that the statements of revelation are not empirical and therefore not reliable. Natural anthropology maintains that the Bible is based on a prejudiced point of view, and that therefore one must avoid making deductions on the basis of Scriptures. For, if one would discover the true nature of man, he must use a purely inductive approach. On the other hand, even so-called scientific psychology is not as inductive as it claims to be. For it, too, is based on certain philosophical presuppositions, as this discussion has previously shown. Therefore, no one has a right to accuse Biblical psychology of falsehood merely because it is based on certain postulates which must be accepted by faith. In fact, when one has appropriated the



view of man found in the Scriptures, he inevitably discovers that life and experience witness to its validity.

#### 4. Its Relation to Natural Psychology

Brunner states unequivocally that the Bible is the only adequate basis for determining the essence and destiny of man. But the question arises, "Is it necessary to eliminate the study of all natural psychology? Are all the findings of psychology inevitably erroneous?" The Swiss theologian would answer in the negative; for he maintains that the incompetency of scientific psychology is limited only to its attempt to define the basic nature and final destiny of man. On the other hand, natural psychology is capable of explaining the psycho-physical development of man within time and space, the relation between mind and body, and the laws of human thought. Therefore, purely rational psychology and anthropology need not be totally discarded as false; for, as Brunner himself states,

"in principle there is no conflict between a scientific and a Christian anthropology since the point of view from which each looks at man is quite different. All that, in principle, is accessible to experience within time and space is not a matter of faith, but of science; faith, for instance, never competes with a scientific theory which seeks to explain how the human race came into existence or the stages of its evolution. The special object of faith is the nature and destiny of man, as it is to be understood from the point of view of God and in relation to God--to the God who discloses himself to us in his revelation." 1

It is only when scientific psychology endeavors to define the

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 143.

fundamental essence of man that it falls into error. But if natural anthropology limits itself to problems of time and space, it is in no wise incompatible with Christian anthropology.

#### D. Summary and Conclusion

It is evident that one cannot dogmatically and categorically declare that all scientific psychology is erroneous and that the statements of Biblical revelation are true. One must have sound reasons for discarding the conclusions of scientific psychology and approving those of Christian psychology. Thus the foregoing discussion has endeavored to answer the following question: "Why does Brunner reject the views of natural anthropology and yet accept the Bible as his ultimate authority for formulating a doctrine of man?"

It has been discovered that Brunner frankly faces the findings of natural psychology and concludes that they are inadequate to provide a true concept of humanity. For all natural psychology, no matter how empirical it purports to be, is based on certain metaphysical presuppositions. And, since psychology deals with the doctrine of the subjective, and there are only three possible philosophical views with respect to the nature of the subject, each system of psychology must be founded on either naturalism, idealism, or pantheism. And if a psychologist accepts any one of these as his premise, his psychology inevitably shares the basic weakness of that premise. When one studies each of the three

aforementioned philosophical positions, he discovers that none is capable of setting forth a valid portrayal of man. Each propounds a partial truth, but it needs the truth suggested by the others. And yet they all are incapable of synthesis, because they are by nature and definition contradictory. This is the crisis of natural anthropology, a crisis which removes all hope that scientific psychology can ever solve the problem of man.

Whereas natural anthropology is incompetent to answer the human problem, Christian anthropology is found to be sufficient as a foundation for one's concept of man. On the one hand, scientific psychology is unsatisfactory because it ignores the facts of daily experience; but, in contrast to this, the Bible is adequate because it portrays man as he is, in conflict with himself. Furthermore, the suitability of Scriptural revelation inheres precisely in the fact that it recognizes God and is thus able to explain the source and goal of man's responsibility. Therefore, if one would understand man, he must accept the statements of Christian revelation by faith.

Although the Bible is the only and ultimate authority for one's doctrine of man, it is not necessarily incompatible with the natural psychology which recognizes its own limits. It is when scientific psychology seeks to go beyond the facts which are observable within time and space that it runs into difficulty. But if it realizes that it is qualified only to discuss those things which are rational, then there is no conflict with Christian revelation. In the realm of psycho-physical development, then, scienti-

fic psychology is the competent authority; but when it comes to the formulation of a doctrine of man, which involves his basic nature and final destiny, the Bible alone is qualified to speak. For Brunner, then, the ultimate authority to the solution of the human problem is Biblical revelation.

CHAPTER III

THE ORIGIN AND ORIGINAL STATE OF MAN

CHAPTER III  
THE ORIGIN AND ORIGINAL STATE OF MAN

A. Introduction

One cannot overemphasize the importance of one's beliefs concerning the origin of man in determining one's anthropological views. In ascertaining the basic and unique characteristics of the human being, it makes a great deal of difference in what manner the fact of his presence in the universe is explained. Is he merely a product of chance, or is he the handiwork of an omniscient and omnipotent Creator? One's answer to this question immediately decides one's view concerning the nature of man's responsibility, the purpose or lack of purpose for his existence, and the character of his ultimate destiny.

It is the intention of this chapter to suggest Brunner's considerations with respect to this fundamental problem. It will set forth the how and why of man's existence, and the implications which inevitably follow.

B. Man Was Created by God

The Bible informs its readers that man was created out of nothing, and that as such he belongs to this world. He cannot be accounted for except as one whom God made, and he is what he is because God has so created him. Brunner expresses the creation of man in these picturesque words:

"He (God) paints His image of man on the canvas of nothingness, as it were; and there he stands, a man. God calls man into existence out of nothingness, even though in doing so He uses material which He has prepared previously."<sup>1</sup>

Like the earth and all that therein dwells, man was created by the hand of God.

That this statement of faith is valid cannot be doubted by any intelligent person, for the very parts of the human body display the handiwork of one whose ingenuity far surpasses even that of man. How else can one explain the miracle of the eye, in which hundred millions of rod cells are so co-ordinated as to make sight possible and thus provide a gateway between nature and the soul? It is more plausible to insist that the great masterpieces of art are the products of chance than to hold that the eye is not the work of an omnipotent and omniscient Creator. All who claim that man is the result of a hit-and-miss process are "like dogs in a great art gallery."<sup>2</sup> They see the pictures and yet fail to see them, for if they saw them rightly, they would inevitably see the Creator too.

Having made the statement that, according to the Scriptural account, man was created by God, Brunner proceeds to qualify it by adding that one need not, however, accept the Biblical view as to the method of creation. For, in keeping with his doctrine concerning the Word of God, the Swiss theologian asserts that one must distinguish between the Biblical view of the universe, which

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 49.
2. Brunner, Emil, Our Faith, p. 18.

is of antiquity and thus out-dated, and the Biblical revelation of God's nature and will. The concept of the universe found in the Scriptures has ceased to be of any value today, for science has demonstrated that it is no longer plausible to believe in a simultaneous Divine creation of all species, including man.<sup>1</sup> However, the essential truth of the Genesis account still remains--that man was created by God. One has no right to insist that the Biblical story of creation is scientifically accurate; for the Bible is not a textbook of science. But although its scientific views may be erroneous, the basic and essential truths which it presents can never be disproved. In this way Brunner reconciles the conflict between science and religion without forsaking either the theories of science or the deep-seated conviction that man was created by the Word of God.

### C. Man Was Created in the Image of God

Man resembles the rest of creation in that he too was brought into existence by the Word of God; but he is distinguished from sub-human creation by the fact that he was also created in the image of God. He was not only created by the Word, but also in the likeness of the Creator Himself. This is the distinctive and specifically human quality of man. Man is different from sub-human creation because he bears a unique resemblance to the Divine.

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1. See Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, pp. 170-172.



As a result of a conflict with Barth concerning the effect of sin upon the Divine image, Brunner clarified the doctrine stated above by adding that the Imago Dei has two distinct aspects: the material and the formal. In order to set forth adequately Brunner's beliefs concerning the image of God in man, these two phases will be treated individually.

1. The Material Image of God

When one speaks of the Divine image in this sense, he is referring to man's justitia originalis, the righteousness which he had before the fall. God created man like Himself in moral character. Adam initially shared the holiness of his Creator, and because of this the Scriptures state that he was created in the image of God.

2. The Formal Image of God.

But there is another sense in which the image of God is used; for if its significance were limited only to the concept stated above, then the sinner, who has lost his holy character, would no longer be a man and thus could not be differentiated from the sub-human level of existence. For the uniqueness and distinctiveness of man lies precisely in the fact that he was not only created by God, but likewise in His image. Therefore, the Imago Dei must include more than the idea of original righteousness; it must also be regarded as a certain relation to God, a

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1. The effect of sin upon the image of God will be treated more fully in the chapter entitled "The Sin and Sinful State of Man."

relation by virtue of which man is distinguished from the rest of creation.

Man, then, may be defined as "the being who is related to God in a special way--a way in which no animal, no plant, and still more no dead thing is related to Him." He is the creature<sup>1</sup> who is over-against God, the being who is addressed in the Word. God reveals himself to humanity, and man is able to understand that revelation and respond in love. It is because of this peculiar relation to God that the Bible claims for man a similarity to the Divine. "Man's distinctive quality consists in the fact that God turns to him and addresses him. In this 'address' God gives man his distinctively human quality."<sup>2</sup> Man is a theological being who can only be understood in terms of the anthropo-tropos theos, the God who in love turns to man and calls him into love. "God has a different relation to men from what He has to other creatures. . He has intercourse with man: He reveals His will to him and expects obedience and trust from him."<sup>3</sup> In considering the formal sense of the Imago Dei, then, one is not concerned with the fact "that man as he is in himself bears God's likeness, but, rather, that man was designated for and called to a particular relationship to God."<sup>4</sup>

It naturally follows that unless man takes advantage of

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1. Brunner, Emil, *The Christian Understanding of Man*, p. 154.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
3. Brunner, Emil, *The Divine-Human Encounter*, p. 127.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

his peculiar relation to God, he is not truly human. If he fails to respond to God's Word with "Yea, I am Thine," he is homo sapien but not humanus. For if man so-called refuses to perceive something of the Divine, he is not much farther along than the animal, which has no capacity for such perception. Man is in-human until he responds in love to the command of God.

"God created us in His image, as reflections of His image. That means that we are human to the degree that we permit God to speak to us. We are men to the extent that we let God's Word echo in our hearts." <sup>1</sup>

All human beings are men in the sense that they have the ability to engage in rational discourse and thus have a capacity for the Word. But only he is truly human who avails himself of his capacity for receiving God's revelation by answering the Divine command in the affirmative.

The idea of God and his relation to man is not something which can be added to human existence like any other idea; for it is impossible to describe the nature of man without at the same time involving God and man's relation to Him. For man is man only because he sustains a certain relation to God. Thus every view which endeavors to locate the specific element of man without considering the God who addresses him ultimately fails in its objective; for the human-self is non-existent in its own right. It has its reality only in its relation to the Divine.

Because God addresses humanity in His Word, man owes it

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1. Brunner, Emil, Our Faith, p. 38.

to his Creator to receive the revelation by faith and to answer it with a "yes" of faith. Thus it may well be said that the distinctively human quality of man is his responsibility. That is the one thing which sets him apart from sub-human creation--he is responsible and is therefore truly a person. It is true, in a sense, that man differs from other creatures because of his mental and spiritual nature. But even such differences are not always clear-cut, for there are many similarities in these areas. However, none other than man can claim responsible existence. Responsible existence, then, is truly human existence.

The validity of this conclusion is upheld by the fact that every human being has some idea of responsibility. Even those who are themselves "irresponsible" possess a sense of accountability. Moreover, "every human being is aware, even if only dimly, that this fact of responsibility means something which affects the totality of his life, and the particular quality and destiny of man as man."<sup>1</sup>

Responsibility is not an idea which can be added to man. He is not just a human being and then responsible. On the other hand, his specifically human element is his responsibility. Moreover, man is not responsible apart from his relation to God; but his relation to the Divine is his responsibility. "Therefore it is his relation to God which makes man man."<sup>2</sup> He has been

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 157.  
2. Ibid., p. 159.

"created in the Word of God, as a being, therefore, whose peculiarity it is that he is responsible to God, whose Voice he hears, whose claim he recognizes. Man alone has an 'I,' or, rather, a Self, but this Self is not itself ultimate reality. It is not based upon itself, it does not possess aseity, but I am 'I' only because and in so far as, God addresses me as 'thou'; therefore the distinctive quality of my existence, responsibility, only exists in the fact that I am addressed by God."<sup>1</sup>

This is the essence of the formal doctrine of the Imago Dei.

Such a concept of the divine image is found throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament God is presented as one who speaks to man and emphasizes man's responsibility to hear and obey.<sup>2</sup> According to the Hebrew Scriptures, it is man's relation to God which determines his destiny, yea, his very existence. Likewise, the New Testament expresses the Imago Dei in terms of a relation, as personal correspondence: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."<sup>3</sup> Man becomes truly human by his relation to God in Christ. It is because of this fact that Christ is called the "Word," a term which implies that in Him God addressed humanity, and that man is capable of hearing, understanding, and believing. This capacity to hear God's Voice and to respond in faith is the formal image of God in man. Having received the revelation of God through His Eternal Word, man has the responsibility of answering and accepting. And when he answers with a "yes" of faith and thus takes advantage of his unique privilege

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1. Brunner, Emil, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 153. See also *God and Man*, p. 115.
2. See Deuteronomy 30:15ff.
3. II Corinthians 3:18.

as a human being, he becomes truly man.

"The Bible expresses the distinctive quality of man by saying that he stands in a special relation to God, that the relation between God and man is 'over-againstness'; that it consists in being face to face with each other. God created man as the being to whom he turns, so that man also turns to Him. The anthropo-tropos theos--the God who is turned toward man--creates the theo-tropos anthropos--the man who is related to God."<sup>1</sup>

This, according to Brunner, is the Biblical Doctrine of the Imago Dei.<sup>2</sup>

#### D. Man Was Created for the Purpose of Fellowship

If man was created by God in His own image, it follows that he must have been made for a specific purpose and with a predetermined destiny. In fact, the purpose for man's existence is involved in his very nature; he cannot avoid it. God has so created him that he is capable of hearing and answering the Word. Therefore God addresses him in His Word in order that He may receive the response which He desires, that response which acknowledges and loves Him as Creator and Lord. God craves to have beings<sup>3</sup> who not only live from His hand but with Him. He has created man out of love, in love, and for love. Brunner aptly expresses this idea in the following words:

"...the divine love is both the basis and the aim of responsibility; and it is both the basis and content of the

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man. pp. 158,159.
2. See also Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10.
3. See Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 117.

specific and genuine nature of man. Both the origin and meaning of man's existence lie in the love of God. Man has been created in order that he may return the love which the Creator lavishes upon him, as responsive love; that he may respond to the Creator's word of love with the grateful 'yes' of acceptance; thus man receives his human existence from God when he perceives that his being and his destiny are existence in the love of God." 1

In a word, the purpose for God's creation of man is that He might have a counterpart with whom He might fellowship. The existence of man cannot be explained on any other basis. The fact that God took the initiative in creating a being who could inter-course with Him is unmistakable evidence that the motivating force in such an act was His will to fellowship.

#### E. Man Was Created a Free Moral Being

Brunner emphatically insists that man is no automaton; he is not like a child's doll, which says "yes" only when it is pressed on the right spot. For

". . . self-knowledge and self-determination are the wonderful and dangerous privileges of human existence. Man is the being who understands himself and in this self-understanding decides or determines what he shall do." 2

Man stands over-against God and thus can never be identified with Him.

"God places Himself face to face with a free being. . . The Bible speaks of only one relation between God and man, in which man by virtue of God's will and God's creation has a decisively free, independent being, not only toward other creatures, but even toward God Himself." 3

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 159.
2. Ibid., p. 145.
3. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 53.

This freedom to say "yes" or "no" to God is the mystery of man.

1. The Basis of His Freedom

a. God's Will to Fellowship

As has already been suggested, God's purpose in making man is that He might fellowship with him. The creation of human beings in the image of God cannot be understood in any other light. It is God's will to love and be loved. But the accomplishment of this purpose is impossible without freedom. God's will to fellowship must postulate freedom, for there is no true love without true freedom. For "enforced love is not love at all." Love is one thing which cannot be realized by coercion. One may force others to serve him, and one may force others to pay homage to him; but one can never compel another to love him. The very essence of love is free will. In fact, according to Brunner, "love is the most freely willed of any activity of which we are able to think." Therefore, if God is ever able to realize fully His will to love and be loved, it is because He created a free moral being, one who in freedom is able to respond in love. The freedom of man must first of all be considered a necessity because without it God's will to fellowship can never be fulfilled. God places 'over-against' Himself a free counterpart in order that with him He might experience true fellowship.

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 62.
2. Ibid., p. 62.
3. See Ibid., p. 128.



b. God's Will to Lordship

The idea of 'God as Lord' is everywhere found in the Scriptures. The pivotal point in the Bible is the Kingdom of God, a concept which involves God's being and becoming Lord over and of all. God is Lord--that is the message of the Word; and to cause men to acknowledge Him as such is its aim.

The concept of Lordship involves two ideas. First of all, it implies that God is the ruler of the universe and its inhabitants. He has the power to do that which He pleases with His creation. God has brought man into existence on His own initiative without any assistance. He fashioned man according to His own desires, and now man stands absolutely at His mercy. He is the Creator; men are merely creatures. No power is derived which is not from Him. He holds the keys of life and death in His own hands. This certainly is meant by the expression that God is Lord.

But the Lordship of God involves something more. For "God wills to be Lord not only 'over' man; He wills to be Lord 'of' man." God is Lord 'over' all creation, even down to the lowest forms; but God is not lord 'of' them. God's will to Lordship, then, implies His desire to be acknowledged and worshipped as Lord. But this acknowledgement and worship would be pure mockery if it were not freely-willed. And God does not desire to be mocked; for He seeks those who are true worshippers. Since God wills to be acknowledged and worshipped only in truth, He places Himself face

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 56.

to face with a free counterpart. God wills to be recognized as Lord in freedom, since it is by virtue of such recognition that He is Lord in the highest sense.

God is not interested in puppets who confess that He is Lord. He is not concerned with a mirrorlike or echo counterpart. For thereby His desire for Lordship is not completely fulfilled. It is only as He is known and acknowledged as Lord in freedom and self-sacrifice that He fully realizes His will to Lordship. God could have made men to be machines, machines which could do nothing except His will. But such obedience would not be true obedience; it would be mere pretence which would not come from the heart. For only he who acts in freedom can obey from the heart.<sup>1</sup> It is only, then, as man in complete freedom cries out 'My Lord' and 'My God' that the Creator sees the full fruition of His purpose. That the creature can be in freedom over-against God is possible precisely because, in the highest sense, God wants to be acknowledged as Lord. God made man a free moral being because He desires that His creature should recognize Him as Lord, not falsely by coercion, as those who are subjugated by a conqueror and forced to pay allegiance to him, but voluntarily and thus in sincerity and truth.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Extent of His Freedom

Although it is true that man enjoys freedom, it does not necessarily follow that he is completely autonomous, free to such

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1. See Brunner, Emil, Our Faith, pp. 76,77.

2. See Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 58.

an extent that he can do anything which he pleases and choose the results which will follow. For there are certain limitations which must be recognized. It is in order at this point, therefore, to consider these restrictions.

a. It Is Limited by His Nature

Man is not unconditionally autonomous, for his freedom is restricted by the very character of his Self. He is created in such a way that he cannot cut himself off from God, who is the source and ground of his personality, and live. He is free to choose what his attitude toward God shall be, but he cannot avoid the consequences of his choice. If man fails to live in keeping with God's purpose for him, if he chooses to run directly counter to the intention for which he was created--

"that is, if he plans his life apart from God, basing all on his own independent existence, he loses both his hopes of realization and his freedom. . He has become a slave of his own emancipation." 1

For man cannot remake or revise the fundamental characteristics of his personality; he is a creature and not the Creator. God created man in His own image; thus man cannot disregard Him and yet realize himself--that is, find true happiness and satisfaction.

Thus man's autonomy never implies complete independence from God; for in Him he moves and lives and has his being. Man is not self-sufficient; he draws every breath by leave of the Creator. It is because of this that his freedom is limited. Man is not a

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 170.

proprietor but a tenant; he is not a Maker--he was made. Therefore, true freedom and true humanness are present only when man knows and acknowledges his complete dependence upon the Creator. Man is made in such a way "that only when he determines himself in accordance with his destiny does he become that for which he was created. Only then is he really free."<sup>1</sup> In this way Christian thought is safeguarded from the error of Deism, "which stresses the autonomy of the creature in such a way as to destroy the very concept of creature."<sup>2</sup> God places over-against Himself a real counterpart, a creature of such a nature that he can say "no" to the Creator; but in so doing he destroys himself. It is thus that man's freedom is limited by his nature; no matter how hard he tries, man can never emancipate himself from his dependence upon God. For he ever remains a creature; his selfhood is never more than a gift from God.<sup>3</sup>

b. It Is Limited by His Environment

"The will is prevented from realizing itself in the external world by a double limit: the material it has to use is subject to its own laws, and the society in which the action has to be performed is likewise subject to its own laws."<sup>4</sup>

As a body man is a piece of this world, and thus is restricted by the laws which govern matter. He cannot choose to disregard physical laws without suffering the consequences. Thus, if he would live, he is not free to sever his head from his body; for the body

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 170.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 55.
3. See Brunner, Emil, Our Faith, p. 46; The Divine Imperative, pp. 58, 59.
4. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 261.

cannot operate without the head. Likewise, man's freedom does not involve complete independence from the regulations of society. Even in a democracy jails are built for those who think they can disregard the rights of others. The community always makes its demands upon the citizen. Thus it is that the freedom of man is limited by his environment, both material and social.

### 3. The Relation of His Freedom to Divine Election

Undoubtedly the Scriptures contain the doctrine of Divine election. Biblical revelation declares that, although man is the off-spring of human parents, he nevertheless comes from eternity, from the eternal thought and will of God. For "before anything comes into existence it has been thought and willed by God, as the work of art is in the mind of the master before it is put on canvas or paper, or in stone." <sup>1</sup> The Gospel teaches that salvation is from eternity. It is God's grace, His mercy, His boundless love, and His election which alone are the bases for man's redemption. When a person believes, he knows that God has chosen him from eternity, and that his name is written in the Book of Life, in the Book of Election.

However, one has no right whatsoever to speculate or theorize about the doctrine of election. For only those who believe know themselves to be chosen from eternity; and everyone is elected who has truthfully accepted Christ by faith. The believer knows himself to be elected, but he cannot legitimately draw any

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1. Brunner, Emil, Our Faith, p. 29.

conclusions with respect to others. Thus election and obedience, election and faith are inseparable. "Those elected are the same as those who love God,"<sup>1</sup> and those who love God are the same as those elected. All speculations outside this relation of personal correspondence should be avoided.

"One cannot play election off against decision, nor personal decision against election, tempting though they be to reason. Reason must bow here, yet dare not abdicate. How the two can be reconciled, the free eternal election of God and the responsible decision of man is a problem we cannot understand. But every believer knows they are compatible. 'He came to his own--and his own received him not; but as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name'. . . What is more important--light or vision? Stupid question! Vision and light belong together. Therefore believe, and you will perceive that you are elected."<sup>2</sup>

This is the Scriptural doctrine of election.

There is, therefore, no doctrine of double predestination in Biblical revelation. ". . . That God has chosen one from eternity for eternal life and has rejected another from eternity to eternal damnation"<sup>3</sup> is foreign to Holy Scriptures. It is man's attempt to systematize the teachings of the Bible which leads him to such an absurd conclusion. Divine election and human freedom appear side by side; and, although this may annoy the intellect and defy the reason, neither can be sacrificed in order to establish the other. For as soon as Divine sovereignty is stressed unduly, determinism is substituted for the reality of human deci-

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1. Brunner, Emil, Our Faith, p. 32.
2. Ibid., p. 32.
3. Ibid., p. 32.

sion; and when Divine election abdicates in favor of human freedom,<sup>1</sup> then the heart of the Gospel is destroyed. On the other hand, the Scripture teaches a Divine predestination of election; but it also teaches that the unbelieving are responsible and thus will face judgment. It teaches, too, that nothing happens without the permission of God's will, but it never teaches a Divine election of rejection. The doctrine of double predestination is due to the substitution of a philosophical idea of God for the Biblical one--that God is sole-sufficient and absolute to the extent that man is deprived of free will. But this is pantheism and not Christian theism. Thus the teaching of double election is the product of human logic and not of Divine revelation. For the Scriptures everywhere declare the close connection between God's will to Lordship and fellowship on the one hand and man's freedom and responsibility on the other. The Biblical doctrine of eternal election means nothing more than this--that

"the divine election of man corresponds to the human electing of God as Lord. . . Being known by God is the same thing as being elected, and being elected corresponds, like the divine love, to man's love for God." 2

#### F. Summary and Conclusion

The teaching concerning man's origin and original nature is the cornerstone of anthropology. Therefore, the Bible is careful

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 52-54.
2. Ibid., p. 126.

to indicate that man was created by God, and that he possesses certain characteristics because he was made for a definite purpose. The Scriptures clearly reveal that man was created in the image of God. This parabolical figure involves two distinct aspects, which Brunner designates by the terms "material" and "formal." The material image signifies man's original righteousness, Adam's sinless perfection before the Fall. In the formal sense the Imago Dei denotes man's peculiar relation to God, by virtue of which he is capable of being addressed in the Word. Unlike any other creature, man is the one to whom God turns and speaks; he is uniquely capable of holding rational discourse with the Divine. Because of this matchless privilege, man is responsible to God. Therefore, it may well be said that the distinctively human quality is responsibility. Truly human existence is responsible existence. This is the Scriptural teaching concerning the Divine image.

The fact that God voluntarily created a being with whom He could commune indicates that He had a definite intention in creation. Furthermore, man's relation to God reveals the nature and goal of the Divine purpose, namely, that God wills to fellowship with man. God set over-against Himself a rational being because it is His eternal desire to enjoy companionship with him. And it is precisely because of His will to fellowship that God made a free moral being; for without freedom true love and friendship are impossible. Likewise, God created man in freedom because He desires that His creature should acknowledge Him as Lord willingly and thus sincerely.



But such freedom does not imply absolute autonomy. For the very structure of personality and the very life of man are dependent upon God. Man is so created that he cannot sever himself completely from God, for it is precisely because of his relation to God that he is and remains a man. Man's freedom, then, is restricted by his own nature. Moreover, his freedom is limited by his physical and social environment. However, there is an area in which man's will is entirely unrestrained. He is completely unhindered to answer "yes" or "no" to the voice of the Creator. Even the Scriptural doctrine of election must be interpreted in the light of this fact. Therefore, it is safe to maintain that the Bible does not teach a double predestination. God does not promiscuously divide the human race into sheep and goats. On the other hand, election corresponds to faith. Only the believer can know that he is chosen from eternity, that his name is written in the Book of Life. Any conclusions concerning election outside of this personal correspondence are inevitably false. For only those who love God can have the assurance that they are elected. The man of faith is elected because he believes, and believing, he knows himself to have been elected.

CHAPTER IV

THE SIN AND SINFUL STATE OF MAN

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#### A. Introduction

If there is anything which man hates to admit, it is the fact that he is a sinner. The constant attempt of philosophy to explain away the existence of evil testifies to the validity of this statement. The evolutionist, for instance, refuses to recognize the reality of sin by maintaining that the defects of man are due to his imperfection, an imperfection which gradually disappears as he develops. It so happens that man is now in a low stage of growth; but as he advances, the principle of good, which is latent in him, will slowly unfold, until in the end he will realize true perfection. In like manner, every other purely rationalistic philosophy has ended by denying the reality and gravity of evil. For the very formation of a philosophical "system" inevitably excludes the possibility of sin, since sin can never, because of its nature, be "systematized." For by definition sin is irrational, and thus it cannot be made a part of a rational system. The moment sin is rationalized, it is no longer sin. Thus by explaining sin in rationalistic terms the natural man, in the spirit of self-assurance, denies the real existence of evil and reaffirms his belief in the innate goodness of human nature.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See Brunner, Emil, *The Mediator*, pp. 122-126; *The Theology of Crisis*, pp. 48-53; *God and Man*, pp. 62-64.

However, if one would understand the true character of man, one must accept the Biblical statement of faith--that man is a sinner. One must not only believe that man was originally created by God in His likeness, but also that man now lives in diametrical opposition to his origin. His existence is "existence-in-opposition." Therefore, one must realize the full significance of man's present contradiction if one would get an insight into the true essence of human personality.

It is the purpose of the present study, then, to determine the significance of the Biblical statement that "man is a sinner." In order to accomplish this, the following aspects of sin will be discussed: its origin, its nature, and its consequences.

#### B. The Origin of His Sin

There are some who maintain that sin originates in the body. Man commits evil deeds because he is flesh and blood as well

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1. Both these statements are statements of faith, "that is, they do not claim to be capable of rational proof; on the contrary, they spring from divine revelation alone and therefore can only be grasped as truth in faith. But since they refer to the actual man and unveil the secret of the contradiction in human nature, and at the same time remove it by faith, they also claim that no experience and no correct ways of thinking can contradict them, but that, on the contrary, through them both are placed in their right context. The Word of God does not contradict reason, but it places it within its right context, which it cannot find of itself, and it ruthlessly lays bare all sham reason." (Brunner, Emil, *The Christian Understanding of Man*, p. 153.)
2. Brunner, Emil, *The Christian Understanding of Man*, p. 162.

as spirit. This is the position of the ascetics, who consequently proclaim that, in order to experience sainthood, one must deny to a great extent his normal physical desires. However, those who hold such a view seem to forget that, whereas man was created in the likeness of God, he was at the same time created a bodily being. Apparently, then, there was no such dualism between spirit and matter in the mind of God, for He made man in the likeness of His righteousness and yet simultaneously gave him a physical body. In the words of Brunner,

"man is created as a bodily being, and his bodily nature is a part of his being. Thus the body is not that which should not be, that which does not properly belong to human beings, the lower principle, which as such is the source of evil." <sup>1</sup>

For if it were otherwise, God Himself would be the author of evil, having consigned man to an evil body. The body, then, is not the source of sin.

On the other hand, sin originates in man's free will. For God has created over-against Himself a free counterpart, one who can say "yes" or "no" to Him. Herein lies the possibility of sin. If God had made a puppet rather than a "man," there would have been no occasion for evil. But God created a being who in freedom can choose the path he shall tread, whether with God or apart from Him. It is precisely because of this freedom that man <sup>2</sup> can and does commit sin. Therefore, evil does not originate in

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 154.
2. This does not imply, however, that God is the author of evil. For although He created a being with the possibility of sin, He did not create a being for whom it was impossible not to sin.

the body, but rather in the free will of man.<sup>1</sup>

### C. The Nature of His Sin

#### 1. It Is Positive

Sin is not something negative; it is not a lack or a defect. It cannot be likened to a hole, which "can gradually be filled up by throwing in enough stones."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it is a positive magnitude, an active and real contradiction.<sup>3</sup> Sin is not merely a deficiency with respect to a certain quality; it "is an opposition, another principle, another direction, another quality."<sup>4</sup> It is more than zero; it is a minus over against a plus. Thus man's sinful condition can never be resolved by development "for the very reason that it is not merely a difference, a negative, a 'not-yet,' but a contradiction."<sup>5</sup>

#### 2. It is Personal

When one understands the nature of man's origin, he also understands the true character of his sin. Man was created in the image of God for the purpose of fellowship; and when he broke this original relation to the Divine, he committed sin. Sin "is an alienation, a disrupted relation, a having left the Father."<sup>6</sup> It is

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1. See Brunner, Emil, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 486; *God and Man*, pp. 155-157.
2. Brunner, Emil, *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 49.
3. Brunner, Emil, *God and Man*, p. 157
4. Brunner, Emil, *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 50.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 50. See also Brunner, Emil, *The Mediator*, pp. 132-133.
6. Brunner, Emil, *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 55.

essentially a broken relationship and thus a wrong relationship to God; it indicates that man has torn himself away from an original divinely given possibility. Man has rebelled against his Creator-- that is the essence of sin. The heart of the contradiction in man is his self-chosen emancipation, his rebellious breaking away from his Maker. He wants to be his own Lord.<sup>1</sup> This is the significance of the sin of Adam and Eve--they wanted to be as gods. Sin is the refusal to recognize God as Lord, the revolt of man against the Giver of Life.<sup>2</sup>

Although man in sin attempts to emancipate himself completely from God, he is never quite able to do so. For even in sin he is related to God. Evil is always an actual relation, in fact, a perverted relation.<sup>3</sup> If man could become entirely independent of God, he would no longer be a sinner, but an amateur providence, a little god. But this phenomenon never occurs, for sin is always against God, in relation to Him. Regardless of man's violent efforts to free himself from God, he inevitably fails; for he cannot become other than man, and it is precisely because he is related to God that he remains a man.

Thus, according to Brunner, sin is not the transgression of an impersonal law but rebellion against the will of the Creator. It is resistance to the Creator and Lord. David recognized this fact when in a prayer of repentance he said: "Against Thee,

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1. Brunner, Emil, Our Faith, p. 79.
2. Ibid., p. 52,53.
3. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 133,134.

These only have I sinned."<sup>1</sup> Although it is true that when man sins he injures his fellowmen, such an injury is not itself the evil thing; for man "can sin only against God."<sup>2</sup> It is the setting one-<sup>3</sup> self against the Creator which constitutes the essence of sin.

### 3. It is Original

It must always be remembered that man's state of alienation is not a matter of certain moments of opposition to God; it is the character and quality of his whole existence. Brunner asserts that "evil has not been understood if we think; 'Now, at this moment, I have done something wrong, but previously, before the actual decision, I was either good or neutral.'<sup>4</sup>" For man not only commits sins; he is a sinner. The roots of evil are found in the very depths of human nature.

"Man does not only do wrong, he does not only commit sinful acts, but he is bad, he is a sinner. A sinner is not one who has sinned a certain number of times; he is a human being who sins whatever he is doing."<sup>5</sup>

Man is incapable of performing even one truly good act, because the innermost kernel of his heart is impure. His person as well as his conduct is in opposition to God. "It is not only the deeds but the doer himself, that cannot be described as good. Therefore evil goes with him, in all his doings; he can just as little es-

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1. Psalms 51:4.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 142.
3. See also Ibid., pp. 127,142,143,147; Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 154.
4. Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 141.
5. Ibid., p. 142.



cape from it as from his shadow." This is the doctrine of original sin--that evil affects the very core of man's existence. The distinction, then, between the fact "of original sin and sinful acts should be formulated as 'actual existence which manifests itself in particular acts.'<sup>1</sup>"<sup>2</sup>

The real existence of original sin cannot be explained. In fact, as soon as one seeks a causal explanation for this mysterious phenomenon, he inevitably closes his mind to all understanding of the Christian view of evil. "That man is a sinner" is a statement which one must accept by faith. Not even the Scriptures themselves are able to expound the how and why of original sin. The account of the Fall in Genesis is merely a "mythological and therefore inadequate conception" which attempts to bring "creation and sin into connexion without weakening either, and in some way making the contradiction in man innocuous."<sup>3</sup> For it is impossible that there should be an "historical" account of the Fall, since "personal transactions between God and man can no more be localized in the world of time and space than one can localize the spirit of man in the brain."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, one has no right whatsoever to demand an explanation for the existence of original sin; for if it could be explained, it would no longer be sin. If one would understand man one must accept by faith the fact

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 77.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 162.
3. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 153.
4. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man. p. 163.

that man has fallen away from his origin, and that this breach with  
his origin runs through the very centre of his being.<sup>1</sup>

If the fact of original sin is a reality, then it must of necessity be a universal reality. Thus the Christian religion always "defines sin as a whole, as a totality, both individual and general."<sup>2</sup> For it teaches that man has fallen away from God; that is, not merely all men, but "man." Sin, then, is essential to being human. Man is a sinner because he is a man and thus shares the sin and guilt of the whole race. "There is none that doeth good, no not one. . . For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."<sup>3</sup> The Scriptures do not teach that no one is perfect and that everyone has his faults. This is not the meaning of "all have sinned." On the other hand, the Bible informs its readers that fundamentally, at the very centre of existence, "man" and thus all men, are in the same condition, namely, bad.

". . . by a sinner the Bible means 'bad at heart,' infected with evil at the core. 'All are sinners' does not mean that even the best are not quite saints. It means rather that the difference between the so-called good and so-called bad no longer comes into consideration."<sup>4</sup>

Sin is a depravity which has taken hold of us all. There is none who can claim that he is righteous in the sight of God. Everyone is traveling on the train which is going in the wrong direction, away from God and home. This is the meaning of original sin; it

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 150.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 146.
3. Romans 3:10ff
4. Brunner, Emil, Our Faith, p. 40.

is universal sin.

In contrast to the Scriptural doctrine of original sin, most theologians of the present day, whether consciously or not, propound a view which is thoroughly Pelagian. They constantly think in terms of "sins," but never in terms of "sin." To them evil can be adequately defined as isolated acts of the will; they refuse to consider it as the corruption of human existence. Hence many modern theologians proclaim that even though man may fail outwardly, yet his innermost will is good. On the other hand, the Bible declares that even though outwardly man may do many good acts, yet inwardly he is essentially corrupt and impure. In order to acquire a proper and adequate knowledge of man, then, one must recognize him as a creature who lives in opposition to his creation, as the being whose very existence is existence in contradiction.<sup>2</sup>

#### D. The Consequences of His Sin

##### 1. In Relation to God

###### a. Law

When man ceases living in fellowship with God, he comes under bondage to the law. The legal relation replaces the relation of love. For the sinner knows God's will no longer as the

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 77.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 89; God and Man, pp. 38,76.

will of one who loves and gives, but as the will of one who demands. God becomes Lord 'over' him; He ceases to be Lord 'of' him. Because man rebels against God and refuses to obey Him, God addresses the sinner in a stern voice, commanding and demanding obedience. The law is the voice of an angry God directed toward the sinner,<sup>1</sup> making known the Divine will.

The very presence of the law is both a token of man's origin and of his subsequent fall. It reveals that man was made to hear the Word, but that he has turned a deaf ear to God, and that consequently God must demand of him obedience and righteousness. And even the good which man does because he ought, because of God's insistence, is for that reason not freely done, and is therefore not really good. The law thus testifies to the fact that man cannot do one wholly good act. It is addressed to a being who is sick at heart, who is alienated from his original relation to the Creator. This is the "curse" of the law; it shows that the contradiction of man affects the very centre of his existence. The law and sin are inseparable. The legal relation is<sup>2</sup> the inevitable connection between sinful man and a holy God.

b. Conscience

Law and conscience, too, are inseparably united. God reveals His will in the law, and conscience informs man that he cannot and does not obey it. Conscience is not, as some think,

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1. Brunner, Emil, *The Christian Understanding of Man*, pp. 164,165.
2. Consult also Brunner, Emil, *God and Man*, p. 80; *Our Faith*, pp. 59,60; *The Divine-Human Encounter*, pp. 92-94.

the "Voice of God"; on the other hand, it

"attacks man like an alien, dark, hostile power. . .It is a kind of knowledge, a perception of our existence as a whole, a sense of unrest, a signal of alarm, which announces the disturbance of order. . .It is not a rational but an emotional kind of knowledge, like the inarticulate groaning of a prisoner in his dungeon, which only penetrates into clear consciousness in a dim obscure manner. It is, indeed, simply the man himself as he feels himself in the centre of his existence to be disturbed, injured, affected by the contradiction, the consciousness that things are not right with him, that they 'are out of order,' a knowledge which comes to him voluntarily." <sup>1</sup>

This conscience of man stands between him and God and, in fact, drives him away from God. Therefore, in spite of the fact it tells man the truth, a "bad" conscience is an enemy of God. <sup>2</sup>

c. Guilt

When man has alienated himself from the Divine, he finds himself in the state of guilt. Essentially guilt means that man is unable to return to his original relation to God. It is more than a mere subjective reflection on one's condition; it is a real, objective break of fellowship, one which man can never mend. There is a "gulf of separation between man and his Creator which runs through everything." <sup>3</sup> And even if man could change an evil will into a good will, he would not be able to bridge this gap between himself and God. Expressed in positive terms, guilt means the wrath of God. "This is the new attitude of God towards man, that He is angry with him on account of his sin." <sup>4</sup> As a

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 155.
2. Brunner, Emil, Our Faith, pp. 59,60; The Divine Imperative, pp. 158,159; The Mediator, p. 300.
3. Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 148.
4. Ibid., p. 148.

sinner man is without excuse and therefore subject to the judgment  
of God.<sup>1</sup> Because of the sinner's guilt, the God of love becomes<sup>2</sup>  
the God of wrath.

## 2. In Relation to Himself

### a. The Image of God

#### (1) Material Image

Through sin the material image of God, man's justitia originalis, has been completely effaced. The righteousness of Adam before the fall was destroyed by his act of disobedience; and, as a result, man is no longer "able to do any wholly good act."<sup>3</sup> Man in sin cannot claim any similarity to God with respect to the moral quality of His being. In this material sense, the Imago Dei is wholly obliterated by sin.

#### (2) Formal Image

However, it is not valid to maintain that the formal image of God is also completely annihilated by sin; for man is always distinguishable from sub-human creation. And it is the formal image--man's reason, his capacity for receiving and giving rational discourse--which is the sole basis for discriminating between him and the beast of the field. Take away this aspect of the Divine image, and man is no different from the animal. But, as a matter of fact, the human being is never confused with the

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Theology of Crisis, p. 155; The Mediator, pp. 130,131.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 164.
3. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 21.

sub-human level of existence. Therefore, even in his sin man retains the specifically human element, that is, the Imago Dei in the formal sense.

Although man's personal and thus responsible existence has not been destroyed by sin, yet his humanity has been perverted, and he has lost his "truly" human and personal being. This perversion of the formal image is best detected in the realm of the intellect. As a result of sin, man has lost his pure reason. Reason has ceased to be a servant and has become the master. It has set itself up as the final court of appeal.<sup>1</sup> Man's intellect has become the measure of all things. The reason has quit functioning as that which makes possible intercourse with the Divine, and it has become that which opposes God at every turn.<sup>2</sup> The intellect under sin claims that nothing is true except the things it declares valid. Thus it refuses to acknowledge God as sovereign, because it cannot compass that kind of God. Because of sin the reason is spoiled by rationalism. It declines to acknowledge the possibility of the superrational. Consequently, it opposes faith as something which is sentimental and thus invalid, and the God of faith as the product of false imagination. The result of man's self-separation from the source and ground of his being is thus revealed by the perversion of his reason, which is the essence of the formal image of God in man.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Brunner, Emil, *The Theology of Crisis*, pp. 42,43.
2. Brunner, Emil, *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 62-66.
3. Brunner, Emil, *The Mediator*, pp. 42,43.

The distortion of man's intellectual faculties by sin accounts for the fallacies of rational philosophy and psychology. The naturalist, for instance, looks at the world and calls it "God," because his rational nature, having been perverted by sin, refuses to acknowledge the possibility of a God whom he cannot see and handle. He is unable to see nature and the world in true perspective because the eyes of his understanding have been blinded by evil.<sup>1</sup> Likewise the idealist, whose reason has been twisted by sin, imagines that his intellect is Divine and autonomous, and consequently denies that it is a gift from God. In a similar manner the effect of sin upon man's mental faculties accounts for all the erroneous systems of thought and the absurd conclusions of many so-called "rationalistic" thinkers.<sup>2</sup>

The alienation of man from the ground of his being also explains the severance of the intellect from sense. This is the deepest and most obvious schism in the human personality. When man dissociates himself from God, his reason becomes abstract; and, as a result, his senses lose their master. Man's appetites and instincts, no longer controlled by reason, in turn control his actions, until his conduct is characterized by an irrational sensuousness. Thus, although his reason may inform him that what he is doing is wrong, he still continues acting in contradiction to his rational judgment. This is the conflict between the "theoretical"

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, pp. 172-174.
2. See also Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 37.



and the "practical," a conflict which is caused by the effect of sin<sup>1</sup> upon the reason and can only be resolved by faith in the Creator.

By thus explaining the results of evil upon the Divine image, Brunner protects himself from the extreme position of Barth, who insisted that the image of God was completely annihilated by sin, and therefore had difficulty in retaining in his thinking the specifically human quality which distinguishes man from sub-human creation and constitutes that to which God addresses His redemptive word. In contrast to Barth, Brunner maintains that man still remains man in spite of his sin, and that therefore he retains, in a restricted sense, the Divine image. There is, then, according to Brunner, a point of contact in man to which God's<sup>2</sup> redemptive word can appeal. Unlike the animal, sinful man possesses the capacity for salvation, and this capacity is the Imago Dei in the formal sense, the point of contact in man. If sin wholly annihilates the Divine image, then man is no different from

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, pp. 166-172.
2. Brunner declares that there are three elements in this point of contact:
  - (1) "Our humanity, our reason, that which distinguishes us from the beast, our capacity to speak and receive rational discourse;
  - (2) The content of rational consciousness, our sense of creatureliness and death to come;
  - (3) Our self-consciousness as over-against our natural knowledge of God, our conscience whose content is fundamentally a sense of guilt. . ." (Ibid., pp. 29,30.)More briefly, he defines the point of contact as "that knowledge of himself which the unbelieving man possesses, and which can, as such, be carried over into faith." (Ibid., p. 29.) Brunner maintains that this point of contact is the formal image of God in man.

a tortoise. But God does not care to save a tortoise, for neither does it need salvation nor can it be "saved." God offers to redeem man because man, unlike the rest of creation, can be redeemed. It is the manhood or humanity of man which may be called the capacity for salvation, and this capacity distinguishes him from all else. It is this distinctive and specifically human quality which is primarily signified by the doctrine of the Imago Dei. Thus even in sin man still retains the formal image of God, twisted and distorted though it may be. For it is this formal image or the capacity of hearing and answering God's Word which is the essential<sup>1</sup> "precondition of salvation."

In keeping with this Brunner also asserts, in opposition<sup>2</sup> to Barth,<sup>3</sup> that even among the heathen there is a knowledge of God. For, although man's will is paralyzed and his intellect blinded by sin, yet one is not compelled to say that, apart from faith, he has absolutely no knowledge of God. For, as a matter of fact, a certain knowledge of God in man is a presupposition of his ability to sin. This knowledge of God in the natural man, dis-

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1. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 25. This view of the Imago Dei does not, according to Brunner, contradict the reformed principle of sola gratia; for the fact that man possesses the capacity for salvation is no credit to him, because it is a gift from the Creator. On the other hand, by so explaining the doctrine of the Divine image and the effect of sin upon it, Brunner avoids the absurdity of maintaining, as Barth does, that man's humanity has nothing to do with the image of God.
2. A discussion of the points of difference between Barth and Brunner may be found in the introduction to Brunner's volume entitled "God and Man," pp. 20-32.
3. Brunner, Emil, Ibid., p. 26.

torted though it may be, is the formal image of God, which is per-  
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verted but not obliterated by sin.

b. Moral Freedom

"Sin is indeed itself slavery, and to be sunk in sin is  
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to be incapable of good." "Whosoever committeth sin is the serv-  
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ant of sin." The sinner is the man who is no longer able not  
to sin. His freedom in the original sense is lost. Man is so  
alienated from God "that he can no longer do the will of God,  
indeed he does not even wish to do it. Sin is the will that is  
4  
bound, enslaved."

However, this bondage cannot be conceived objectively  
in a deterministic manner, but as a personal and actual condition.  
For it is not the cause of sin, but its consequence. If man is a  
slave to sin, he himself is to blame. In fact, freedom and thus  
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responsibility are the presuppositions of every sin. Although  
the sinner is enslaved to evil he is still responsible for his  
actions. Never is sin excusable on the pretense that it is caused  
by external factors which are beyond man's control.

"Even the idea of slavery to sin. . . cannot be allowed to con-  
ceal that of freedom of decision and the concomitant responsi-  
bility. Freedom of decision and inability to decide now for  
good are two sides of one and the same human reality, the one  
turned toward creation, the other toward eternal death. And  
both are presuppositions for the Biblical doctrine of redemp-  
tion." 6

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1. See also Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 116; The Mediator, p. 149.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 136.
3. John 8:34.
4. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 164.
5. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, p. 158.
6. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 136.

Man in freedom chooses sin, and in freedom remains a sinner. But the more he lives in sin, the more he becomes a moral subject of that which he does. Therefore, he is in bondage and yet in freedom,<sup>1</sup> and thus is held responsible for his condition.

### 3. In Relation to His Neighbor

In sin "man stays concealed in his secure hiding-place, secreted behind walls of his I-castle."<sup>2</sup> His entire world revolves around his own selfish interests. He may absorb his neighbor in his circle, but he never succeeds in breaking through this circle of self-interest.<sup>3</sup> The sinner is a prisoner of Self, and he has no access to the keys which could set him free. He thinks of his neighbor as an "it," an object, rather than a person, a "thou."<sup>4</sup> Consequently, instead of loving his neighbor,<sup>5</sup> the sinner uses him to accomplish his own purposes.

Because man is enslaved to greed, covetousness, and egotism, he becomes inhuman, evil, and unhappy. Thus society deteriorates into a battlefield, upon which unhappy and inhuman creatures strive against one another. For, lacking peace in his own heart, the sinner finds it impossible to remain at peace with his fellowmen.<sup>6</sup> The man who is alienated from his Creator is forever peaceless and joyless, and thus in continuous strife with

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, pp. 155,156.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 71,72.
3. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 175.
4. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, pp. 57,58.
5. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 162.
6. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, pp. 162,163.

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other men.

The basis of love for one's neighbor is the knowledge of man's common creatureliness, and this knowledge is conditioned on man's recognition of his Creator. As soon as man forgets that he, like all others, has been brought into existence by the hand of God, he begins to consider himself superior and consequently abuses his fellow creatures. This is the precise result of sin upon man's relation to his neighbor.<sup>2</sup>

#### E. Summary and Conclusion

Although man was created by God in His likeness, he now lives in opposition to his creation, in the state of contradiction. In a word, man is a sinner. Whereas he originally came from the hand of the Creator a righteous being, he has rebelled against his Maker and thus has sold himself under bondage to sin. And man is responsible for his sin, for sin originated in his free will.

Evil, then, is not a mere negative quality, a defect in human nature. On the other hand, it is opposition and contradiction, the rebellion of man against God Himself. It is man's attempt to emancipate himself from God and become his own Lord. The sinner is one who has broken his original relation to the Creator.

The Bible reveals the true depth of man's contradiction by declaring that man not only sins; he is a sinner. This is the

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1. Brunner, Emil, *Our Faith*, p. 79.
2. See also Brunner, Emil, *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 493, 494.

meaning of original sin. Man is not a sinner merely because he commits evil deeds; he is a sinner because at the very core of his existence he is bad. He not only does that which is evil; he cannot do that which is good. Man in sin is unable to do any wholly righteous act. This is the universal condition of man. All are sinners, all are bad at heart; that is, not only all "men" but "man" himself. "Man" and thus all men live in opposition to God, and that opposition affects the very centre of their being.

Because man is a sinner, God addresses him in the law. The will of the Creator is no longer expressed in love but in the demands of the legal code. Since man himself is unable and unwilling to live righteously, God must demand righteousness of him. But the sinner is incapable of obeying God's commands--this is the message of conscience. Conscience stands between man and God, because it informs the sinner that he is out of order, that his existence is existence in opposition, and that consequently he cannot obey the law. Thus the sinner stands before God without excuse. He is guilty, for he has broken his relation to God and he cannot mend it. As a result, God turns to him in wrath.

Because of sin the material image of God is completely effaced, that is, man's justitia originalis. However, man retains the image of God in the formal sense; for it is the formal image, man's capacity for rational discourse, which is the distinctive human element, that which differentiates him from the beast. Nevertheless, sin has perverted and distorted the formal image; consequently, man's rational faculties have been warped. This accounts

for the fallacies of natural psychology and philosophy, and for the distinction between the "practical" and the "theoretical." However, although man's reason is twisted by sin, he still possesses the formal image of God and thus remains man. This image constitutes the point of contact for God's redemptive word; it is man's capacity for salvation.

The freedom which man enjoyed in the beginning is no longer his, for he is a slave to sin. However, even as a slave he is responsible, for he himself is to blame for his condition. Furthermore, at every moment he chooses to remain in bondage to sin. In fact, such freedom is the presupposition of his ability to sin. Therefore, although man is in bondage, he is at the same time in freedom and thus responsible for his condition.

The sinner is a prisoner of Self; consequently, he uses his neighbor for his own selfish purposes. And because he is enslaved to greed, the sinner is unhappy; and being unhappy, he causes unhappiness among his fellowmen. This explains the existence of war and strife in human society. Since the sinner refuses to recognize God as Creator, he is not aware that he, like all others, is a creature. Consequently, he abuses and misuses his neighbor, thinking himself to be superior. Sin, then, not only disrupts man's fellowship with God, but also his relation to his fellowmen.

CHAPTER V

THE REGENERATION AND REGENERATE STATE OF MAN



## CHAPTER V

### THE REGENERATION AND REGENERATE STATE OF MAN

#### A. Introduction

The Christian Gospel is "good news" because, in addition to showing man his condition, it provides the means by which he can become a "new" man. This provision for regeneration is not only essential to Christian anthropology; it is, in fact, its culmination. "In Jesus Christ--who reveals to man both his original nature and his contradiction--in this actual revelation, man is restored to his original unity. ."<sup>1</sup> This is the glorious message of the Gospel. Omit it and Christianity becomes a religion of despair; include it and Christianity becomes what it rightfully is: the εὐαγγέλιον, the "good news" of God to man.

Therefore, the fact that the doctrine of regeneration is both essential and central in Christian anthropology is indisputable. But the problem still remains: how is this regeneration effected and what are its exact results? It is the intention of this closing chapter to endeavor, in summary fashion, to answer this all-important question.

However, before the discussion proper begins, it seems advisable to call one's attention to the fact that any logical treatment of this great subject is of necessity inadequate. For

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 153.

although one is aware of the presence of several different factors in the experience of regeneration, yet when one attempts to analyze this experience and determine its component parts, one is confronted by the fact that the various elements overlap. As a result, it is impossible to draw a definite line of distinction between them. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine which factor precedes the others. Any logical treatment of regeneration, then, inevitably has its shortcomings, and the present treatment is no exception. However, for the sake of clarity and for the purpose of analysis, certain distinctions will be made. But even in this analytical process it is well to keep in mind the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> No rational treatment of this fundamental doctrine can ever hope<sup>2</sup> to be adequate; for ultimately justification is by faith.

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1. John 3:8.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Theology of Crisis, p. 63.

B. The Means and Method of His Regeneration

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1. The Human Aspect

a. Repentance

True "knowledge of sin--genuine horror of sin--is the  
presupposition of faith"<sup>2</sup> in Christ as Saviour. For before man  
is willing and able to receive regeneration, he must realize that  
without it there is no hope, that the chasm between himself and  
God is otherwise impassable. He must see evil as guilt, as a bro-  
ken relation to God which he himself can never mend. Repentance,  
then, involves the realization that no human activity can change  
the sinner's relation to God, that the sinner's condition outside  
of Christ is hopeless. "This appreciation of our helplessness  
and hopelessness"<sup>3</sup> in addition to the need and desire for deliv-  
erance the New Testament calls repentance. Thus repentance is  
a prerequisite of faith and regeneration; for as long as man  
sees no need for Divine intervention, he rejects every effort of  
God to redeem him. In fact, the sinner must despair of himself  
and his self-sufficiency before he is willing to accept the suffi-  
ciency of God. Essentially, therefore, repentance means self-  
despair and consequent denunciation of self-trust, and reliance

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1. The inadequacy of any logical treatment is especially evident here; for although the process of regeneration involves both man and God, it is impossible to distinguish accurately between the action of man and the action of God. Any such distinction, then, does not hold true in every respect, but is simply a means of pointing out the main emphases.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 150.
3. Brunner, Emil, The Theology of Crisis, p. 57.

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upon God alone.

Although repentance is called the presupposition of Divine help, it cannot be said to precede Divine help. For self-knowledge is impossible without the light of God's revelation. It is through Christ that the sinner sees himself as he really is, in actual contradiction. Thus repentance and reconciliation are two sides of the same thing. Neither is possible without the other. 2

b. Faith

Because true self-knowledge depends on Divine revelation, repentance and faith are inseparable. "Faith itself must. . . issue from repentance, as, on the other hand, repentance is only completed in faith." 3 Whereas repentance is realizing one's own dead condition, faith is the acceptance of the gift of life from the Hand of God. 4 But it is not simply passive acceptance; it is the decisive act of "pulling oneself together." 5 Faith is acceptance, and acceptance is decision. 6

The exercise of faith, then, is a continuous process. It is not a static quality or virtue of the soul, for it must be "continually wrestled for and won out of unbelief." 7 It is decid-

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 174.
2. Brunner maintains that any knowledge of man's contradiction apart from Christ is superficial. For it is impossible for man to see the real significance of the chasm between himself and God, since "he does not stand above it but in it." (Brunner, Emil, The Theology of Crisis, p. 58.) See also Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, pp. 175,176.
3. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 81
4. Ibid., p. 162.
5. Ibid., p. 81
6. Brunner, Emil, The Theology of Crisis, p. 63.
7. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 80.

ing here and now for God. In essence faith signifies obedience. It "means responsible existence, an existence which complies with moral demands. ."<sup>1</sup>

Brunner emphasizes the fact that even the act of faith is the gift of God. For the sinner is unable to respond to God's revelation, since he is not in a position to pass judgment upon it. Therefore, God Himself must answer the question for the sinner.

"This is revelation, this is faith: that God answers for us. This is what it means to believe: that we have nothing more to examine and weigh up, that even our "yes" cannot be regarded as our own choice, but simply and solely as God's own speech and God's gift. Faith, the power to believe and not merely the content of faith, is the gift of God; this is the testimony of the Bible."<sup>2</sup>

Thus Brunner considers faith as a kind of Divine soliloquy, God's answer to His own question. However, he insists that "this does not exclude the fact that faith is decision of a fully personal and active kind."<sup>3</sup> For it is impossible that it should be anything else. Nevertheless, man's personal decision, the highest activity of Self, is the gift of God. The Holy Spirit in the heart of man answers the call of God; this is faith.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The Divine Aspect

### a. Reconciliation

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 161.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 283.
3. Ibid., p. 283.
4. Consult also Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 50; The Mediator, pp. 406,407; The Divine Imperative, p. 77; God and Man, p. 83.

The sinner is separated from God by guilt, and he is unable to repair the breach which severs his life from the Divine. Therefore, if he is to be restored, God in His mercy must "throw a bridge across the chasm between himself and man and . . . blaze a trail where man himself could not go."<sup>1</sup> This is what is meant by forgiveness and reconciliation. It is the suspension of that which lies between the sinner and God, and this can only be accomplished by God Himself. Justification is reckoned to the person who believes; it is the gift of God apart from works.<sup>2</sup>

The fact of forgiveness is more than a human idea; it is based upon an event, an event in time and space.<sup>3</sup> God removed the contradiction of man by bearing it Himself; this is the meaning of the cross.<sup>4</sup> The act of reconciliation is an act within history; it signifies the entrance of the Eternal into the realm of time. The Cross ever remains a testimony to God's grace, which alone makes possible justification. The Incarnate and Crucified Christ is the bridge, the mediator between man and God; and it is His death, an objective historical reality, which resolves the sinner's guilt and effects reconciliation between him and God.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Brunner, Emil, *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 60.
2. This is the emphasis which distinguishes the Gospel from all other religions and philosophies, namely, "that God comes to man and not man to God; that God resolves the contradiction and not man; that God makes reconciliation and not man." (Ibid., p. 61.)
3. Brunner, Emil, *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 76,77.
4. Brunner, Emil, *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 60.
5. See also Brunner, Emil, *The Christian Understanding of Man*, pp. 175,176; *The Theology of Crisis*, pp. 59,62,63; *The Mediator*, pp. 389,390.

b. New Birth

In contrast to the view of many theologians, Brunner maintains that justification is more than a purely forensic act. God not only pronounces the sinner righteous, but He actually makes him righteous. "God not only declares, He creates a new <sup>1</sup> man." The new man is not simply an idea, a pretence; it is a reality. "The man who is in Christ through faith is the man who <sup>2</sup> has been 'born again.'" He is a person who has been born into a new hope, and to be able to hope means a new kind of life. This is what Paul signified in the sixth chapter of Romans: "In faith <sup>3</sup> the old man really dies; and in faith the new man actually lives." The act of justification does not merely represent judicial ac- <sup>4</sup> quittal but a creative act of God. The believer is a new cre- <sup>5</sup> ation in Christ Jesus.

However, new birth must not be thought of as a magical process, or the new man as a permanent state of being. For re- <sup>6</sup> generation "is the same thing as the act of faith." And

"what we 'possess' in faith is not a quality or a possession; the mystery of the divine action and the divine giving is fulfilled--beyond our understanding--in the very fact of our acceptance and our passive yielding to God. The new man, the new

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 102.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 612.
3. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 102.
4. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, pp. 176,177.
5. Brunner emphasizes the fact that "the true self of man is not in himself but in Jesus Christ. . .Hence Christian anthropology is essentially Christology; for Christ is our righteousness, our sanctification and our life." (Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 178.)
6. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 160.

person, is not simply 'present' like a newly planted life-germ, as something which is present to be thought of in biological terms; but the new man exists and continues to exist only in the obedience of faith." 1

In other words, 'the paradox of the new birth consists in the fact that although one lives the Christian life, he never is a Christian; for the life of a Christian is not a possession but a day-by-day decision. This is the significance of justification by faith. Although a person is justified and thus receives his life from God, he does not cease to be a sinner to the last day of his earthly existence.

"The Christian then is to be recognized as such not by the fact that he himself has overcome the contradiction, but by the fact that he knows, while standing in the contradiction, that it has been overcome of God." 2

In fact, the Christian more than anyone else realizes the full intensity of his contradiction; but by faith he "puts on the new man."<sup>3</sup>

### C. The Results of His Regeneration

#### 1. In Relation to God

The new man of faith is one who no longer seeks his own interests, but strives to do the will of God. He has ceased minding the things of the flesh; he now minds the things of the Spirit.

"Through faith man becomes a volunteer in the Divine army, one

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 161.
2. Brunner, Emil, The Theology of Crisis, p. 64.
3. See also Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 258.



who because and in so far as he believes, can do nothing else than will what God wills, precisely because his life is based in and on God." <sup>1</sup>

The believer is one who says, "Whatever God does He does well." <sup>2</sup>

Because the man of faith places God at the centre of his life, God no longer addresses him in the imperative of the law but in the indicative of grace: not "you must be" but "you are mine." <sup>3</sup> It is no longer necessary for God to demand obedience from the believer, for he voluntarily and spontaneously obeys, because a man in Christ can do nothing else. The relationship between God and the believer is no longer legal, but the relation of love.

However, even for the Christian the moral law is not abolished; for the Gospel does not condone sin. Therefore, although the law no longer condemns, it still remains as an expression of God's will. Instead of saying, "Do this or you will surely die," God now declares, "You are mine; therefore do this." "The <sup>4</sup> believer looks beyond law to grace, and from grace back to law." He interprets the law through the eyes of faith. Thus he sees behind the law, not a God of wrath, but the God of love who says, <sup>5</sup> "This is my will; do it."

It is likewise true that God, in the act of regeneration, does not eliminate conscience.

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1. Brunner, Emil, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 79.
2. Brunner, Emil, *The Mediator*, p. 408.
3. Brunner, Emil, *God and Man*, pp. 81,82. See also *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 75,76.
4. Brunner, Emil, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 81.
5. Brunner, Emil, *The Mediator*, p. 612.

"Rather, through faith conscience is corrected. First--from the standpoint of faith--its voice is now understood as the accusation of God, as the 'impression' which the demanding and judging God makes on the heart of man. Secondly, the divine acquittal which is perceived and accepted by faith is understood as the suppression of this accusation by God Himself. Thirdly, the conscience is refurnished in its critical function as the understanding of self which is peculiar to man through the joint knowledge of the command of God as the court of appeal which decides what belongs and does not belong to God." <sup>1</sup>

Thus the conscience, which previously drove man away from God, now becomes the guide which leads the believer into a knowledge of the good and perfect will of God.

## 2. In Relation to Himself

The life which man receives from God has been perverted and destroyed by sin. Regeneration means the restoration of this life to its original state, the "restoration of that which was the purpose of creation." <sup>2</sup> The believer again enjoys the privilege of being truly human; for in the act of faith, in letting God speak to him and in answering God by the decision of faith, he becomes <sup>3</sup> a real person. The new birth restores the image of God in man. By justification through faith the unity of his personality (peace) is once again made possible, and he regains a truly personal life, <sup>4</sup> that is, a life of love.

In faith the believer also becomes a free man; he is no longer a slave of the law and sin. He is free to do that which

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 159.
2. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, pp. 115-117.
3. Ibid., p. 10.
4. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 176.  
See also The Mediator, p. 212; God and Man, pp. 17,18.

he wills, namely, that which God wills. But this is possible only because he is dependent upon God for his life and righteousness. Freedom, then, means dependence. But even this dependence is freely-willed, for the man of faith desires nothing more than to lean on God. To him freedom means to be that for which he was created<sup>1</sup> -- the being who relies upon God for his very existence. The Christian is one whom the Son has made free, free from himself and free from the world. The Spirit of God dwells in his heart; and where the Spirit is, there is liberty. That is the glorious freedom of the children of God.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. In Relation to His Neighbor

In justification man is torn out of his self-isolation and self-sufficiency.<sup>3</sup> He is set free from himself to serve others. His neighbor ceases to be a mere case to be subsumed under a law; for the believer comes into personal encounter with his neighbor.<sup>4</sup> Since God's love flows through his heart, it is normal for him to love his fellowman. He sees his neighbor as one for whom Christ died. The man of faith identifies himself with the will of God and thus participates in God's attitude toward His creation. The Christian loves his neighbor because God loved his neighbor to such an extent that He sent His only Son to die for him. In fact,

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Divine Imperative, p. 78.
2. Brunner, Emil, God and Man, pp. 11,83,84.
3. Ibid., pp. 57,58.
4. Brunner, Emil, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 104; God and Man, p. 11; The Divine Imperative, p. 175.

the believer can do nothing else but give his whole life to the restoration of the Divine image in man, because that is the ultimate goal of God's redemptive plan.<sup>1</sup>

#### D. Summary and Conclusion

In order to become a new man, the sinner must first realize the genuine horror of his guilt, and that he cannot by any amount of human works suspend it. This is the meaning of repentance. But since this self-knowledge depends solely on Divine revelation, repentance and faith are inseparable. Faith, then, is the culmination of repentance. In faith man accepts his life from God. But the believer does not receive life once for all in the act of faith; for faith means decision, and decision is a daily experience. And although man himself exercises faith, it is essentially the gift of God.

As a result of his repentance and faith, the sinner is reconciled to God. God in His mercy restores man to his original relation by suspending his guilt. The contradiction of man is removed because God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn sin in the flesh. The cross, then, is the supreme act of reconciliation.

But justification means more than reconciliation; it

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1. Consult also Brunner, Emil, *The Christian Understanding of Man*, pp. 160,161,177,178; *God and Man*, p. 120; *The Divine Imperative*, p. 79.

means regeneration. Not only is man pronounced righteous; he is made righteous. But it must be remembered that the man of faith is a new man only in the act of faith. He is a new creature as long as he yields to God and precisely because of the fact that he does yield to God. The new birth, then, is not a permanent pass to heaven. It is equivalent to the obedience of faith. As long as the Christian believes and obeys, he is a new man. And belief and obedience are daily decisions, decisions which must be forged on the anvil of unbelief and disobedience. Faith, then, is the secret of regeneration. Although man himself remains in his contradiction, he is a new creature because he believes that in God his contradiction is resolved.

The new birth means a new life, a new existence. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.<sup>1</sup>" The believer no longer seeks to do the will of Self; he strives to do the will of God. As a result, the law and conscience cease to condemn him; on the contrary, they become a light unto his pathway. Because his original relation to God is restored, he is at peace with himself and with his neighbor. The man of faith is free from the world and from himself; he is free to love his fellowmen. This is the significance of regeneration; it is freedom from Self to serve God and others.

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1. II Corinthians 5:17.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

#### A. Summary

The problem of man is both perennial and universal; and its solutions throughout the ages have determined the course of history. For what man considers himself to be inevitably determines what his attitude shall be toward others. It is especially consequential, then, that the modern mind see man in his proper light; for if in this atomic age a wrong view of human nature is promulgated, a ruined planet may survive as the only witness to the folly of man. Therefore, because of the supreme importance of discovering the true character of man, it is indeed fitting that the beliefs of the great minds of our day should be examined with respect to this problem, in order to find the answer which alone can save civilization from destruction. Among these outstanding thinkers is Emil Brunner, the eminent Swiss theologian and philosopher, who has exerted a widespread influence on Christian thought. It has been the intention of the preceding chapters to give an insight into his anthropological views.

In order to lay the foundation for Brunner's doctrine of man, the second chapter contained a consideration of the underlying presuppositions and the primary sources upon which his concept of human nature is built. It was discovered that natural philosophy and psychology are incapable of solving the human

problem. For each of the three basic philosophical views upon which all empirical psychologies are founded is of itself inadequate; and yet it cannot be synthesized with the others, because all three are by definition contradictory. This is the crisis of natural anthropology, a crisis which is as long-lived as man. Therefore, the only source which affords an adequate solution to the human problem is Biblical revelation. For the Bible frankly recognizes man's contradiction, and it presents the God in the light of whom man's contradiction can be understood and, in fact, removed. However, the statements of Scripture are not capable of rational proof; they must be accepted by faith. Thus, although scientific psychology has its place, Brunner maintains that the Biblical statements of faith are the ultimate authority in solving the problem of man.

What do the Scriptures reveal concerning the origin and original state of man? It was to this question that the next chapter was addressed. In answer to this query Brunner states that man was originally created by the Word, but that, unlike the rest of creation, he was also created for the Word; that is, he was made in the likeness of God. According to Brunner, the Divine image contains two distinct aspects: the material and the formal. In the material sense the image of God means original righteousness; but in the formal sense it refers to a certain relation, the relation of being over-against God, of being one whom God addresses in the Word and who is able to respond in love. But if God speaks to man and man is able to answer, then he is responsible



to God. Therefore, the distinctively human quality is responsibility. Human existence is responsible existence, for only responsible existence can be truly personal. And it is only when man avails himself of his peculiar relation to God that he becomes truly human.

God made a creature who can hear and answer because He desires to fellowship with him. And it is precisely God's will to fellowship which is the basis for man's freedom. God created man in freedom so that man might truly love Him; and the very essence of love is free will. Moreover, man's freedom is founded upon God's will to Lordship, for God is Lord in the highest sense only when man voluntarily worships Him. For coerced homage is not sincere homage; but when man willingly says 'My Lord' and 'My God,' he worships in spirit and in truth.

Freedom in this sense does not mean complete autonomy, for the very make-up of man demands that he be related to God, since he is man only because of such a relation. Furthermore, man's freedom is restricted by his physical and social environment, the laws and regulations of nature and society. However, man is free to the extent that he can answer "yes" or "no" to his Creator. And if he responds with a "no" of rebellion, he must suffer the consequences--eternal death. But if he answers with a "yes" of faith, he will know himself to be elected from eternity, the man whose name is written in the Book of Life.

If man had remained in his original position, there would have been no necessity for the message of the Scriptures

or for the coming of Christ. But, as a matter of fact, the Scriptures claim that man fell from his original position, that he is a sinner. The fourth chapter of this study was a discussion of Brunner's views concerning the significance of this Biblical statement of faith. It was disclosed that, according to Brunner, sin did not originate in the body of man, but rather in his free will. For to maintain that the physical body is the source of evil is a logical fallacy, since God created man at once both a bodily being and a being who possessed the Divine image. But how could man be made like God if his body contained the principle of sin? Therefore, evil must of necessity have originated in the free will of man, by virtue of which the creature could say "yes" or "no" to his Creator.

What, then, are the essential characteristics of sin? Brunner suggests that sin is not a lack or a defect, but rather a positive magnitude, a contradiction. And contradiction means that man is opposed to his origin, that instead of loving God, man rebels against Him. Thus sin is a personal relation to the Creator. However, it must be realized that man's wrong relation to God is not simply the result of his having committed certain wicked deeds. For man not only sins; he is a sinner. That is to say, his contradiction reaches the very core of his existence; regardless of what he does, he still remains a sinner. This is the significance of original sin. And since sin affects the basic nature of "man," all "men" are sinners.

The consequences of evil are far-reaching. Because of

man's sin God no longer speaks to him in tones of love. For, since the sinner refuses to obey, God must demand of him righteousness and obedience. Thus the original relation of love now becomes the relation of law. But the sinner is unable, and what is more, refuses to heed the law; as a result, the conscience informs him that he is out of order, and that the breach between him and God is irreparable as far as human effort is concerned.

But sin not only affects man's relation to God; it also affects the image of God in man himself. In the material sense the Divine image is totally obliterated by man's rebellion; and the formal image, namely, reason, is twisted and distorted by his sin. Moreover, the sinner is enslaved by the powers of darkness. And because he is a bondservant of sin, he is unable to obtain happiness; and being himself unhappy, he causes unhappiness among his fellowmen. These, according to Brunner, are the primary results of sin.

The fifth chapter was a presentation of Brunner's beliefs concerning the doctrine of regeneration. It was discovered that Brunner sets forth certain factors as the means by which man becomes a new creature. Man himself must first realize the horror of his guilt, and he must realize that his own efforts are of no avail in bringing relief. This is what the New Testament means by repentance. But true repentance is impossible without faith, for one cannot know the real nature of guilt except by Divine revelation. In faith man also sees that what he himself cannot do, God is able to accomplish; consequently, he accepts the gift of life

from the Hand of God. The element of reconciliation involved in justification is consummated by God alone, who bridges the chasm between man and Himself in the body of Christ. As a result, the believer becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. No longer does he seek his own will, but rather the will of God. Consequently, he ceases to be under bondage to the demands of the law; on the other hand, the law becomes to him an expression of God's purpose for his life. Likewise, conscience ceases to condemn and becomes a guide to his footsteps. Moreover, the Divine image is restored in the believer; he again enjoys true freedom. And having been released from self and from sin, he is free to serve others. As the life of the vine flows through the branch, even so does the love of God flow through his life. Instead of using and abusing his neighbor, the believer loves him, because God loves him.

Thus Brunner's doctrine of man may be summarized by the following statements:

1. "Man has been created in the image of God--imago Dei."
2. "Through sin man has come to be in a state of opposition to his divine destiny--peccatum originis."
3. In Jesus Christ--who reveals to man both his original nature and his contradiction--in this actual revelation, man is restored to his original unity--restitutio imaginis."

That, according to Brunner, is the Christian doctrine of man.

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1. Brunner, Emil, The Christian Understanding of Man, p. 153.

## B. Evaluation

Studying Brunner's doctrine of man is comparable to taking a breath of fresh air on a sultry summer day. For, in contrast to the abstract and sentimental concepts set forth by various thinkers, Brunner propounds a realistic and exceedingly practical view of man. This is primarily due to the fact that, whereas others reject the Scriptures, he accepts them as the authentic and ultimate basis for a valid anthropology. And yet Brunner does not assent to the validity of the Scriptures blindly, for he is fully aware of the claims of natural anthropology. Moreover, he tests the truths of Biblical revelation by the observable facts of experience. And he discovers that, whereas natural psychology is unable to solve the human problem because of its logical and practical inadequacies, the Scriptural view enables one to understand the predicament of man because it deals with the facts of life. In this connection Brunner's analysis of the weaknesses of scientific psychology is one of his chief contributions, for in so doing he has prepared the way for the acceptance of the Bible as the only sufficient foundation for a true concept of man. And in addition he has shown that the Scriptures are capable of disclosing that which natural psychology is unable to reveal, namely, that man is in contradiction. The beneficial results of Brunner's work along this line cannot be overestimated.

Brunner's insistence that reason must not be severed from experience also contributes to his realistic understanding of

man. This emphasis is, of course, one of the primary contentions of the Barthian school of theology; and because Brunner, like Barth, stresses the necessity for "existential thinking," he avoids the pitfall into which many philosophers and theologians have fallen, namely, abstract rationalism. Consequently, his anthropological views appeal to the person who is interested in the evangelical approach to religion. One feels that the conclusions set forth make a difference, that Brunner himself is affected by his beliefs. In fact, Brunner is even more evangelical than Barth, precisely because he realizes the supreme necessity of relating theology to experience, of bringing reason down to earth. As a result, his doctrine of man is vital; it comes to grips with the realities of life.

Generally speaking, the content of Brunner's concept of man is in keeping with the teachings of Biblical revelation. However, the discrepancies which do appear are due primarily to two reasons: first, the interpretation of certain passages, apart from any theory of revelation; and secondly, his view of the Scriptures in general. For instance, one might place in the first category Brunner's teaching concerning the nature of faith. He maintains that, since man is a sinner, he is in no position to respond to God's revelation, because he has no basis for judging it. Therefore, faith must of necessity be the gift of God; in fact, faith means God's answer to His own revelation. By describing the character of faith in this manner, Brunner makes it a kind of Divine soliloquy. Thus he fails to take into account either the fact

that man has a free will or his ability to exercise it. However, this is simply a matter of interpretation, and it cannot be expected that all who study the Bible will agree in this respect. But by far the most serious fallacy in Brunner's thinking is his view concerning the Scriptures. It is his doctrine of the Word which makes it possible for him to accept the theory of evolution in preference to the Biblical account of creation. In defense of his position Brunner maintains that there are some statements in the Scriptures which reflect the views of antiquity, e. g., the picture of the universe set forth in Genesis 1. These statements, he asserts, are outdated because of recent scientific discoveries. But, after all this should not bother the Biblical scholar, for the main idea which the Genesis account is attempting to convey is that in the event of creation God was behind the scenes, and that the end product of evolution is a creature who bears a unique resemblance to the Divine. This particular application of Brunner's concept of revelation may indeed seem inconsequential and harmless; nevertheless, it is extremely important, because it reveals the fact that at times Brunner is more willing to accept certain unproved theories of science in preference to the statements of Scripture. Brunner explains his willingness in this connection by a theory similar to that of Aquinas, which insists that whereas faith is the highest authority in the realm of revelation, reason is the final authority in the realm of science. But the problem is this: how is one to make a clear-cut distinction between the area in which science and reason are supreme and the area in which the Scrip-

tures and faith are supreme? In facing this issue Brunner himself is inconsistent and arbitrary; for he accepts unequivocally the theory of evolution simply because some scientists claim that it is valid, and yet rejects the theories of certain psychologists in spite of the fact that they insist with the same vehemence that their findings are likewise valid. As a matter of fact, Brunner's basis for choosing at this point is somewhat subjective, and it is precisely here that the danger of his viewpoint lies. For, although Brunner himself has set forth, for the most part, an acceptable view of man on the basis of his concept of Scriptures, yet if this same view of Biblical revelation were employed by an Ingersoll or a Rosenberg, an entirely different anthropology would emerge. For instance, instead of rejecting the "assured findings" of behavioristic psychology, the latter might accept them for the same reason that Brunner accepts the theory of evolution. Brunner is therefore guilty of doing that which he criticizes in rationalistic philosophers; that is, he rejects a Biblical statement of faith because something else appeals more to his reason. His inconsistency in this respect is noteworthy, for it has characterized the whole Barthian approach to the Scriptures. Barth and his followers have seen the impotence of liberalism and consequently have returned in many respects to a vital faith in the Scriptures. However, they still retain some of the tenets of liberal theology; as a result, their doctrine of the Word is stated in such a way as to make possible the retention of these beliefs, especially in reference to science and Biblical criticism. Herein lies the cause for Brunner's



inconsistency. Therefore, although in general his doctrine of man is Scripturally acceptable, yet it must be noted that the theoretical basis upon which his anthropology is built is fundamentally unsound.

Nevertheless, this study of Brunner's concept of man has been both refreshing and stimulating. And although one may not agree with all his conclusions, the eminent theologian of Switzerland deserves a hearing; for he is a thinker of great intellectual acumen and, what is more, one who is intensely interested in the problems of man.

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