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THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION
IN THE
THEOLOGY OF EMIL BRUNNER

by

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A THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

1. Importance of the Problem
2. Justification of this Study
3. Purpose of the Thesis

Introduction

1. Importance of the problem of revelation

Each age has its own distinctive problems that come out of the actual life situations of the age: and science in a broader sense finds its *raison d'être* in the contemporary age only when it takes up those problems into consideration and tries to present pertinent answers for them. We find three distinctive movements that are respectively claiming their contemporaneity since the Great War that marked the beginning of our age, viz. Marxism, Fascism and the dialectical theology, usually known as "Barthianism" in this country.

It is needless to say that the dialectical theology differs entirely in its nature from the others as it belongs to the sphere of religion: while the latter two have grown up in the politico-economic ground. Yet it is not hard to point out the tenor that is common to all of them. They are revolts against human culture which is based on the conception of human freedom that capitalism, with its ally, German Idealism, has long been cultivating. While both Marxism and Fascism, with their approaches which are diametrically opposed, are aiming to bring men a new culture and civilization, rejecting, on the one hand, the idealistic conception of freedom and the *laissez-faire* principle of capitalism, yet, on the other, relying on the in-

herent cultural ability of the human being to build an ideal social order, the dialectical theology is more "radical", so to speak, in that it goes so far as to take up humanity as its object of inquiry and to bring it into judgment. Revolt against and despair in human culture are not real until the very ground of human culture, viz. humanity itself, is taken into inquiry. It is not thoroughgoing to see in the destruction that the Great War brought forth the bankruptcy of the civilization of capitalism and the self-defeat of humanism.

Man must see an invisible Might standing behind this visible world that shakes his existence from its foundation. Despair in human culture must come to despair in man himself before this "awe-ful" Given. Therefore, man must after all be the being that is to be spoken of only with God. However, where the search for the Invisible, the Eternal, and the Unconditional becomes the inquiry after God, there the consciousness is strong to realize that to know this Eternal is beyond the ability of man but is dependent upon the revelation of the Eternal, God, Himself.

It is for this reason that the problem of revelation is a most vital and important one in our age. It is not only the central theme of theology in particular, but also the key idea of the "Weltanschauung" of the day. The

study of revelation in theology is, therefore, not an idle speculation, but on the contrary, the most real and fundamental task that might give due answer to the life-situations of the contemporary world. It gives ground for man's existence and the key to his interpretation of the world.

2. Justification of this thesis.

With all the pros and cons of criticism, no one can deny that the dialectical theology has made a definite contribution to the history of Christian thought in that it has brought the problem of revelation into the central place of the task of theology. Thus it may be said that the dialectical theology has revived the true spirit of Protestant Christianity. For, Protestantism stands solely on the belief that the justification of man is not by his ethico-religious merit, but wholly by the saving work of Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, who is the revelation of God. It must, however, be admitted that so far as revelation is concerned, every religion is based on divine revelation in one way or other by which the divine and personal character of the supersensible world manifests itself in this temporal world. The whole culture with its conceptions and its ritual action is based upon manifest-

ations of deity to man. In the "religion of educated people", also, there exists always a problem that is concerned with revelation that relates the Eternal to the temporal. It may mean the emergence of the eternal ground of all existence into consciousness, the perception of something that is always true, or the growing consciousness of a divine presence which can take place anywhere and at any time. Revelation in this sense, therefore, is timeless and universal, independent of all the "accidents of history". What, however, makes Christianity unique from all other forms of religion is not revelation of this kind, but its emphatic claim that, between the soul and God, between humanity and God, between the world and God, there stands a third element, the historical fact of the life and work of Jesus Christ that took place once for all in human history. Although the element of historical contingency does not itself constitute a revelation, yet the revelation upon which the Christian faith is based is founded upon this fact alone, and apart from it, Christianity itself could not exist. "There is nothing accidental", says Brunner, "about the unique and unrepeatable character of revelation in the Christian religion; it is an integral element, or rather, it is not one element alone, but constitutes its very essence."* Thus, the problem of rev-

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* Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, Eng. tr. p.25

elation is the very core of Christianity.

3. Purpose of this thesis.

The writer of this thesis aims to present the doctrine of revelation as viewed by Emil Brunner, the most prolific author among the dialectical theologians who have made such a definite contribution to the Christian thinking world. He aims to describe how Brunner expounds the problem, and by so doing, hopes to clarify the essential truth of Christianity, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER I

Historical Background

1. Theological Currents since Schleiermacher.
2. Rise of the Dialectical Theology.

Chapter I Historical Background

1. Theological Currents since Schleiermacher.

If it is possible to characterize the Middle Ages with its authoritarian culture that had been grown up in the influence of the authority of the Church, and the modern period with its liberal culture that has grown up in the autonomy of human reason, it would be correct to say that the modern period dates its beginning with its departure from the spirit of the Middle Ages and with its discovery of the freedom of humanity. The Renaissance played a great part toward achieving the bringing of the new era in human history into the secular world. The Reformation, however, was a protest against the secularization of religion in those days, and in this respect was an attempt to maintain the purity of the spirit of the Middle Ages. The mergence of these two different elements into a blooming culture of the modern period was not made in the early period known as the Post-Reformation or the Protestant Scholasticism, but during and since the period of the Aufklärung. Therefore, it is said that the modern period in the true sense has marked its origin in the time of the Aufklärung.

"Aufklärung", wrote Kant in the year 1784 in his essay,

"What is Aufklärung?", "is the advance of man beyond the state of voluntary immaturity. By immaturity is meant, inability to use his own understanding except under the guidance of another. The immaturity is voluntary when the cause of it is not want of intelligence, but of resolution and courage to use it without another's guidance. Sapere aude! Dare to use thy own understanding! is therefore the motto of Aufklärung."* With this motto and its presupposed conviction in human reason as its basis, the Aufklärung flourished into a great age of Rationalism, leaving a deep influence on science, philosophy, and religion. "It was a time of jubilant and all but fatuous optimism, strongly buttressed by faith in the infinite perfectibility of man through education."**

In such a time, it was not surprising that religion was reduced to a system of doctrine, intellectual information, or a code of moral precepts, rather than as a personal relation. The reality of sin was not denied; but it was explained genetically as due to the senses having started ahead rationally. It is a disease of childhood, like measles, which the human race may justly expect to outgrow. Christ is undoubtedly our example, yet it is wholly unnecessary on that account to credit him with

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* Vide, Otto Pfleiderer, The Development of Theology, Eng. tr. p. 3

**H. R. MacKintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p. 16

attributes of a supernatural order. What is important in him is not an accidental element of his historical reality, but the Logos which he manifests in his personality. Salvation is to attain the Logos by human reason through its highest art of knowledge, contemplation, intuition and mystical experience. "It is the metaphysical element alone, and not the historical, which saves us." (Fichte) Thus, in Rationalism the unique meaning of Christian revelation is entirely rejected. Revelation is not special in the sense the Reformers tried to present; it is general and universal by nature. It may be called special only in the sense that it is an individual, concrete instance of a general truth, that it is the accidental incarnation of that essence which is in the realm of the Eternal, or, that it is an individual embodiment of general revelation. Once religion covered the whole sphere of human life, and theology was the queen of science; now not only theology became a branch of philosophy, but even religion was regarded simply as a matter of "evidence".

It was in his protest against this situation of the Christian religion amidst the Rationalism of the Aufklärung that Schleiermacher's place as a theologian in the history of Christian thought should be considered. Although brought up in the strict Moravian Pietism, which at its best was a revolt against, and a recoil of living faith from a dead

and rigid orthodoxy of the Protestant Scholasticism, Schleiermacher was not so dull as to be insensitive to the reigning tendency of the Aufklärung. Having plunged into the study of Rationalist teaching, he, however, felt painfully the indifference of the mind of the day to religion and found himself consoled with the tender and exquisite Romanticism* in which he saw a great affinity with himself. Dissatisfied with cold, lifeless pietism, and protesting against the obliteration of religion in the general intellectual field, Schleiermacher tried to restore the place of religion in human life. In the year 1799 he published his famous book, "Address on Religion to its Cultural Despisers". In it he made it clear that religion is not doctrine but life, and therefore, it has a sphere of its own in human activities. "Belief must be," writes he, "something different from a mixture of opinions about God and the world, and of precepts for one life or for two. Piety cannot be an instinct, craving for a mess of meta-

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* Mackintosh defines Romanticism as follows. "Romanticism, which is more a mood or temper than a creed, was a reaction against the predominance of classical norms in literature and art, as well as a revolt against the arid intellectuality of eighteenth-century rationalism. It may be defined as an impassioned return to natural instincts, to life, to freedom, to individual predilection, to the spontaneity of the creative fancy. It looked upon nature and man with eyes full of wonder, and pointed anew to the mystery of life". H. R. Mackintosh, Op. Cit., p. 33 footnote

physical and ethical crumbs."* It comes not from intelligence and will, but in feeling and intuition.

This theme is also seen in another great book of his, "The Christian Faith", which appeared in the year 1821. "You can reject," we can hear him say, "the dogmas and propositions of religion. Very well, reject them. They are not in any case the essence of religion itself. Religion does not need them; it is only human reflection on the content of our religious feelings or affections which requires anything of the kind, or calls it into being. Do you say that you cannot away with miracles, revelation, inspiration? You are right; we are children no longer; the time for fairy-tales is past. Only cast off as I do faith in everything of that sort, and I will show you miracles and revelations and inspirations of quite another species. To me the Universe is a miracle; and everything finite has such a relation, in so far as I find in it a token or indication of the Infinite. What is revelation? Every new and original communication of the Universe to man; and every elemental feeling to me is inspiration. The religion to which I will lead you demands no blind faith, no ne-

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* Address II, Eng. Tr. p. 31.

gation of physics and psychology; it is wholly natural, and yet again, as the immediate product of the Universe, it is all of grace."* Religion is not science, nor morality. Its seat is not in reason, or conscience, or will. Since religion is direct contact of the soul with the divine, its home is nowhere but in feeling. Faith is the "feeling of absolute dependence", and there ought to be found the essence of religion.

While we ought not to underestimate the contribution of Schleiermacher which restored religion to its proper place in human life, we should not fail to point out that the essence of religion in his idea is something general, and not special, that is common to all religions including Christianity. The Christian revelation is the individualization of the universal, that expresses the essence of religion which is universal, in an individual and accidental form, in the positive aspect of history, and at the same time also within its limitations. Thus Christianity is in his system, nothing but a special variety of religion in general, that is not able to claim its own uniqueness.

It is in his attempt to restore Christianity from this Schleiermacherian submergence of the essence of re-

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* Expounded by Dr. Mackintosh in his Op. Cit., pp. 43-44
Of Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, p. 14

ligion that we ought to find the place of Ritschl in the history of Christian thought. He wished to break away from the idealistic speculative idea of universal religion and to return to the scriptural doctrine of a revealed religion. Thus Ritschl begins with the revelation of Christ and interprets it through the appropriation of it by the believing community.

Christian truth is neither solely objective nor solely subjective. It is something that is at once given and received; and this is the subject matter of Christian theology. Inevitably Christianity claims to be the perfect religion, for it has received a perfect knowledge of God from Christ, who as the son of God ascribed to Himself a perfect knowledge of His Father. It is with the discussion of this claim that Ritschl begins his monumental work, "Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation", which deserves to be called "the second milestone in the theological history of the last century."* All that we have in Christianity is ours only when we recognise in Christ the perfect revealer of God. But how is he the divine revelation? To this question Ritschl answers, like Luther, that the Christ's divinity is believed only when we are aware of his saving work in his relation with the Christian community,

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* Brunner, Op. Cit., p. 56

and of the position thereby given to Christ as the head of the Kingdom of God. Here he introduced his much argued doctrine of value-judgments. If Christ is my Lord by his saving work, and "if, by trusting for my salvation to the power of what He has done for me, I honour Him as my God, then that is a value-judgment of a direct kind."* "Christ's whole activity in discharge of His vocation forms the material of that complete revelation of God which is present in Him."** In other words, the claim of Jesus to be the revelation of God is guaranteed by his moral fidelity to his vocation in relation to the divine purpose for the world, viz. the Kingdom of God; therefore, he is judged as revelation. Thus what is important is not the fact of Jesus Christ but the idea of the Kingdom of God, from which everything is deduced in rigid fashion. Revelation simply means the introduction of this idea of the Kingdom into history. The fact of revelation is held to consist in the life of Jesus, in so far as in him the ethical idea of the Kingdom of God was founded, and was personally exemplified. Ritschl, who started his work as a protest against Schleiermacherian obliteration of the distinction between special and general revelation, came to the same result. It is quite right that Brunner

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* Justification and Reconciliation, Eng. tr. p. 398

** Ritschl, Op. Cit., p. 451

summarizes correctly when he says that "the Ritschlian theology is a Rationalistic system clad in scriptural garments."*

Ritschl had unduly isolated Christianity and refused to consider it in the context of other religions, except in the case of Old Testament religion. In not unnatural reaction, the new school which grew up in Germany in the last decade of the nineteenth century, broke away from Ritschlianism, to form what is called the Religio-Historical School, in which Christianity is discussed as one of the religions of the human race. The rise of this movement, apart from its apathy to Ritschlianism, was not unreasonable because propagation of Christianity in non-Christian lands raised a new scepticism concerning the absoluteness of Christianity, even though it might still claim superiority. Troeltsch, one of the ablest representatives of this school, regarded the customary claim for the absolute validity of Christianity as impossible. He saw nowhere that Christianity appeared as an absolute religion, free from the limits of time and age. To Troeltsch the historical is necessarily the relative.

Thus, it is easy to see that the idea of a special revelation had disappeared from Troeltsch's mind. Rev-

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* Brunner, Op. Cit., p. 57

elation meant to him the depths of man's own mind yielding wonderful intuitions of unseen reality. "The whole of the world or God," to quote him, "can only manifest itself through itself, through that inner feeling and certainty of the whole and its being, which we call religious feeling or religious sense, and which we clearly feel as the presence of this whole within ourselves." "It is revelation such as everyone can experience and testify to who has a real religious life, were it only for moments of time." "Christianity is not the only revelation or redemption, but the culminating point of the revelations and redemptions which are at work in the elevation of humanity to God."*

2. Rise of the Dialectical Theology

Thus tracing the development from Schleiermacher to Troeltsch, we may find that the modern world-view has progressively forced the unique content of traditional Christianity into oblivion. Historicism, with its twin, relativism, has demarked the distinction between special and general revelation, and man has built his whole world-view and culture upon his reason and inherent faculty that would reach God by a gradual process of development.

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* Revelation, an article in Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, IV, 918ff. Mackintosh's tr. Vide, his Op. Cit., p. 195

It must be well noticed that the dialectical theologians have all been baptized with this humanistic ideology of the modern period which we have just surveyed. Barth, the initiator of this group, for example, began his ministerial career as a disciple of Herrmann, the great Ritschlian theologian, to whom he pays the following warm tribute.

"Herrmann was the theological teacher of my student days.... Of course, I cannot deny that in the course of the years, I have become a somewhat strange Herrmann pupil.... But I could never have been willing to admit the fact of a conversion away from Herrmann and I can not do so today. What it means to be the real pupil of a real master, generally, and particularly in regard to theology, is a question which has not yet been unanimously answered. But it appears to me that I received from Herrmann something fundamental which, thought out to all its consequences, later compelled me to say the rest differently from him and finally to interpret even his fundamental principle in another way. And yet, he showed it to me. Nobody can take that from me, and I should like gratefully to acknowledge this in public."*

In taking an actual pastorate among the people before and during that distressing experience of the Great War, Barth felt keenly a hollow dissatisfaction with the general liberal viewpoint of theology, and witnessed a horrible avalanche of the culture that is based on optimistic, human freedom since Schleiermacher. For there was no universally valid source or authority of revelation which one man could prove to another. Faith

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* Quoted, Wilhelm Pauck, Karl Barth: Prophet of a New Christianity?, pp.41-42

was entirely personal and subjective. Despaired and disgusted, Barth took up the Bible anew and groped for a revelation that is to be reliable. Let us hear the words of Eduard Thurneysen, his colleague, about this situation.

"Not far from here lies Safenwil and still a little farther away Lentwil, where, during the years of the war, Karl Barth and I were ministers. Both of us were religious socialists---as one had to be in those days, if the appeal of the times, and the needs and enterprises of his generations had awakened him from ecclesiastical slumber. Socialism, connected perhaps with temperance, was the movement that was to us the most impressive parable, if not the substance, of the Kingdom of God, which we preached on Sundays. And the task of preaching was in those days our central concern. Then came the war. At its outbreak we recognised first of all a judgment upon that Christianity which had identified itself altogether too much with bourgeois interests. But the more decisively the deluge of the war broke down everything that was seemingly built firm and high, the more we saw the ruin not only of the bourgeois-Christianity but also of the religious-social ideology. Not only the great 'ism' at our right, nationalism and militarism, but also the 'ism' at our left, especially socialism, came under the crisis.

"A huge, yawning abyss opened before us. And if we may call the bourgeois, socialistic, ecclesiastical and religious interpretations of the meaning of the events of the times, the bridges which were brought to cross the abyss, we must say that they all proved much too short. They all fell into the pit.....

"In this situation something very simple happened to us. Our attention was presently called to the Bible.. We read with the eyes of shipwrecked people whose everything had gone overboard.

"The Bible appeared in a new light. Beyond all interpretations its genuine word began to speak again: the word of the forgiveness of sins, the gospel of the coming Kingdom, coming not from men, but from God....

"In the midst of this encounter with the Bible, Barth's letter to the Romans was written. From that time on we have occupied ourselves with the great actual truth which lies hidden in the old abused terms: Word

of God, Church, sin, grace, justification by faith, return to Christ, reconciliation, redemption. The Bible led us back to the Reformation, and the Bible and the Reformation have held our attention throughout the years."*

No comment is necessary to this fine description of the situation. There are some who hold the view that Barthianism is a product of the war, a temporal reaction coming out of the war. This is neither true nor fair. Although the war precipitated the birth of the dialectical theology as we have just seen, Barth's commentary on the Romans should have been out, even if the situation were different. Thus it may be said that the dialectical theology marked its beginning with his Romans that was published in 1918. Three years later it was completely rewritten. His interpretation in it may not always be correct, but what is to be noticed is his great emphasis upon the paradoxical nature of religion and of faith in particular as the organ of religion, and as its consequence, upon unique significance of revelation in that paradoxical relation between God and man. Modern theology attempted to substitute a revealed religion for the natural religion born of the Aufklärung. But we must not forget that its revealed religion is something that originates in the inherent creative powers of the human soul. Thus not only is it

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* Zwischen den Zeiten, 1927, pp. 514-5, Pauck's translation. Vide, his Op. Cit., pp. 58-60

not originated from the faith of the Reformers, but stands in direct opposition to it. It is this truth that Barth and his associates are striving to clarify.

Karl Barth has written several important books since his monumental Romans---Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie, 1925; Die Auferstehung der Toten, 1926; Dogmatik; Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes, First Part, 1927, 2nd edition greatly altered in 1932, Second Part in 1938; Die Theologie und Kirche, 1928; and Credo in 1936. Among his early associates, Eduard Thurneysen still holds an intimate relationship with Barth. He wrote Das Wort Gottes und die Kirche in 1927, and a beautiful book, Dostojewski in 1930. Friedrich Gogarten was brought up also in the thought of Herrmann. His main interest is centered in the criticism of German Idealism. He published in 1921 Die religiöse Entscheidung, and in 1926 his most famous, Ich glaube an den dreieinigen Gott. In this group Rudolf Bultmann is unique in that he is a New Testament scholar, while the rest of them are all systematic theologians. He is famous for his books, Jesus, 1926, and Der Begriff der Offenbarung im N. T., 1929. Emil Brunner, with whom we are primarily concerned in this thesis, was brought up in the home of a university professor. Philosophically he was influenced by Bergson, and breathed in the liberal

theology as he studied in Union Theological Seminary in New York City having received the Francis Brown Scholarship. He has been a most influential interpreter of the idea of Karl Barth, writing many enlightening books, and comparing the Christian truth with modern, liberal, cultural thoughts. But now between Barth and Brunner there developed a theological difference as to the relationship between special and general revelation through the publication of Brunner's *Natur und Gnade: Zum Gespräch mit Karl Barth*, and Barth's reply, *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner* in 1934. However, no one can deny that Brunner is the most powerful and influential advocate of the dialectical theology. He wrote many fine works---*Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, 1921; *Die Mystik und das Wort*, 1924; *Philosophie und Offenbarung*, 1925; *Religionsphilosophie evangelischer Theologie*, 1927; *Der Mittler*, 1927; *Gott und Mensch*, 1930, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*, 1932. He is the only one among the dialectical theologians who published English books of his own, *The Theology of Crisis*, 1929, and *The Word and the World*, 1930.

CHAPTER II

REVELATION AS THE BASIS AND SUBJECT OF BRUNNER'S THEOLOGY

1. Revelation as the Basis and subject of Theology.
2. Difference between Philosophy and Theology.
3. Function of Theology.

CHAPTER II

REVELATION AS THE BASIS AND SUBJECT OF BRUNNER'S THEOLOGY

1. Revelation as the Basis and Subject of Theology.

It will be superfluous to say from the historical background which was briefly reviewed in the previous chapter that the dialectical theology that claims its place in the history of Christian thought as a protest against the obliteration of the revelation in the Christian faith in the modern theology, is centering its attention on the meaning and truth of the revelation in the historical event of Jesus Christ. What is most essential and most significant in the dialectical theology is its uncompromising effort to make clear that the revelation which is present and operative in Jesus Christ is, for the Christian Theology, the sole basis to stand on and the primary object to take up.

2. Difference between Philosophy and Theology.

Every science has its own sphere of inquiry, depending on some kind of presupposition. The deeper its inquiry, the more fundamental is its presupposition to be based on,

which is to supply the meaning and explanation of the relation among all particular facts that are taken up for the inquiry. It is for this reason that philosophy is long regarded as the basic or fundamental science, for it aims to supply the ground for the inquiry which includes in it, the meaning of all science, all civilization and human life in general, in short, the whole of existence and life. Theology however, like philosophy, is also concerned with the inquiry of the whole of existence and life. It claims to give an answer to all the questions about what man knows, does, and thinks. Thus philosophy and theology inevitably come into conflict concerning the validity of the claim as the final ground for the meaning and truth of the reality. The difference between them is that philosophy is based on man's reason, whereas theology finds its ground on what is beyond man's reason, viz. God's self-revelation. Brunner explains this difference very clearly as follows.

"To philosophize is to reflect on the mental grounds, with the assumption that ultimate validity belongs to the complex of grounds and consequences developed by natural reason. Christian faith on the other hand involves recognizing that this complex has been broken into by revelation. It is in this revelation that the affirmations of Christian faith are grounded. Theology, which is Christian faith in scientific form, could only lay claim to a scientific character provided it gave clear and exact expression to the fact that its complex of grounds and consequences differs from that

of all other sciences as to the final authority it recognizes; provided further that it developed all its affirmations purely out of its own presuppositions and thus founded them on that complex; and provided finally, that on this basis it investigated the relations, whether positive or negative, between revealed faith and rational knowledge".*

Theology is, thus, on common ground with philosophy in showing the existence of an intelligible relationship within the whole of reality; but this is not, as it is for philosophy, the logic of the natural reasoning process, but the knowledge and acknowledgement of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, which is known not by reason as some universal truth, but only by faith as a unique fact that took place once for all, in history. This revelation is the sole presupposition of theology. It is for this reason that theology is only possible within the borders of the Christian community or church, and has its definite content and its definite standard in the Bible.

3. Function of Theology

The function of theology, consequently, is to make that presupposition clear and to keep its content pure and faithful to that believing community. "The work of theology", says Brunner, "is like that of those whose business it is to test food-value. It is the duty of the theologian to examine the spiritual "food-value" of the faith which the

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* The Philosophy of Religion, Eng. Tr. pp. 13-14

Church offers to the world in her proclamation of the truth--to distinguish the true from the false.....
The Church needs to use Theology as a check, in order to protect herself against 'food-poisoning', and against the acceptance of worthless and deceptive 'food substitute'. Theology cannot herself create the Divine Food of Life, but she can render yeoman service to the Church, and to the cause of God on earth, by exposing the poverty-stricken condition of Christendom".*

If this is the function of Christian Theology, it will immediately follow that theology must, first of all, dispute any kind of human attempt but revelation in explaining the whole of existence and life.

In the following chapter we shall try to clarify the nature of revelation by showing the inadequacy of reason and the human abilities as the ground for explaining the ultimate reality.

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* The Mediator, pp. 14-15

CHAPTER III

REVELATION AND RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

1. Problem of Knowledge.
2. Problem of Ethics.
3. Problem of Religious Experience.
4. Summary: Need of Revelation.

CHAPTER III

REVELATION AND RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

1. Problem of Knowledge

When we inquire about the truth, the ultimate ground in which all things are grounded, we find it not as a thing or a world existing by itself, but as an idea or law. Every science consists of studying that law or the process by which it is gained. Philosophy, which boasts as the science of all sciences, attempts to seek out of the many laws which each science postulates the final and utmost law which makes cognition of the Ultimate possible. Truth is only cognized by the relation to this law. To cognize means to grasp in this relationship. Broadly speaking, philosophy* knows three possible ways of cognition concerning the Ultimate reality: realism, idealism, and the critical philosophy. Realism thinks that each single part of the whole is "given", and is independent with each other, the aggregate of which is the reality. There are two concepts

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* Brunner considers the function of philosophy in two ways. The one is "the formal critical testing of concepts as the business of philosophy". This is usually described by him as criticism and regarded as the inevitable accompaniment of theological study. The other is "the possibility of a knowledge of God by means of the reason". Vide, Brunner, *God and Man*, p. 41 footnote. It is in this latter sense that we are using the term 'philosophy' here.

which have proved themselves serviceable for this thought, viz. the concept of causality and that of analogy. According to the former concept, it is concluded that the finite as a whole has a cause, because every single finite existence has a cause. Especially the perception of immanent purposiveness seems to actually force us to such a conclusion, since nothing finite can fully account for purposiveness. According to the latter, it is concluded that reality, which appears as a graded structure of realms of being that is not completed in the finite, demands its ideal completion in the construction of an existence in which that may be present in its perfection which appears as still imperfect even at the highest stage empirically known. Thus realism thinks that a single part of existence is a composite thing, a relative whole. We are, however, looking for the uniting principle of those relative wholes into one reality. Realism, therefore, ultimately concludes that the whole, or the explicable connection, has its ground entirely in those ultimately single elements, and is not independent, but derivative. Thus realism asserts that reality is out there independent of the cognizing mind.

Idealism thinks that a part is only meaningful as grounded in the whole. The whole cannot be divided or resolved into parts. The whole is the Logos in which the

particular is grounded, and which gives the meaning to the particulars and to the whole. Idealism believes, thus, contrary to realism that it can find the ultimate reality in the ideas of the Logos without taking into account the fact that this idea is an empty abstraction, lacking fullness of being. "Sense-perception without concept is blind, concept without sense-perception is empty".

Now, the critical philosophy says that true knowledge of reality cannot be attainable by both realism and idealism, because knowledge of the ultimate reality is not to be gotten either by sense-perception alone or by thought alone, but by the combination of the both, viz. the understanding of the wholes which are constituted by meaning between the particulars of reality. But here the critical philosophy fails to give a solution in the fact that what we are able to set in order is never more than a certain "datum", the existence and nature of which always finally evades our comprehension, is an indication of its irrationality. Hence despite our knowledge we remain ignorant of the true nature of reality.

What has been said concerning the types of philosophy that attempt to find out law and the process by which the law is gained in order to attain the truth shows that philosophy is always short of cognizing the reality as it is.

Philosophy is concerned with the source of the law by which is explained the relationships of cognition, Therefore, Brunner says,

"The source of this law remains hidden. Philosophy cannot put it, but simply presume it. The ultimate ground of all objective truth can never become the object of cognition. Through this ground we can always have cognition, but the ground itself, what makes things true, the ground of the truth, the truth in all truths never enters into our cognition, and therefore leaves our cognition in distance of the truth itself, and thus it is, at the same time, truth and non-truth".*

Thus the Absolute is not known to us. What we can have is, after all, nothing but the limit-concept concerning the Absolute. The thing-in-itself in the Kantian System may be understood as the limit-concept of this kind. "Thus when we reflect on knowledge we are brought face to face with the question of the Absolute without however being able to give ourselves any answer to it".** To speak of this in a religious sense, it is that God, the Absolute, is the ground of our life. Yet He Himself is concealed to us. We cannot know God. If He is the object of our cognition, He is no longer the Absolute. For if we absolutify what is relative to our cognition, it is after all absolutification or deification of our own thinking. Thus from a philosophical standpoint with its proper methodology, God is simply inferred as "deus absconditus".

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* Philosophie und Offenbarung, p. 8.
** Philosophy of Religion, p. 66.

2. Problem of Ethics.

Theoretic knowledge is not everything. It is a part of life, but we are more than our theoretic knowledge. Theorists are like spectators in a theatre. They exclude themselves from the actual situation and calmly and coolly look at it. But as a matter of fact we cannot remain as spectators in life. We ourselves are the actors. We do not become men until we pass from the natural life, into which we are born, with its character as an immediate datum, and begin to inquire about the true life, the truly significant and good life, which is not a datum. In so doing we no longer reflect upon the objective world, but turn to the active ego and ask: "How do I truly become a man?" This question itself implies a provisional answer, viz. that the true ego is not a datum, but a mandatum or task. Thus man truly becomes man when he inquires after himself. Here begins the moral problem. Man finds himself under moral obligation of the categorical imperative. The fact that this moral obligation is universal and therefore purely formal, defining form rather than content, is not a defect, but rather a distinctive quality of ethics: it ought to lay the stress on form rather than content, on mental disposition rather than material result.

From this universality of the sense of moral obligation

in men, it has been thought that there must be the true reality behind this idea of obligation. The good, as Plato tells us, is "the queen of all the ideas". It is the pledge of a higher reality. By saying "you ought" it gives me a place in the realm of ends. And the realm of ends is only a "realm", i. e. a unity, through being constituted by a will, which is not mine but above me. It is the divine will, that challenges me in the law of obligation and thereby raises me at last to the level of man.

Kant, developing the moral argument along the same line as Plato in his "Critique of Practical Reason", arrived at a two-fold conclusion. The first is that from the existence of the absolute moral law in our consciousness we arrive at God as absolute law-giver. The second is that for the possibility of the realization of the moral law in the visible world, we postulate God as absolute ruler of the world. However, the objection concerning the former argument is that the moral law cannot be regarded as a commandment given from without, but rather belongs to man's own nature, and is really moral only as arising out of this autonomy. To trace it to an outward lawgiver is to destroy the moral self-determination, and consequently the proper dignity of man. For the second argument Kant asserted that the practical reason postulates the existence of God for

the realization of the highest good, which consists in the union of perfect virtue with perfect happiness. For the former, man is responsible, but the latter is not in man's power, and can only be procured for him in a way answering to his virtue by an Almighty God. Hegel objected to this eudemonistic idea of Kant that morality consists in action, but action is the realization of moral ends, and therefore the restoration of harmony between the moral idea and the reality, and that in this its action with a view to this end it brings with it immediately its own happiness, its own satisfaction. It may also be protested that a God who is to minister to human desire is not true God. These objections are both true. Kant himself knew deeply the contradiction between the principle of human autonomy and the fact of radical evil in man. The fact of the contradiction between will and law is a positive quantity. It is neither weakness nor sensuousness nor simply absence of good. It is the radical evil of man as a moral being. For, if moral autonomy is a fact, the law is our own law, and therefore our deepest ego is at one with the law; it is itself the law-giver, the intelligible ego. On the other hand, if autonomy is a fact, then where there is want of conformity with the law, the responsibility lies in the deepest ego, and it alone. For reason alone is capable of

responsible action. Thus we have to conclude that our deepest ego is in contradiction with the law. The principle of human autonomy issues in doing away with the fact of radical evil, the fact of radical evil in doing away with autonomy. And there is no way of avoiding this contradiction. This contradiction, since it expresses realities in the life of the ego, is not simply the product of speculation, "but a danger to life", as Brunner puts it, "and that of the most serious kind, viz. the cleavage of the ego at its center".*

Thus we are obliged to have the same embarrassment and perplexity in this ethical problem as we did in the problem of knowledge. Not only are we unable to arrive at God through practical reason but we are also exposed to the disruption of our deepest ego. We all set the ground of our existence somewhere. But our real life is contradictory, separated and conflicting with this ground. It is known that the richer the life, the stronger the consciousness of this contradiction. We see the best example of this fact in Paul when he says, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

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* Op. Cit., p. 71

O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:21-24) In other words, when we consider the moral which motivates our personal conduct, we can think of it, but we cannot get to the ground of it. On the contrary we find constantly the anti-moral within us. To speak this in a religious sense, is this: We set the ground of our existence on God, but we have lost it. Because we cannot cognize God. He is the 'deus absconditus', as in the case of the problem of knowledge.

3. Problem of Religious Experience.

There is, however, another attempt in which it is supposed that if God can be known, it will never be except by experience; and since here experimentation is impossible, the experience will have to be an immanent experience, implied in the very act of living. This attempt in the religious knowledge, although seen in every age of the history of religion, is especially understood as a protest against rationalism of the Aufklärung in the modern theology. By the Aufklärung religion was reduced to certain moral and metaphysical commonplaces, and this was justly brought into discredit by Schleiermacher. Man is said to be religious when his inner Ego is deepened and expanded and feels the universe in itself. Religion is a belief of immediate and primal being of God in us through feeling, a sort of mystical

feeling of unity of man with the Ultimate reality, in which the essence of religion ought to be found. As Pascal says in his Pensee, "it is the heart which senses God, and not the reason".* God in this idea is not One who is reflected on but felt or experienced. Mysticism has its start from this proposition. In it reason or intellect is strongly rejected, and intuition or feeling is regarded with utmost importance. This mode of conception, however, has a decisive feature in common with that of rationalism and intellectualism, against which it was a protest, that is to say, that man by his innate capability can know God. No matter what definitions may be given, feeling and intuition** are assumed as the basic faculty by which our religious knowledge is possible. In rationalism it is reason, in Romanticism it is feeling, that makes man get to God. And what is most important is that they are both natural ability, innated in human being.

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* Quoted from W. M. Horton, Theism and the Scientific Spirit, p. 20.

**In Lyman's "Meaning and Truth of Religion", he says that intuition needs the test of reason. For, "intuitions are not infallible. There can be mistaken intuitions, just as there can be illusory perceptions and fallacious pieces of reasoning...An intuition may become the focus for a new body of judgments; then it pioneers into new territory which in the end must be annexed to the domains of knowledge. Such being the case, intuition presents itself as having the power to go beyond reason but never to dispense with reason". (pp.206-207) In other words intuition cannot speak of its own truth unless it is tested by reason; it has no meaning unless reason gives sanction to it. It may be said, therefore, that intuition is one variation of reason.

Furthermore, the danger of mysticism lies in its deformation of the boundaries between God and man by its doctrine of immediacy. For what it wants is not recognition of difference but fusion between the two. "It is a 'religious short circuit'", says Brunner, using the analogy of Karl Barth, "a connection without a cut-out, identification of God and man, unguarded with infinite distance between them. It is a hasty installation which does not contain the dialectical negation, a fruit plucked unripen, a robbed this-sidedness (Diesseitigkeit) of God---robbed because it is forgotten that the this-sidedness of God is possible only on the ground of the absolute other-sidedness (Jenseitigkeit) of God".*

4. Summary: Need of Revelation.

We have seen that the religious knowledge, thus examined in its three basic types concerning the ultimate reality, in which our very existence is grounded, is inadequate and limited in holding the very object that it attempts to attain. The fundamental conviction underlying every effort, whether it be philosophical, ethical or mystical, is that man has the power to penetrate to the ground, the unity of all things. The Philosopher, whether he be the metaphysician in the narrower sense, or the mystic, finds

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* Erlebnis Erkenntnis und Glaube, 4 u.5 Auf., p. 56.

this power in human reason, and consequently, the penetration into the ground of realities is present in the last resort in his own thinking. His reason is the infallible means of access to the ground, the ultimate cause which he calls God. In his thought he has not only control over the idea of God, but also, in virtue of this, in the last resort, in the innermost depth of his spirit, he is identical with that ground of all things. Thus Brunner says:

"Every system is a monologue of the thinker with himself. Inasmuch as the world unfolds itself to him, it is his thinking self which unfolds itself therein. He puts the question, but it is he too who answers it to himself.... It is precisely this, this freedom from the necessity of having the word said to one, power to say it oneself, which is the essence of reason, with which all philosophy operates".*

Therefore when philosophers think that they have attained the knowledge of God, it is not really God after whom they are striving, but merely the presupposition of thought, idea of ideas. For God is bound to the thinking subject with just the same necessity as the subject is to him. The two stand in correlation which is just as indissoluble as that between left and right. "We have here", says Brunner, "neither a relation of freedom nor the possibility of a personal relation, for between consequence and ground there is a relation of pure necessity. God is of necessity precisely as dependent on me as I am on him, the two entities never confront one another. That which is all

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* God and Man, p. 47 Emphasis is Brunner's.

immanent ground can be neither creator nor person".* What, therefore, philosophers have thought as achievement serves to show that human reason is never able to know God, the true ground of realities,,and that by its achievement it exposes its own inadequacy and limitation as to its power concerning the knowledge of the Ultimate reality.

In the problem of ~~ethics~~ we have already seen the inner contradiction that natural ethics has brought into. But still more important is that all natural ethics has man as its last point of reference. Despite its inner contradictions which comes out of its principle of autonomy, all natural ethics or ethics of reason attributes to man the power to realize the good, the divine will in his moral action. "Thou oughtest, therefore thou canst". Behind it lies the belief that man himself has in ~~him~~ to bridge the gulf between himself and God by his own resources. "It is man", says Brunner, "who comes to God, and not God who comes to man. It is in himself, and not in God, that man trusts when he is left to his natural morality. God merely demands--he does not give--the true life. Man is God's equal partner".** This ethical self-reliance of man logically results in self-glorification. For morality is, in the last resort, the means of his spiritual self-assertion,

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* Op. Cit., pp. 48-49

** Op. Cit., p. 75

a refined form of egoism. Man enjoys himself in his own righteousness. This self-justification, therefore, is not only a by-product, but the deepest ground of this morality. "The morality", says Brunner, "instead of being his judgment, becomes a means of self-glorification, a mirror for his own worth".* Thus not only is man unable to get to God, but his morality itself shows that it is inadequate and limited and that it is the very evidence of his being lost of the ground of his existence.

Religion draws its life only in the relation of the One who is beyond humanity. However the One upon whom humanity is grounded is on the other side of humanity. We have seen that there is no means for humanity to reach it. There is a deep abyss between God and man, and no human attempt can bridge it. As Barth said in the preface of the second edition of his commentary to Paul's Epistle to the Romans, "God is in heaven, and thou art on earth".** In religion man seeks for freedom from this bondage on earth and for entrance into the heaven with God. But, alas! there is no means for him to get his objective, save God provides a way for him. "Brothers, man is something that must be overcome", said Zarathustra.*** And he is only to be overcome by God alone. God must make Himself known to

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* Ibid., p. 76

** Eng. tr. p. 10

*** Brunner, Die Grenzen der Humanität, p.4

us, and bridge the abyss that man cannot cross. The self-revelation of God is a necessity for man.

CHAPTER IV

REVELATION AND FAITH

1. Characteristics of Revelation.
2. Meaning of Christian Faith.
3. Characteristics of Christian Faith.
4. Relation between Special and Universal Revelation .

CHAPTER IV

REVELATION AND FAITH

1. Characteristics of Revelation.

We have just seen the limitation and inadequacy of human effort to attain the knowledge of God, and the need of the self-revelation of God for man to know him. If man can ever have a knowledge of God, since God can never be brought into the knowledge of man, it must be a knowledge of God which in no way is founded in man, which by no means is obtainable by man through his religious or metaphysical faculties or through his religious experience, but a knowledge from beyond all human possibilities--truth, given in the event which constitutes revelation, in the unique* decisive occurrence of history, in the Word of God. "Ἐφ' ἀνάξ, once for all," says Brunner, "this is the category to which the Christian revelation belongs. The Scriptures bear witness to this unique character of the Christian revelation--a revelation which can never be repeated. There is nothing accidental about the unique and unrepeatable character of

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* 'Einmaligkeit' is the word used by Brunner to express the characteristic of the Christian revelation. According to Miss Olive Wyon, translator of "The Mediator", 'Uniqueness' is the nearest word in English, but it does not fully express the author's meaning. 'Einmaligkeit' means occupying a unique moment in time. 'Unrepeatableness' is the real meaning." Op. Cit., p. 25 footnote. Emphasis is here.

revelation in the Christian religion. It is an integral element, or rather, it is not one element alone, but constitutes its very essence. The whole meaning of this revelation would be destroyed if it could be severed from this unique event which took place once for all".*

This unique characteristic of revelation can be easily understood from our consideration of the inadequacy and limitation of religious knowledge about God which we have discussed in the last chapter. The religious knowledge, whether it be metaphysical, ethical or mystical, has three characteristics: it is general or universal, timeless and impersonal. The innate human ability is presupposed as the ultimate ground of man's search for God, therefore it is held that God is knowable universally in man's consciousness. Thus the mystic takes no notice of time and history. On the contrary, in order to have his mystical experience, he has to forget history and time completely. Neither does the moralist or the metaphysician need to know of history. What they are interested in is not the individual events of history, but rather the Logos behind those historical realities, therefore their effort consists of eliminating the accidental element of history and abstracting the essential truth. Their truths, therefore, are timeless, like those of mathematics: and most metaphysicians and moralists have,

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* The Mediator, p. 25

like Plato, seen a proof of their conceptions in the timelessness or eternity of their ideas. For the Platonic or Aristotelian philosophy it is of no importance whether Plato or Aristotle ever lived. It is not here a question of somebody telling me the truth which I myself cannot find, but of my finding an access to the depths of the world in the depths of my soul. What matters is not personality, but the Logos that is disclosed in personality.

But the Christian revelation is given to us as an alternative to the religious knowledge of those characteristics we have just seen. It is historical, personal, and not general. The way of God is not in man's moral, mystical or metaphysical structure of mind, but outside of him in a historical once-for-all event. Again, Christian truth is not timeless, but, as the Fourth Gospel says, has come. Only the man who knows of that event obtains this truth. "A Christian faith", says Brunner, "unrelated to that event between the year A.D. 1 and 30 is as unthinkable as a symphony without sounds or a picture without form or color".* Moreover, Christian truths cannot be separated from Christ as a person. The Christian does not believe in the teaching of Jesus, but he believes in Christ Himself. Therefore revelation means the Word of God as a human person.

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* The Word and the World, p. 20

"The meaning of the Word-says Brunner-is Jesus Christ. This "given" quality of His is the revelation in history, as a thing unique and complete. The word has been spoken. It is as this finished work that it is presented in the canon of Scriptures, by means of which revelation and general history are separated for the first time. The concreteness of the word, the fact of its having happened in space and time, is not accidental as in the case of general truths, but crucial. Only thereby does it become other than an idea: it becomes a given authoritative word of revelation, not discoverable by ourselves. It is as much the nature of revelation to occur once for all, as it is the nature of idea to be 'semper et ubique', i.e. general truth".*

2. Meaning of Christian Faith.

Thus it follows that "Christian faith, to which theology gives the form of scientific conceptions, is the knowledge and acknowledgement of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ".** It means acceptance of Jesus Christ as the only way by which man can approach to God. "He, the incarnate logos, is the ground, content, and standard of all the affirmations of faith. That is where faith differs from every religion as well as from every philosophy. By Christian faith is meant, not some universal truth, nor yet some religious experience, but a definite fact which as such is opposed to every universal, be it religion or philosophy".***

3. Characteristics of Christian Faith.

Such is the Christian faith, it has three distinctive

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* Philosophy of Religion, p. 25

** Op. Cit., p. 15

*** Ibid.

characteristics. Faith is, in the first place, an objective reality. Since faith is our acceptance of revelation as the only way to know God after the futile searches for Him by every human effort, it cannot be itself a human effort of a different sort. "All attempts", says Brunner, "to 'erect' or deduce faith, whether it be through the way of logical reasoning or of ethical postulate, must end in the falsification of faith. Faith is the knowledge of God. The only proof of God is faith, pointing to God Himself".* We can rely on nothing human concerning the knowledge of God save faith, Faith, therefore, is rather the despair of human efforts in finding God or rather, it should be said that faith is the despair of humanity itself. It is thus not a human faculty, but rather a gift of God implanted into us by God. It is only spoken together with the content of faith, that is God. Our problem is this: whether "faith is to be understood only as the relationship with God, that is to say, God is thus absolutely presupposed, or there is no faith".** "Faith is not a vessel that can be filled with another another content, but it is the vessel of this content, pro-created even by this content".*** As such, faith is objective. It does not depend on believers, but on its content,

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* Erlebnis, Erkenntnis, und Glaube, p. 90

** Ibid

*** Ibid. Emphasis is Brunner's

God. Therefore, in the last analysis, faith is described as an empty form (die leere Form), that itself is nothing, save as the sole vessel for that particular content. "The less it is described, and the emptier it becomes, the purer faith is. Faith is pure objectivity. (Der Glaube ist reine Sachlichkeit)".*

Faith, in the second place, is an adventure. It has been said that faith is the despair of humanity. Man knows that he cannot know God. He is out to search for God. But after exhausting himself in his journey, he has come to stand on the border line of humanity. With his heart still yearning after God, he has no means of getting Him. "God is in heaven, and thou art on earth". Man is limited, and is bound in the spot evermore. Beyond him, there lies a great abyss which his possibilities are powerless to fathom or to get over. He knows only that he stands there as such a being. Here he is confronted with the critical alternatives of either to remain there despairing eternally or to jump into the abyss in his entire self-negation and in trust of God.

"Nothing but faith", says Brunner, "is able to swallow up despair, there is no other alternative".** Faith is thus the adventure of adventures. Faith is, in other words, the consciousness of being in such a crisis. Faith is, in

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* Op. Cit., p. 91
** Our Faith, p. 92

Brunner's terminology, "to secure the foothold, in beyond on the other side, in the unlimited".* It is "a leap in the dark".** Or, rather it is not a leap, "but a case of being drawn and carried along, for to make a leap is not man's but God's act".*** Or, again, it is "the self-surrender of soul to God, the dropping of a draw-bridge on which the divine conqueror comes out of the other side into this side, and takes hold of sovereign authority".****

Because faith is given to man out of such a situation of crisis of man's total existence, it is in the third place, the decisive act of the most personal kind. Faith is neither experience in the sense of the Romanticism nor cognitive in the sense of Rationalism. It is not psychological phenomenon or speculative thinking. It takes man in his totality, not in some special locus that can be fixed by psychology. It is rather emancipation of man from human limitation and entering into the pure realm of the direct divine truth in his decision of self-surrender before the absolute divine will. It is not static receptivity that attaches to human nature, but the dynamic act of totality. "Faith", says Brunner, "is breaking, breaking through, and coming back from the

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- * Erlebnis, Erkenntnis, und Glaube, p. 101.
- ** Philosophy of Religion, p. 29.
- *** Ibid.
- **** Erlebnis, Erkenntnis, und Glaube, p. 101.

strange land of tempo-causal, psycho-historical happenings to the primeval and eternal home that lies ere and beyond all history and all processes. Faith is to find oneself in losing oneself, and to win constantly the renewed life in 'dying'....It is an Act, 'actus', by which what is 'beyond' is affirmed as what is and ought to be 'ours' in a daring paradox".*

4. Relation between Special and Universal Revelation.

We have seen the unique meaning of revelation and of faith in the Christian religion. In Christianity revelation is Jesus Christ and faith means to believe in Him as the self-revelation of God. This does not mean, however, that the Christian faith altogether denies the idea of universal revelation of God in creation, in history, and especially in the human conscience. Certainly Christian faith stakes everything on the fact of the distinction between it, as the faith in that fact of revelation, and the religion of rationalism and mysticism, which, in principle, does not see, any discontinuity between God and man, consequently, any necessity for the divine revelation as such. But this does not mean that it is unable to discern traces of truth in all forms of religion and traces of God in all existence and in all thought. Yet, a believer in the universal revelation who is a Christian and believes in Jesus Christ as the Mediator, can no longer

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* Op. Cit., pp. 127,128. Emphasis is Brunner's

be a rationalist or a mystic, because, says Brunner:

"The Christian believer regards 'general' revelation as an indirect (gebroschen) form of revelation. In so far as the idealist and the mystic are aware of its existence they have the truth. But in so far as they do not recognize that it is merely an indirect (gebroschen) revelation and think that in it they have an authentic knowledge of God they are not in truth. The recognition of the indirect (gebroschen) general revelation is the presupposition of the Christian religion of revelation, with its unique character".*

This faith in the special revelation in Jesus Christ is the Christian religion itself. It is not something alongside of the centre, but it is the substance and kernel of it. Our faith is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

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* The Mediator, p. 32

CHAPTER V
GOD AND CHRIST

1. God
2. Christ

CHAPTER V
GOD AND CHRIST

1. God.

In the previous chapters we have seen the limitation of humanity that manifested itself in the most crucial quest of human existence, i.e. man cannot know God, the ground of his very existence, in his search for Him by his every effort. God is beyond his knowability, the "wholly other", incognizable by man, from whom He is removed by a wholly impassable difference, except as He comes forth almighty in self-revelation, that is Jesus Christ. This does not mean, however, as we have also seen, that human thoughts of God are valueless. On the contrary, they have a place in man's knowledge of God, all pointing toward one direction, i.e. the limitation of humanity and the need of self-revelation of God.

Thus, for Brunner, God is first of all, God unknown. He is transcendent of humanity. There is the qualitative difference between God and man. God is wholly Other One. There is no continuation between God and man. For "a God who is identical with the depths of the world or the soul is not really God. He is neither the sovereign of the world

nor of man. He is too close to both of them to be really their Lord. Indeed, he is merely another aspect, the hidden portion, as it were, of the world and of myself".* He is an idol that man has put between man and God.

Thus, Brunner's idea of God transcendent destroys many idols and the futile effort of man for deification of himself, to open the way for God's revelation of Himself. It means the despair of finding God, unless He has first found us. It means the denial of all human possibilities, in order to make way for God's possibility. It means that there is no way from man to God, but in the same breath it affirms: Only from God to man. The Unknown God is thus, at the same time, the self-revealing God. Apart from this speaking of Himself to man, God is to him the unknown, the hidden.

The crucial point in this relation between God and man, established in God's revelation is that God does not speak to man about something, for in relation to every something, or to put it in another way, in relation to all world facts, our ignorance is simply accidental. Moreover, what we customarily call knowledge has this character, that the communication by which it is imparted is always merely accidental. Thus God does not in His revelation impart something, but He imparts Himself, His will. The essence of revelation has always essential reference only to God Himself. Brunner

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* Brunner, Theology of Crisis, pp. 29-30

puts this truth in the following way.

"Only God himself is essentially **mystery**. All is yours, but ye are God's. Of all the trees in the garden ye shall eat, but from this one tree ye shall not eat. All is in subjection to us--that is the concept of the world--save one thing only, God Himself. All things can become object of our thought and be fitted by us into a system, save one thing only, God himself. He must reveal himself to us, but that means that here is the limit of our competence. In thought we are ourselves, master; that over which we have mastery is the world. That over which we have no mastery----that is God alone".*

Thus the fact that we can only know God through revelation, and that we must let ourselves be told by Himself who He is, implies that through it, by the very nature of this revelation, we find a master. Therefore, God is, in the second place in Brunner's idea, described with the word "the Lord". The God of philosophers, of mystics and others, the God reached through thought and other human faculty, is never the Lord, just for the very reason that He is reached through thought, feeling and others. But the God of the Bible is always the Lord, because He only gives Himself to be known through revelation, and because His revelation reveals Him alone to our knowledge, because here revelation is taken in its unconditional sense. God is our Lord, because we come under His dominion, and He claims His Lordship over us in that relationship that is established by His revelation.

"God's revelation", says Brunner, "the invasion into

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* God and Man, pp. 58-59

my egoistic thinking in which I am always the centre is the event in which God drives me out of the centre, in which I cease to be master, and receive a master--the only one whom I can receive, the one who is the Lord. God in his revelation does not let himself be made an object, but remains a subject over against me, and I become an object, and therefore in this act my existence is transformed, and from being lord of my own being, the autonomous self, I become a servant of God".*

From this idea of God's Lordship, we are led in the third place, to express the idea of God, with Brunner, as the subject. In the relation that man has with God through His revelation it is not we but God who is the initiator of the relation. When we say that we cannot know God, It means that God cannot be brought into the object of our knowing. When we say that we can know God only through His revelation, by letting Himself known to us, by addressing Himself to us, it means that God Himself is the subject, and we are the object of His address. "An object", says Brunner, "is what I can think myself; a subject is what I cannot think. In my thinking it becomes an object. A subject is what exists as such for me only as he himself speaks to me; outside this communication he remains a mystery".**

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* Op. Cit., pp. 59-60

** The Word and the World, p. 24

In this subject-object relationship between God and man, in the fourth place, God must be described as personal. For the secret of personality consists in being known as a subject. A person cannot be reduced to an object. He remains a subject. If I bring a subject into my thinking, it is not already a subject, but an object. I cannot know myself, because I am a subject. When I wish to know myself, the self which is known by me is not the self which is wishing to know. I can think of or know "me", but not "I" which is my true self. Personality has such a nature. Suppose I am, leaning from the window of my room, looking at passers-by. As long as I am looking at them as they pass, they are, strictly speaking, not men, but things with features of man. They are not essentially different from the features in paintings or photographs. Suppose one of them stops at the window and looks at me. While I am looking at him as one of the passers-by, he too is not personal. But he opens his mouth, and speaks to me. He is my friend. He is now not an object to be looked at. He is the one who is speaking to me, to whom I am responding, who is in personal relation with me, and is a subject who acts. Thus he is no more a mere thing, but a person. Personality has such a character. Thus the relation between persons is that of dialogue and not that of monologue. The relation between God and man is also that

of dialogue. God speaks to us in our relationship of dialogue and demands our response as the initiator of this relationship. He places us in a situation of responsibility. Therefore our relationship to Him is no more secure, but most insecure, for it is a relation which consists in decision. This is what is meant by faith the nature of which we have seen in the previous chapter. Faith is the man's personal decision which in responsibility answers God's address to man.

And finally, God must be known as the Creator, because the knowledge of Him is not reached from the world, but from His own revelation. "The Creator", says Brunner, "means something totally different from the world-ground or the world-cause. The Creator is the Lord of the world and of myself, the sovereign Self who needs no world in order to exist. He is the One in whose will the world has its ground; the One who for this reason cannot be known from the world, but only out of His Word".*

It may be possible to know a maker of the world from the world. But he is not the creator. For he is neither personal nor subject. He who is known from the world is always one like the world, and bound to the world. God who manifests Himself in revelation as the Lord of the world

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* Op. Cit., p. 26

is not known through his creation of the world from the world, but by his creation of the world out of nothing. The idea of 'creatio ex nihilo' may be foolish to all those who try to seek God by reason. But God in the Christian faith is not the cause of the world, but the relation in which the Lord of the world stands to the world is a relationship which no category of thought can express.

2. Christ.

We have repeatedly stated that revelation which we need in our relation with God, according to Brunner, is an event which has taken place in Jesus Christ and still takes place in Him. Christ is God incognito. "The appearance", says Brunner, "of the human personality of Jesus is not, as such, revelation; it is revelation only in so far as in this historical, human personality the eternal Son of God is recognized".* Hence, in Brunner, Christ is not merely understood as the greatest teacher and the unique example, as Harnack thought, nor as the greatest religious genius as Schleiermacher considered. Nor does Brunner believe in Jesus, because, like Ritschl and Hermann, in Him the moral idea, love, is perfectly expressed, because, like Troeltsch, He is the symbol of the divine and this personal symbolism is of the highest import-

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* Theology of Crisis, p. 35

ance for the formation of a religious community. But for Brunner, Jesus Christ is wholly God in flesh, the self-revelation of God.

Therefore, Christ is, first of all, presented as the Mediator. He is the one who mediates man to God. By Christ the broken relationship between God and man is restored. He is the bridge that spans the gap between God and man. But this Mediatorship of Christ is not to be considered in epistemological necessity alone, but more fundamentally, in ethical necessity. It has been mentioned before that in search for the ground of man's existence by way of the practical reason, man is forced to admit the cleavage of the ego at its centre. Man and God are, on the one hand, in the closest relation, because God is the Creator of man. But, on the other hand, they are in the remotest relation, because between them there lies an infinite qualitative difference. "God is in heaven, and thou art on earth". The feeling of such a man before God called "feeling of helplessness" (Hilflosigkeit⁴gefühl) by Scholz, must be more fundamental than "feeling of dependence" (Abhängigkeitsgefühl) of Schleiermacher.* It may be the "creature-feeling" (Kreaturgefühl) of Otto who describes it as "the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness

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* Vide, Heinrich Scholz, Religionsphilosophie, p. 137

in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures".* This supreme Something, God, is felt as something "numinous", as we see in the Book of Isaiah. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jahveh of hosts". (6:5)

This consciousness of man's sinfulness is more than man's ordinary feeling. It is rooted in the very nature of his existence. Thus man standing in the presence of God realizes himself in the limit-situation, which he regards as the crisis of his existence. "To understand", says Brunner, "the crisis, in which we stand, means to understand our need and imperfection as our sin".** When Peter was pressed to stand in his limit-situation, he cried before Jesus, "Lord, leave me, I am a sinful man". (Luke 5:8)

Man's sinfulness is thus not a presupposition of religious speculation, but his existential reality. Sin is to human existence not accessory, but essential. It may be said in a word that the essence of sin consists in his creatureliness. Sin is usually considered as an incident which is caused as the result of a moral choice of man. But it is possibly so only because there is previously present in the mind of the

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* Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, Eng. Tr. p. 10

** Die Grenzen der Humanität, p. 12

chooser a standard by reference to which he could adopt it morally. And the source of that standard is, as Richard Niebuhr* pointed out, always religion, not morality, because ultimate morality is always driven back to the acceptance of a standard which is given to it, without which morality would be impossible, but which is itself prior to all morality. Sin is therefore, not merely a subjective process. It is a conception, as Denney rightly points out,**which bids us think not of what man has done, but of what he is. It is a determination of existence, of the being of humanity itself, of human nature. To use the Pauline terminology, it is flesh of humanity. It is because he is ~~fallen~~ that man is the sinner. The sinful action is the symptom or the outcome of a sinfulness which already characterizes the actor. It proceeds, to follow the classical representation of the words, from a corruption or depravity of nature which is fundamental rather than any given manifestation of it. However, conscious or unconscious of his situation he may be, man cannot escape his humanity. And humanity means limitation, finitude, creaturehood. Sin is understood in its full reality and gravity only where it is regarded as insubordi-

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* Vide, his article "Man the Sinner", in the Journal of Religion, Vol. XV. No. 3 (July, 1935)

** James Denney, Studies in Theology, p. 81

nation, as the "severance from the ground of existence--
emancipation from God".* It is "gainsaying, setting one-
self against".** It means that "man has torn himself away
from his origin".***

Therefore the Fall and original sin do not aim at
stating the cause of sin, but its existentiality.

"The Fall is a declension from the Creator and Giver
of all good, a false independence and self-assertion,
i.e. such as is directed not against the creature but
the Creator, a self-exaltation. It is a will that
wants to be more than it can, and over-reaches itself
by this self-exaltation. In short, it is a freedom
that through overestimating itself, becomes slavery,
since there can be no such thing as freedom apart from
God. It follows--and here comes in the (so to speak)
metaphysical element in evil--that sin is at the same
time lack of freedom for good, the so-called original
sin".****

Thus sin is man's existential crisis of a broken relat-
ionship between God and man. It is not his being far away
from God, nor his life is like the divine life. But it is
the most concrete, positive fact of human existence. Between
us and God there is an actual chasm, which hinders the re-
lation between God and man, and which we feel as an actual
obstacle, that blocks the way like a great boulder, an ob-
stacle so great that we cannot push it out of the way by

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* Philosophy of Religion, p. 89
** The Mediator, p. 143 Emphasis is Brunner's
*** Ibid.
****Op. Cit., pp. 89-90

our efforts, and when we see this obstacle in relation with God, we feel it as guilt. "Guilt means", says Brunner, "that something has taken place with which man is impotent to deal. The simple act of turning 'right about face' is not only impossible--since sin has poisoned the very nature of the will--but also it is not permitted. A veto has been imposed from the other side. This is what guilt means, the objective obstacle which alienates man from God; thus guilt means hostility on God's part".*

To look at the Holy One with realizing mind is to become aware that there is in us an impurity and impotence for which we are answerable. And since the obstacle which lies between God and man is infinite, human guilt gains its infinity from God. The more we see that sin is sin against God, the more serious it becomes; and the more we see it as sin against God, the more we recognize that our sin is irrevocable, that is, it is guilt. Therefore, "this objectivity of guilt", says Brunner, "this divine reaction against sin, is the reason why reconciliation must take place, why it must consist in something more than a mere change of mind on the part of man".**

However, it is impotent for man to take away this sense

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* Op. Cit., p. 518

** Ibid.

of guilt by himself. Once we have recognized the character of the obstacle between God and man, once we have seen the gulf between God and man in its whole breadth and depth, we know that from the side of man there is no bridge, no possibility of crossing over to the other side. Guilt is no longer in our power. Man cannot push this obstacle out of the way, because he has no power to do so in himself. Only one thing could help us: if God Himself were to intervene, if He were to remove the obstacle. This God has actually done in the life and work of Jesus Christ. God reconciles Himself in Christ to man. Christ is thus the Mediator between God and man. Thus Christ's mediatorship is not simply to be epistemologically construed, but in the last resort, religiously concerned with forgiveness of human sins. Brunner summarizes it as follows:

"In Him (Christ) the divine creative and redemptive Word speaks to us. That this Word, the Alpha and the Omega, speaks to us once more as to those who belong to Him: this is the reconciliation, the central point between the Fall and the Redemption, the central point at which redemption begins. It begins through the atonement because it is based on the Word, because we are here concerned with a personal relation, and not with a process of nature. Redemption without atonement is in the last resort the conception of sin as something natural, like disease. Forgiveness without atonement means that sin is conceived as error. The Word is the reality which restores what was lost, wounded, broken: it is this which constitutes the Atonement. The mere

word of forgiveness apart from its actual reality is mere Idealism; to assert the reality of redemption without the Word is merely natural religion, which includes all forms of Pantheism; even of the most "spiritual" kind. Thus the central point, where the subjective and the objective aspects of Atonement meet, is this: the Word of Justification....."Justification is the most incomprehensible thing that exists. All other marvels are miracles on the circumference of being, but this is the miracle or the centre of being, in the personal centre. Justification means this miracle: that Christ takes our place and we take His. Here the objective vicarious offering has become a process of change. Apart from this transaction, forgiveness is not credible; for it contradicts holiness of God. Justification cannot be separated from the "objective atonement", from the expiatory sacrifice of the Mediator. Indeed, justification simply means that this objective transaction becomes a "Word" to us, the Word of God. When I know that it is God who is speaking to me in this event--that God is really speaking to me--I believe. Faith means knowing that this fact is God speaking to me in His Word".*

As the result, therefore, of the restoration of the relation between God and man, man's life is thus established, recovering the ground of our life. "The barrier between God and man, guilt and self-will, is broken down, and thus God-will or good will is realized in man's will".** Therefore, the foundation of ethics is only found in the faith in the revelation, Jesus Christ. When man accepts God's grace in the Mediator's work, the meaning of creation is restored, so that the relationship between God and man is one of dependence upon grace and not one of self-reliance and inde-

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* Op. Cit., pp. 524-525. Emphasis is Brunner's
** Theology of Crisis, p. 76

pendence of God, and "good will, which is the same as God-will, actualized in men".* "The New Birth", says Brunner, "is not a magical process; it is the same as the act of faith; it is that state in which man no longer strains after God but receives his life and strength from God: it means living on the powers which flow from 'justification by grace alone'. Through the New Birth the new person, the being whose life is derived from God, the self which has its home in God, in Christ, and not in the Self, is established".** The change of heart, which takes place through faith is the supreme ethical fact without which we can hardly think or speak of ethics, goodness, or good will.

In the second place, forgiveness establishes in us freedom. But here freedom does not mean human autonomy, but freedom from his limitation in his relationship with God. Or, paradoxically speaking, Christian freedom is rather non-freedom in that we are being taken captive by God. "The man who acts in faith", says Brunner, "is always free, for he is bound by nothing but God's 'guidance' at the moment; he lies, light like an arrow on the bow of the marksman, in God's hand. Yet the man who acts in faith is ever bound, and worlds apart from all self-will; for, like the adjutant in the ante-room of

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* Ibid.

** The Divine Imperative, p. 159

the general, he waits continually upon his master's command".*

In the third place forgiveness establishes love in us. What we respond to the divine grace is our love toward God. And on this ground we love our fellowmen. "To hear", says Brunner, "the divine claim to me that comes from him (Christ) is to see him (the individual human being) as the man whom God loves; more, it is to see him *ἐν Χριστῷ*, and that means to see him in the light of the end, the completion of the new creation, to see him as one over whom the sign of the cross is made. And that is what love means in the New Testament".** Thus in faith alone, each one is at the same time a member of the "Body of Christ", a member of the Christian Community, of the Church.

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* God and Man, p. 90

** Op. Cit., p. 98

CHAPTER VI

THE BIBLE, THE HOLY SPIRIT,
AND THE CHURCH

1. The Bible.
2. The Holy Spirit.
3. The Church.

CHAPTER VI

THE BIBLE, THE HOLY SPIRIT
AND THE CHURCH

1. The Bible.

It is the Christian faith that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is to be drawn from the Scriptures. The Bible is the unique and concrete datum which is the basis of our knowledge of God. But, as we have already seen, the knowledge of God is not a special form of knowledge belonging as a class to some more inclusive conception of knowledge. It is rather the knowledge of the basis of all truths, the ultimate significance behind every kind of knowledge. It follows, therefore, that all knowledge finds its standard and criterion here no matter whether the knower is aware of this or not. "We do not measure", says Brunner, "God's word in Scripture by the standard of reason: we measure reason and indeed all knowledge by God's word in Scripture".*

This, however, does not mean that the book of the Bible as such is the word of God. The identification of those two in Orthodoxy, thus making the Bible the supreme external authority and rule of faith was developed in one reason for defending and enforcing the Protestant standpoint against the

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* Philosophy of Religion, pp. 150-151

Roman Catholic authority. The result of this orthodox view of the Bible, which is usually called the doctrine of verbal inspiration, was deplorable for the cause of Christianity. For it is inevitable that the Orthodox view of the Bible, canonizing everything in the Bible in the name of the Word of God, came into conflict with the modern mind.

It must be admitted that the Bible has in itself many human errors, of the chronology, the historical narrative, the anthropological world-view of the old Semitic civilization and of antiquity in general. We can find many contradictions even about the life of Jesus. We can also trace the process of the development of idea of God and of ethics from a naive, primitive stage to the high, cultivated stage. It is inevitable that Orthodoxy was "put into the spot", so to speak, by the attack of the scientific mind in those respects. Brunner speaks of this very eloquently as follows:

"The first stroke came from natural science. The world-view which had been created by Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton was irreconcilable with that of the Bible, and the Bible had to give way. Then came the development of historical criticism together with a second blow from natural science, the victory of biological evolutionism, the widening of the dimensions of time, the new data of pre-historic anthropology, the better knowledge of old Semitic and Egyptian civilizations, the scientific investigation of the Biblical accounts with their contradictions and primitive conceptions. All this could not but shake trust in Biblical authority to its foundations, and break down completely the Biblical world-view. As the last phase of dissolution came the Comparative Science of Religion which gave the religious con-

ceptions of Israel and early Christianity their place in the general process of the history of religion, and through its comparative parallels completely undermined the traditional view of the originality of the Bible".*

Not only the things in the Old Testament, but also those in the New Testament have undergone profound changes. We are made clear about the important differences between the Synoptic, the Pauline, and the Johannine tradition. We have learned that as the historical document the Fourth Gospel is much inferior as compared with the Synoptic Gospels, and even the Synoptic tradition is not entirely reliable and full of contradictions. To scientific men gospel miracles are most incredible or the natural phenomena which can be explained by science. In a word, everything seems to be destroyed by science. The orthodox authority of Scripture has fallen down to the ground. "The theory of verbal inspiration", said Inge, "is indeed more incapable of defence than the theory of an infallible Head of Church".**

But it is superficial to think that authority of the Bible is impossible with the fall of Orthodoxy. What scientific criticism has destroyed is nothing but what has to be destroyed, i.e., the divine authority of what was really human. "If we hold fast", says Brunner, "to this truth that the Word of God is given to us only in human, question-

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* The Word and the World, p. 98

** W. R. Inge, Faith and its Psychology, p. 116

able form, it is a matter of course that Biblical criticism and Bible-faith or Bible-authority not only are reconcilable, but necessarily go together. Biblical criticism is nothing but the act by which we recognize that the crib is not Christ, that the ground is not the gold, that God's Word is only indirectly identical with the Bible Word, although we have the one only through the other".*

The content of Scripture is truly the Word of God, not because as a whole it is to be regarded as God's word, but because and to the extent that God in Christ meets us and speaks there, and puts us into existential decision. "There is no such thing", says Brunner, "as revelation-in-itself, because revelation consists always of the fact that something is revealed to me. Revelation is not a thing, but an act of God, an event involving two parties, it is a personal address. Hence the word of Scriptures is not in itself the word of God but of man, just as the historical appearance of the God-man is in itself that of a man. The incognito of the purely human appearance is unmasked only by faith, by the testimony of the spirit which enables us to hear the word of God in the mere word of man".**

In short, Scripture is the Word of God in that it is the

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* The Word and the World, pp. 101-102
** Philosophy of Religion, p. 32

witness to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Just as a sentence consists of many words but has only one meaning, so the revelation of God in Scripture in the Old and New Testaments, in law and Gospel, has only one meaning, viz. Jesus Christ. Scripture is as Luther well puts it, "the cradle in which Christ lies",* It is this content that makes the Bible the Word of God, for Christ is the Word. It is not in itself the revelation, but only so far as and because it has this meaning, just as the words that constitute a sentence are not true by themselves, but in virtue of their single common meaning in the sentence.

It is for this reason that the Bible is a unitary book. Historians cannot see any unity in the whole Scriptures. For them it is not one whole, but a collection of the books in which there is no internal unity. In them the religion of Israel prophets, Jesus, primitive Christianity are just enigmas. But the believers can see the unique unity of the witness about the revelation of God in Jesus Christ in the Bible, though they find many different recorders with their own characteristics.

It is for this reason also that the Bible is living book. For in the Bible God speaks to us and makes us believe in Him in the very present. For believers the revelation is not of

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* Op. Cit., p. 34

the past, but is grasped in the present as the actual fact in them through the 'testimonium spiritus sancti internum'. If the Bible is a mere book that transmits Jesus as a mere historical person, he is nothing but an existence of the past. But for believers Jesus Christ is the Word of God not only for Peter, Paul, unknown author of the Fourth Gospel, or other witnesses of the primitive Church, but also for those of the present time. Christ confronts them in the present, demanding the absolute decision either to believe Him or not. In the Bible we see the direct testimony of Christ. And thus the Bible is said to be the Word of God.

2. The Holy Spirit.

In the previous section we have seen that we can know that the Bible is the word of God in so far as we have faith in the divine revelation of Jesus Christ by the testimony of the Holy Spirit which enables us to hear the word of God in the book of Scripture. In other words, we testify to the truth of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit becomes thus the criterion for the truth of what we have mentioned. This the Reformers called the 'testimonium spiritus sancti internum'.

To understand this doctrine of the Holy Spirit, we have as well to go back again the subject-object relationship of

God and man. God in the Christian faith is subject and not object. He is the self-speaking, and not the thought-of or the looked-at, God. He is the God who in His Word manifests Himself as subject, and stands over against us. Only in being subject as such is He really the Lord and the Creator.

It follows then that to know God means nothing but to hear Him say what He is. He addresses us in an historical event and personality that is Jesus Christ. But it is important to notice that only faith can penetrate into the depth of that historical event and person and acknowledge Jesus as the revelation of God. In other words, the address from without must be accredited from within. "Jesus Christ", says Brunner, "standing before us on the plane of history is not our Lord; He is not yet the Word of God. He becomes the Lord only when our ears are opened to hear His voice as God's. Without this, even Jesus remains an object of our knowledge; the miracle of faith happens only where Jesus Christ is no more object of my knowledge, but He Himself has become subject within me. It happens only where He---to quote Luther-- "puts Himself in my place and takes over (if I may use the phrase) the role of my subjectivity, where He speaks not only to me but in me. The miracle of faith is identical with the miracle of the inward speaking of the Holy Spirit".*

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* The Word and the World, pp. 64-65. Emphasis ~~is~~ Brunner's

Faith, which is absolute self-negation and perfect dependence on God, complete absence of autonomy and thorough-going heteronomy, therefore, involves both of these antitheses in the paradoxical unity. We know that to believe means to acknowledge without reserve God's Word that comes from outside ourselves. Yet at the same time faith knows that this objective Word of God is corroborated subjectively just as certainly, just as subjectively, as anything which we know for certain, with the certainty which the Ego has about itself. This is what is meant by the assurance of faith, the testimony of the indwelling Holy-Spirit. And man can have faith and its certainty only when he is saved, only when his broken relationship with God is restored by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, as we hear Paul saying, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ Liveth in me". (Gal. 2:20). This identification of the Word of God in Christ with ourselves is possible only through the Holy Spirit attesting the Word of Christ as true within ourselves. In short, the Holy Spirit may be construed as revelation on its subjective side. And revelation on its objective side brings with it this revelation on its subjective side. "The doctrine of the Holy Spirit", says Camfield, "is the coping-stone of the doctrines of revelation and faith. Apart from it, the whole structure lacks unity and coherence".* No man can say that Jesus is the Lord

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* F. W. Camfield, Revelation and the Holy Spirit, p. 98

but by the Holy Spirit.

3. The Church.

We have seen that the Bible is the word of God only for Christians who acknowledge God speaking to them through His revelation of Jesus Christ, by the testimony of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and that faith, Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit are inseparably related to each other, being tied to the definite fact of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. We cannot proceed without relating the Church with them, for the Christian faith is only possible within the borders of the Church. "No Christians", says Brunner, "ever existed other than those who knew themselves to be members of the Body, the head of which is Christ. Individual private Christianity is a self-contradiction, like iron made of wood. 'Extra ecclesiam nulla salus'. We believe in the Holy Catholic Church. Apart from this creed there can be no Christian faith".* Faith and the Church belong to one another as inevitably as the body and the limbs, or rather faith exists only in the Church.

But this is not the ~~Chrish~~ of which we usually think when the ~~Chrish~~ is mentioned. The ~~Chrish~~, in the ordinary usage, is a definite institution, concrete visible churches, which can be clearly defined within space. But in the stand-

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* The Word and the World, p. 107

point of faith the visible church itself is nonsense when it is not considered in relation with the invisible universal Church. Or it may also be said that the institutional church is but a portion of the invisible Church, and the meaning and life of its existence on the earth is entirely due to and drawn from the Holy Catholic Church, with which we are now primarily concerned here.

The Church, in the first place, is the 'coetus electorum' the community consisting of those whom God has called. This is the meaning of the *ἐκ-κλήσια* in the New Testament, for the will and choice of God, not of man, is the sole foundation of the Church. "Because, and to the extent", says Brunner, "in which, God calls men by His word out of the world where they are "without God and without hope"--to Himself, into fellowship with Him and into His service, there the Church exists".* It is for this reason that the Church is qualitatively different from any human society or association, formed by those who have common interests or same aims, in order to further mutual advance in these common interests. In human society, the primary thing is the interest of the individual, which leads him to his neighbor, in order that it may find expression for itself. Hence human society is, in the last analysis, an individualistic one. But the Christian Church is universal by nature. For, her universality and her

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* The Divine Imperative, p. 524

social character are not based on the human need for community, but on the divine will for the Kingdom of God. "The Church", says Brunner, "is no natural society, for we are not born into it. It is no intellectual society or society for the prosecution of aims, for we cannot make it. It is the society into which one enters by the call of God, through the second birth. The Church is the society of those who have been called into it by God".*

Secondly, the Church is called the 'communio sanctorum', since it is a community which, although it is grounded in the eternal, is realized within history. With the restoration of the broken relationship between God and man by the grace of God new personal relation of Thou and I is generated between God, the righteous, and man the sinner. The moment of making this restoration is the decision of faith by the Word of God, Jesus Christ. Through this objective-subjective event man becomes a "saint" in the Biblical sense. A saint means, according to Brunner, "that he is a person whom God has apprehended for Himself, and one who willingly submits to this claim; thus he is one who, by the very fact that God's Hand has seized him, has really become God's "property"; thus he has abandoned the world, with its alienation from God, and has returned to communion with God".** And on the ground of this communion a relation between man and man is

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* God and Man, p. 109

**The Divine Imperative, pp. 524-525

newly generated. On the ground of the love of God to us, in other words, love of fellowmen is truly established. Faith means being united not only with God but with our fellow men.

In the third place, the union between this invisible, "other-worldly" effect, is expressed in the simile of the 'Corpus Christi'. Where Christ is, there is the Church, and nowhere else. And the Church is wherever Jesus Christ is. For it is the fact of His presence among man which creates community in faith and love. He is present in the call which summons to decision, and it is only through the decision of the response of faith that He takes possession of the individual. It is for this reason that Christ is the head of the body, the Church (Col. 1:18), and that the believers are the body of Christ, and members in particular (I Cor. 12:27).

The ultimate, absolute end, that is, the Kingdom of God, begins therefore, in this community, the Church. The Church is not based on the fact of creation, but on that of redemption, although creation was designed with this end in view. But it is only the concealed beginning of this ultimate end, hence it is in itself not an end, nor is it complete. As faith is not itself perfection, but is only the certainty of the coming perfection, so also the Church transcends itself, and reaches out towards that which is beyond itself. The Church can be

understood only in the light of the end..All who belong to the Church are of the company of those "who desire a better country!"¹ (Hebrew 11:16). They live in the hope of the final fulfilment of the promise. Therefore the Church does not stand still, but is ever moving towards the end. She moves toward it, because she herself is drawn by it. ✓

CHAPTER VII

REVELATION AND HISTORY

1. Meaning of History.
2. Revelation as the
Solution of the problem.

CHAPTER VII
REVELATION AND HISTORY

1. Meaning of History.

We have seen briefly in the first chapter of this thesis the implication of historical relationism upon the idea of revelation. History there is regarded as an endless flux, a continuum, and hence, relativity. History means uninterrupted development, incessant becoming, change without halting places. All historical phenomena are constantly passing over into one another, like the colors of the spectrum. Thus the history of Christianity is only one wave in the great stream of the history of religion in general. It is true that in this history there are peaks of epochs and individual personalities, but they are only relative, and cannot claim its special uniqueness from others. Therefore, the special revelation that Christianity claims is itself impossible. What is important is the essence which is behind the individual manifestations that are but accidental. Christ is therefore not in any sense a unique man, except the supreme example or teacher who as person is not important, but whose ideas and teachings are important. Christianity

is also not the sole revelation and redemption, but merely the supreme instance of the revelations and redemptions operating in the process of elevating mankind to God.

This individualistic and evolutionary conception of history cannot answer the problem of historical existence. For a historian would not rest content with mere reproduction of the complete "film" of the past. He wants the meaning of it. In so far as we stand outside this stream of history, we have not yet come in contact with what is truly historical. We may find individualities in the flux of history. But all life, all existence is individual, and there is not a difference of quality but only of degree. Therefore what a historical existence is made unique is not individuality. It must be something else. Brunner explains this as follows, taking Plato as for example.

"Plato is far from being merely an individual. As an individuality he is only quantitatively defined. He is thus the great genius that included in himself more elements of truth, beauty, spiritual power, etc., than other men of antiquity, he is in the first instance a wholly unique combination of what all other men also are, but in quite unique proportions. But this is not to define him as man at all, i.e., as a historical person. Plato is more than an individual, he is a man, a personality, he has self-determination. The true subject of history is not merely what is individual, but what is personal.....Personal decision is not, like individuality, a mysterious combination of elements of being, but is fundamentally different from everything that we can conceive of as a universal: it is the Creator's call and man's decisive response. Individuality is made by the

Creator; it is an object. Personality is addressed as "thou" by the creator. Man is called into existence. And it follows that his life in its specifically human and truly historical quality is lived by way of a definitive answer to this call. Above all individuality stand responsibility and the freedom that has its basis there, a freedom which makes every moment of life a crucial moment".*

Thus only what makes decision is personal, and only what is personal is historical. Decision is that which has reality only as a response to the call of God to us, and in which therefore our highest worth as created beings finds expression. And yet, it is at the same time the factor which exposes limitation of human being and makes us conscious of our loss of this nearness and worth. It is for this reason that Brunner said that "the decision which is the deepest reality of our being is at the same time its profoundest untruth".**

2. Revelation as Solution of the Problem.

Man is destined to be a historical being. But he has lost it. He has slipped away from his place. To restore him into the original place, therefore, is not "historification" of nature, but restoration of historical nature of man in the light of the revelation. It is for this reason that Brunner calls Jesus Christ the "Urgeschichte",*** or primordial

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* Philosophy of Religion, pp. 120-121 Emphasis is Brunner's.

**Op. Cit., p. 122

***Op. Cit., p. 123

history. He not only calls us into our personal decision by making us stand in the existential crisis, thus making us historical, but also promises us a new history and its consummation through our new birth. As such, Christ is the "Endgeschichte",* or the consummation of history. He is the Alpha and Omega of history, the "Ur-und Endgeschichte".

Therefore there is no such thing as a unity of history by its own right and no possibility of understanding it by means of such unity. We can talk of the unity of history in so far as it belongs at once to "Urgeschichte" and "Endgeschichte". In other words, we can only understand history, not as moved by forces within itself, but within its relation to a creative and redeeming God. Without the reality of divine revelation history finds no real meaning in itself. It does not belong to the realm of nature, yet neither does it belong to the realm of real history. History which is not shown in the light of the revelation is, if to use Brunner's simile, like a masquerade. No one knows who is behind the mask. The Christian believer sees history thus such an intermediate as this, a mixture of indefinable character. "It is lit up", says Brunner, "as by lightning by the history which is both primordial and ultimate and which blazes up at its central point. There, i.e. in Christ,

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* Op. Cit., p. 126

the meaning and the absurdity of history, its created unity and its ruin by sin, its attraction to God and its distance from God, its beginning and its end, are visible outside history".*-

It is therefore clear that something must take place in history to the extent that this knowledge is gained. The Church is a phenomenon visible in history of those who have regained their places in history, because it is now the re-created by God, fallen as it was, and is that which receives the promise of its redemption in Christ. The Church visible on the earth is that which is certain of its completion in the Kingdom of God.

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* Op. Cit., p. 127

CONCLUSION

1. Summary.
2. Critical Estimate.

CONCLUSION

1. Summary.

In the previous chapters we have briefly seen the doctrine of revelation in the theology of Emil Brunner. We have seen from the relationship between God and man that revelation is absolutely needed for man not only to know God but also to establish his own life in this world. Thus we have seen that religious epistemology must become soteriology, and that revelation which is called forth in the former is the Mediatorship of Christ in the latter. We have also seen that it is solely due to this work of the Mediator that there is the formation of the Church, in which alone Scripture and history have acquired their true meaning. Revelation therefore is the sole source on which the whole sphere of the Christian theology is grounded. It is for this reason that the doctrine of revelation is so vitally important in theological studies.

2. Critical Estimation.

As we are now going to estimate Brunner's doctrine of revelation, the writer of this thesis is obliged to state

a little about his theological background. Before he made up his mind to prepare for the ministry, the Church in Japan had already tended to the dialectical theology. Therefore he has breathed the "Barthian" atmosphere from the very beginning of his theological life. After he came to study in Auburn Theological Seminary, in which he was rejoicingly acquiring the knowledge of ethical implications of the Gospel of Christ in various aspects of human life and society, he was busy rethinking the ideas brought over from his country, though they were never adequate, in order to put them into a certain body of thought, as he met with the current thought of American theology, which, however, was not necessarily quite similar to that of his background. And as far as methodology and procedure of systematic theology are concerned, the writer of this thesis is still on the same track which he took up in the beginning of his theological life. In other words, he belongs to, generally speaking, the dialectical theology from the beginning. If he is asked what type of theology he likes best, he will answer without hesitation that "the theology of the Word of God", as Dr. Macintosh uses for the title, is his choice. If he is asked what his theology is, he will answer that it is, in a very inclusive word, the dialectical theology. Not only does he like it, but he

loves it. He treats it with sympathy and points out its weakness with understanding. He is glad to see during his almost four years' stay in this country, that the dialectical theology is gaining its influence here. The people in this country do not reject the dialectical theology any more simply by saying that it is a mere product out of the despair of the World War, the criticism that he used to hear when he first entered the American Seminary. He has heard such scholars as President John Whale of Cheshunt College, the theological seminary of Cambridge University, and Dr. C. H. Dodd of Magdalen College, Cambridge University, preach with definite Barthian ideas and dictions. Thus the theology of Emil Brunner is too close for him to criticise. It is, as it were, his theology. However, he has the problem the solution of which the dialectical theologians have not shown him. It seems to him that that is the limitation of the dialectical theology. Or, it may be said that it is the point from which the dialectical theology is to continue to develop. In other words, the critical estimation of Brunner's doctrine of revelation is, for the writer of this thesis, the reflection of the limitation of his own theology in order to make it more adequate. We shall consider here the question concerning the basic point

of the revelation without going into its implications with the departmental aspects of systematic theology, such as God, man, Christ, Church, Scriptures, etc.

This must be said at the outset: that the dialectical theology has made a definite contribution to the Christian Church. It has restored Christ into the proper place of theology by turning the mind of today from the homo-centric interest of the liberal theology to the theo-centric emphasis of the Christian faith. The liberal theology is wrong in presupposing that there is the continuity between God and man and that the highest and best of the human are directly the divine. It has therefore the imminent danger of falling into the pitfall of pantheism or self-deification of man. Barth and Brunner and others, so-called "Barthians", are quite right in attacking such humanistic views and in emphasizing the discontinuity between God and man. There is a qualitative difference between God and man. "God is in heaven and thou art on earth". There is this absolute 'no' between God and man. There is however the absolute 'yes' between God and man. That is the revelation in Jesus Christ. It is the Christian faith that the revelation is the knowledge of God, that God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, and that this revelation is the definite historical

event. In Jesus Christ therefore man has the dialectical relationship with God. He is the impossible possibility--- impossibility from the standpoint of man but possibility from the standpoint of God. And this paradoxical unity is not only possibility but is a reality. It is only by faith that man can truly understand this truth. For everything but divine is put into the category of impossibility in this relation. Faith is not man's faculty, but God's gift. Theology is the methodical form of speaking of the human impossibility and of the divine possibility, which has become reality.

It is quite clear that there is the dialectical relationship between God and man. The direct continuity of God and man cannot be maintained. Man is limited. He cannot be a God. Man is absolutely negated before God. But as such he is affirmed by God. Apart from such a man God cannot be spoken. God and man are antitheses, but they cannot be separated. God is the God of such a man, and man is man of such God. This does not mean that God is man and man is God. But simply shows that there is such an inseparable, close relationship between God and man. Although man cannot know God because of his limitation, because of his qualitative difference from God, yet man can know God as such.

It is his knowledge that God is the Wholly Other One. Is not the question about the divine possibility a human possibility? For no question could be asked about the divine possibility unless a divine answer, even if preliminarily and scarcely intelligible, were not always already available.

It is indisputable for us to hold that God is only known by God. In other words, we can find God only when we rise above ourselves. This transcendentalizing act does not mean that we have the transcendental. The point is that we are in quest of it. And we have to notice that this quest is possible only because the transcendental has already dragged us out beyond ourselves as we have received answers which drive us to the quest. The question itself is possible only because man has already received answers to it, and therefore can have knowledge about his finiteness and limitation.

If we take up the problem of the relationship between faith and reason, Brunner asserts that reason is to find a place in faith.* He reminds us however, that for Christian faith to claim the superiority of faith over reason does not mean that Christians do not use reason. It means that faith speaks the last word when reason ceases to

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* Vide, Philosophy of Religion, p. 55 ff

speak, or reason is supported by faith in the last analysis, because revelation is the solution for the problem of reality, and reason finds its place only in so far as it is within the bounds of revelation, viz. faith.

But it is questionable whether we can always separate faith from reason and give the place of superiority over the latter. It is quite true that faith speaks the last word, because reason is limited, and because in faith the limit of reason is discovered. But the moment faith speaks the last word, the relationship of superiority of faith over reason is disrupted because what faith has spoken is in the bounds of reason. To say that reason is limited, that faith sees the reality beyond the bounds of reason, is itself possible only by reason. Faith begins, according to Brunner, where reason comes to its border line of limitation. Faith then may be said to be reason which is conscious of its limitation, or self-limitation of reason. Without reason, there is no faith.

Brunner also says that "the object of faith is something which is absurd to reason, i.e. paradox; the hall mark of logical inconsistency clings to all genuine pronouncements of faith".* But paradox does not necessarily mean unreasonable. There is logic irrational, which is just as rational

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* Op. Cit., p. 55

with logic rational.

To summarize, Brunner's presentation of the relationship between God and man which is the sole bases of his doctrine of revelation, with its due necessity of emphasis on the sovereignty of God, is one-sided and disrupted dialectics. It is not dialectic, but paradoxical wherein lies its strength. It is supernatural, and that constitutes its weakness. Brunner himself is not clear in this respect, and therefore he borrows the Reformers' doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit to solve the problem. But the Holy Spirit bears witness to our Spirit---a witness that we are able to understand, since this witnessing takes place not beyond our spiritual life, but in response to the quest for a relation to God. Yet, the demand for this answer, and the capacity of asking and perceiving it, come through humanity. Without it the witness of the Holy Spirit to man's spirit would not concern him.

Brunner himself seems quite perplexed in this respect. Therefore he admits the general revelation as supplementary to the special revelation, thus making room for reason in his doctrine of revelation and faith. He holds the view in his "Natur und Gnade. Zum Gespräch mit. Karl Barth" that man's primordial *imago Dei*, '*justitia originalis*', has gone with his Fall, with the consequence that he can no longer do one wholly

good act. But there is a formal sense in which we may speak of the imago Dei as that which distinguishes man from beast, his reason, his conscience, his capacity for receiving and giving rational discourse---his capacity for the Word. This function of the imago is not annihilated by sin, "in fact it is the presupposition of man's ability to sin".*

Therefore, man can respond through this formal imago Dei which still remains in him to the call of the divine address. Here we can easily see the process that Brunner transformed the Kantian idea of the limit-concept into the crisis situation of the human existence. However, Brunner's acceptance of the formal imago Dei makes the room, as Barth severely criticises in his "Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner", for the continuation between the higher knowledge of God by revelation and the lower knowledge of God by man's power, thus giving the 'theologia naturalis' to rise.**

This is, it seems to the writer of this thesis, a limitation of Brunner's idea of revelation. However, by his mighty proclamation of the Christian truth of the divine sovereignty, Brunner with Barth and other colleagues of the same school, has saved theology from forgetting the divinity and holiness of God and has saved the Church from lapsing into pantheism and secularism. This positive value is more important than

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* p. 10. Vide, pp. 9-11

** Vide, p. 18

all the objections that may be raised against him. He is one of the great theologians the Christian Church has ever had, and his influence will be actively continued for some time in the Christian Church and to the writer of this thesis as well.

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