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# A Study of Faith and Reason as Found in the Writings of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and E. J. Carnell

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A STUDY OF FAITH AND REASON  
AS FOUND IN THE WRITINGS OF  
KARL BARTH, EMIL BRUNNER, AND E. J. CARNELL

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Western Evangelical Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by  
Bernard Edward Mott, Jr.

April 1953



APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following faculty committee:

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The question which forms the core of this paper is the relationship of faith and reason. Is faith reasonable? Does every aspect of that in which man believes need to fit the requirement of reason? Does reason support faith or faith reason? Is reason possible without faith?

To establish this relationship also means the establishment of the limitation of each. What is the area of faith? How is knowledge obtained? Why is faith necessary at all? Or why is reason necessary? To answer these questions one must also ascertain the correct view of the world, of man, of God, of revelation, and something of their mutual relationships.

Since this theological controversy has been raised by a number of recent theologians, it is to their writings one must turn. The three chosen by the author of this paper are Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and E.J. Carnell.

#### B. JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

Generally, Modernistic Liberalism believes that it alone of all Christian theologies has subjected every aspect of faith to reason. In fact, reason has so subjected the entire field of religion which it surveys that even God has been brought



low. In many instances, He has been considered as no more than a figment of the human mind. God was good, and man was good. Every day and in every way the world was getting better and better. An optimistic view of history was this indeed in the light of selfishness and greed which dominated the motives of the nations of the world. Though it could survive the scandal of the early nineteenth century, liberalism could not survive the holocaust of war. From the smoking ruins of Central Europe there arose a new theology, a theology which no longer asserted the divine immanence nor the goodness of man. Certainly the Second World War has done nothing to dispel this new theology's threatened sway over the theological world.

Since the basic error of the liberals was immanence, it is logical to expect that the basic thesis of the new theology is transcendence and discontinuity. Discontinuity of man with God replaced old continuity. "Where liberal theology saw the goodness of God as continuous with the highest human goodness and the fulfilment of life as gradual sanctification and as the conservation of value, neo-orthodoxy is more concerned with the discontinuity between God's goodness and human sin, and visualizes the relationship of the eternal to history as a dialectic one in which God as the End fulfils man's desires and expectations only by disappointing them in their corrupted form." . . . Barth charges the liberals with having made God in their own image. He himself defines God as absolutely transcendent, the wholly other, the deus absconditus. Anything less than wholly other is but an oversized man. . . .<sup>1</sup>

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1. Edward J. Carnell, The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 31.



How does one know God? By faith or by reason? Or by both? If there is a line of demarcation between the two, where does one begin and the other end? More important still, how does one know where this line of demarcation is? Modern man demands the answers to problems. It is not sufficient for him to be told what is wrong, but that which is right also. How can faith be justified before him unless an appeal for faith is compelling?

### C. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. A short biographical sketch of each individual who has been discussed.
2. The philosophical assumptions of each man were examined.
3. The theological viewpoint of the men was presented in the light of their respective philosophical assumptions.

### D. LIMITATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

Because of their outstanding success in their respective theological circles, this study has been limited to the views of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and E.J. Carnell upon this problem. These were chosen because of their purported claim to be heirs of the reformers, particularly of John Calvin.



## E. DEFINITION OF TERMS

There can, at the present time, be no exact definition of terms given. The emphasis will be placed upon an inductive study of faith and reason in all of the authors, permitting their usage to determine exact meanings. However, as a working hypothesis, the following definitions are submitted since they are related so closely to the central problem. Some aspects of these definitions, no doubt, will apply to all of the men to be studied.

### 1. Reason

The special mental faculty which in thinking ideas of absolute completeness and unconditionedness transcends the condition of possible experience.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Faith

Faith is the giving of oneself to be controlled by what commands trust and devotion. . .<sup>3</sup>

## F. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The method of procedure has been limited to an inductive study of the writings of these men. Only for purposes of biography have other authors been consulted. A short biography of each individual has been included in order to demonstrate under what circumstances and what particular

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2. Dagobert D. Runes, Dictionary of Philosophy (New York, Philosophical Library, n.d.), p. 264.

3. H(enry) N(elson) W(ieman), "Faith," An Encyclopedia of Religion, compiled by Vergilius Ferm (New York, The Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 270.



background each has written.

Due to the limitation of the author of this thesis, most of these studies have been made in authorized translations. Both Barth and Brunner have written principally in the German language, making this a necessity.

As much as is humanly possible, this researcher has made an attempt to be objective. All criticisms and suggestions concerning the various authors have been made from the criteria which they themselves have declared valid. It must be noted however, that in all too many instances, this paper has fallen short of complete objectivity. This investigator wishes to apologize to all who feel that their own viewpoint has not been fairly represented. The author can only beg forgiveness on the basis of our common humanity.

All references quoted by this author from the Bible have been taken from the American Standard Version of 1901. For those quotations contained within quotations of other authors, due reference must be made to that author's work.



## CHAPTER II

### THE RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION OF KARL BARTH

#### A. BIOGRAPHY

Karl Barth has been recognized as one of the outstanding contemporary theologians. Around his works and thought have raged controversies which few men have experienced. Barth was born in 1886, in Basel, Switzerland<sup>1</sup> son of Professor Fritz Barth, author of a book on the chief problems of the life of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> It has been stated that the typical life of a Neo-Orthodox theologian could be traced from a Conservative background to Liberalism to Neo-Orthodoxy. It is doubtful if Barth was a true Conservative, but the early influence of Modern Liberalism is everywhere evident in his writings. Without accepting this viewpoint thoroughly, Barth could never have become the associate editor of the Ritschilian journal, Die Christliche Welt.<sup>3</sup>

Barth's university days were spent in Berne, Berlin, Tübingen and Marburg.<sup>4</sup> After a ministry of two years at

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1. J.L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia, The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), II, 172.

2. Hugh Ross Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology (London, Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1949), p. 271.

3. Neve, op. cit. II, 172.

4. H(erbert) H(irshwald), "Karl Barth," Chamber's Encyclopedia (New York, Oxford University Press, 1950), B, 141.



Geneva (1909-1911) he accepted a pastorate at Safenwil (Aargau). It was during this pastorate in Switzerland that the great First World War broke out, and, significantly, it was here that radical changes were introduced into his theology.

It in no way discredits a man to examine the immediate environment in which his thought was born. Though a theological truth may be an eternal verity, yet its elevation to the forefront of human thought usually took place in a particular environment which was conducive of that thought. An examination of that environment, moreover, often is able to lead the examiner to a more critical and literal interpretation of what has been thought before him.

Until this time of radical change, Barth had been committed to an optimistic theology. This is evidenced by his committal to the Swiss Religio-Social movement of Hermann Kutter and Leonhard Ragaz.<sup>6</sup> Reacting against this human attempt to usher in the Kingdom of God, Barth wrote a paper entitled, Der Glaube an den Persoenlichen Gott, in which he stated that the kingdom of God is not measured by human achievement and progress, but rather in the terms of God's Lordship.<sup>7</sup>

There is much which is similar in the historical and

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6. Neve, op. cit. II, 172.

7. Ibid.



political situations of Kierkegaard's day and that of Barth's.<sup>8</sup> Kierkegaard was stricken by the worldliness which had smitten the Danish church of his day. His disposition, whatever the cause, was anything but cheerful. It was the extreme seriousness of life which impressed him. This worldliness was caused, Kierkegaard believed, by the extremely optimistic theology prevalent in the church at that time. This, he felt, was not at all warranted by the actual facts. There were no omens which seemed to him to declare that the church was ushering in the Kingdom of God. Everywhere immorality prevailed, both inside and outside the church. Denmark had just engaged in a war with Germany and had lost part of her riches and most productive territory, Schleswig-Holstein, which added additional grief to his troubled soul. A century later, in Barth's day, Germany had lost a war. In addition, she lost all of her territorial possessions in Africa and the islands of the sea. The rich Saar basin, with its wealth of natural resources, was taken from her. This was in striking contradiction to the philosophy of Hegel that it was to the Germans the world could look for the ideal of absolute freedom.<sup>9</sup> As in Denmark one hundred years before, a severe financial depression

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8. Ewart Aubrey, Present Theological Tendencies (New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1936), p. 74.

9. G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, trans. by J. Sibree (London, George Bell and Sons, 1902), p. 354.



struck Germany. This, coupled with the other disasters, brought the realization of the futility of human effort upon Barth. Social idealism, he concluded, was only a disillusionment.<sup>10</sup>

During his pastorate at Safenwill, Barth wrote his famous Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. (1917). In this commentary he sought to reinterpret Paul's teachings about God, man, and human destiny in the light of his twentieth century surroundings.<sup>11</sup> This book gave him theological fame throughout the religious world.

In 1921 Barth became a university professor, first at Göttingen, then Münster in 1925 and Bonn in 1930. After the rise of National Socialism in Germany, Barth was forced to return to his native Switzerland. His work for the confessional church in Germany before he left proved to be the backbone of its resistance in its struggle against Hitler. It has been said that the famous Declaration of Barmen (1934) was essentially his writing.<sup>12</sup> In Switzerland Barth was appointed professor of theology at Basel, but at the close of World War II, he again returned to Germany.<sup>13</sup>

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10. Aubrey, op. cit. p. 74.

11. Ibid.

12. H(erbert) H(irschwald), "Karl Barth," Chamber's Encyclopedia (New York, Oxford University Press, 1950), II, 141.

13. "Karl Barth," The Encyclopedia Americana (New York, Americana Corporation, 1952), III, p. 288.



## B. REACTION AGAINST LIBERALISM

It has already been noted that Barth represents a reaction against Liberalism. From Hegel's "Whatever is, is right," Barth might be characterized by "Whatever is, is wrong." Both of these statements must, of course, be rightly understood in the light of the philosophies which they represent. An allied statement characterizing Barth's thought is that everything in the natural sphere of time and space is relative. This would include man, his ethical systems, and his attempts at systematization of thought.

Whenever a philosophy claims to be a relative philosophy the question must always follow, to what is this relative? As far as considering this world relative, Barth is in superficial agreement with Modern Liberalism, but when the question is pushed further, we then see that there is no real agreement, at least at this point. Modern liberals, following in the legacy of Hegel, have made all human endeavor relative to the yardstick of progress. As the struggling spirit of man ascends the scale of progress, his values also ascend. On the other hand, Barth vehemently denied that there could be any scale of human achievement. That although all is relative, it is relative not to man, but to God. Hegel sees the world composed of metaphysical opposites which man gradually solves through the aid of infinite Spirit. As he solves these, he ascends the ladder of progress. Barth denounces this deifying of man, stating that these great contradictions cannot be solved by man,



but that man must rest content to let these reside within the mysteries of God. Hence, for man there is no complete system of thought. If he were to attempt this impossibility, man must either not account for all the facts, lapse into idealism in order to make all the facts fit; or he must be forced to give up. Even the attempt at such a system, Barth has argued, is sinful. It is the building of the tower of Babel, man's attempt to make himself master of the situation, hence gods. This attempt has been made because man basically has not trusted his Creator, willing more to place trust in his own powers. The difference then, which is most striking between Hegel and Barth is that the former has placed no limitations upon the ability of the reason, while Barth has advocated that it is restricted and limited.

### C. NATURAL THEOLOGY

It would do well for us at this time to examine the position of Barth as to the reliability of natural theology. In this area of thought, he is noted for the pamphlet, Nein, which he wrote in rejecting Brunner's qualified acceptance of natural theology. Upon this point, Barth and Brunner were separated and have never since been reunited. Concerning natural theology, Barth wrote:

I certainly see -- with astonishment -- that such a science as Lord Gifford had in mind does exist, but I do not see how it is possible for it to exist. I am convinced that so far as it has



existed and still exists, it owes its existence to a radical error.<sup>14</sup>

If man can learn nothing from his natural surroundings as to the nature or even the possibility of God, then human reason must be limited to that of the natural sphere.<sup>15</sup>

At this point, it might be noted that Barth is in full agreement with the epistemologies of both Hume and Kant.

But Barth has laid forth the claim that it is only to the Word of God we can turn if one wishes to possess certainty about God. In so turning away from and rejecting the human reason, Barth believed he was turning from the natural theology and dogma of the Catholic Church to a proper emphasis as presented by the Reformers.

But the Reformation and the teaching of the Reformation Churches stand in an antithesis to "Natural Theology" which is at once clear and instructive for both. . . that, however, in no way alters the principle that the revival of the gospel by Luther and Calvin consisted in their desire to see both the church and human salvation founded on the Word of God alone, on God's revelation in Jesus Christ, as it is attested in the Scripture, and on faith in the Word.<sup>16</sup>

This abandonment of human reason, the abandonment of all natural theology, is done purposely and deliberately by Barth because they are unlike God. God is absolute, while

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14. Karl Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation (Great Britain, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 5.

15. Henry Nelson Wieman and Bernard Eugene Meland, American Philosophies of Religion (New York, Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1936), p. 79.

16. Barth, op. cit. p. 8.



his conception of all that can be called cosmos is limited and relative.

I repeat, it does not mean the negation, the denial or the depreciation of that which is not God. But it does mean that this latter factor is criticized, limited and relative.<sup>17</sup>

How can man know that there is a God? This is the heart of the Barthian theology. One knows through the Word of God. In summary concerning this vital point we quote Barth again,

Knowledge of the one and only God becomes possible and real, because this does happen, because God does arise and makes Himself visible in the world and distinguishes Himself from the world as its creator, thereby making the world visible and distinguishing it as His creation.<sup>18</sup>

This message, this distinguishing Himself from the world, can, in the final analysis, be called the Word of God.

Where does one find the Word of God? Where does God make Himself known? The first place one would look would logically and naturally be the Bible which has been known as the Word of God throughout the centuries. Moreover, as has already been noted,<sup>19</sup> it is to the Biblical teachings that Barth has claimed to turn. Let us examine in a preliminary sketch what Barth has found of value in the Bible.

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17. Ibid., p. 16.

18. Ibid., p. 15.

19. Cf. Ante, p. 12.



## D. THE BIBLE

Barth's view of the Bible can be found in a series of negative presentations in which he has presented what is not to be found in the Bible. The first of these negative presentations is history. Whether the history which is presented in the Bible is true history or not is really beside the point. The real issue is this, that the Bible is not primarily a history of events, events which can be resolved into a system. Referring to those who have read the Bible for the historical record contained therein, Barth wrote: "But the pleasure is short-lived. The picture, on closer inspection, proves quite incomprehensible and flat if it is meant only for history."<sup>20</sup>

Biblical history in the Old and New Testaments is not really history at all, but seen from above is a series of free divine acts and seen from below a series of fruitless attempts to undertake something in itself impossible. From the viewpoint of ordered development in particular and in general it is quite incomprehensible--as every religious teacher who is worth his salt knows only too well.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, even more forcibly, Barth has denied all meaning to Biblical history.

Fundamental Protestantism, or the group of Protestant

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20. Thomas S. Kepler, ed.; Contemporary Religious Thought (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), p. 134.

21. Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, trans. by Douglas Horton (no location, The Pilgrim Press, 1928), p. 72.



believers generally known as Orthodox, together with the Catholic Church, have generally believed that from the Bible one must draw his doctrine and dogma about God. This is just exactly what the Bible has not purported to do.

It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the content of the Bible, but the right divine thoughts about men. The Bible tells us not how we should talk with God but what he says to us; not how we find the way to Him, but how He has sought and found the way to us; not the right relation in which we must place ourselves to Him, but the covenant which He has made once and for all in Jesus Christ. It is this which is within the Bible. The Word of God is within the Bible.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly one would look for moral teaching within the Bible. One would point to the great moral laws of God as delivered to Moses upon the mountain of God as a primary example.<sup>23</sup> The teachings of Jesus upon the mountain would certainly be a great code of morality.<sup>24</sup> But Barth seemed to give only the barest attention to these great principles of law and instead has given the most weight and emphasis upon those points which have always been difficult for Modern Liberalism. This, no doubt, was a vestige of his Liberalistic training. He pointed to the places where God has blessed men who committed terrible deeds, or even where men were commanded by God to commit them.

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22. Kepler, op. cit., p. 138.

23. Exodus 20:1-17.

24. Matthew 5 - 7.



And in how many phases of morality the Bible is grievously wanting! How little fundamental information it offers in regard to the difficult questions of business life, marriage, civilization, and statecraft, with which we have to struggle! To mention only a single problem, but to us a mortal one: how unceremoniously and constantly war is waged in the Bible! . . . Time and again the Bible gives us the impression that it contains no instructions, counsels, or examples whatsoever, either for individuals or for nations and governments; and the impression is correct.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, also basic to his criticism of the morality of the Bible, is the concept which he has which is becoming more evident with each quotation, that the Bible is limited and relative because it too is a part of the cosmos. It is obvious that the great commandments were limited to a particular situation and are not applicable to the modern world. But this is not only true of Biblical ethics but of all modern systems.

The world is full of morality, but where have we really got with it? It is always an exceptional condition--I had almost said, an artificial dislocation of our will. It is no new will. Steadily or intermittently, we apply ourselves to our morality--to our thrift, let us say, to thought for our family, to efficiency in our vocation, to our patriotism--and through it we lift ourselves above our own real level and that of our fellow men. . . . Is the unrighteous, self-seeking, capricious, world-will really struck at, much less overcome, by our withdrawing with our morality--seemingly a little to one side? Is it not our very morality which prevents our discerning that at a hundred other points we are the more firmly fettered to that will? Does it not

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25. Kepler, op. cit., p. 136.



make us blind and impenitent toward the deep real needs of existence? Is it not remarkable that the greatest atrocities of life-- I think of the capitalistic order and of war-- can justify themselves on purely moral principles? The devil may also make use of morality. He laughs at the tower of Babel which we erect to him.<sup>26</sup>

Of what value is the Bible? It does not primarily teach history, nor can it be used correctly for dogma, nor can it be deduced to a system of ethics. The truth of the Bible, Barth has stated, lies in the fact that it points us beyond history, beyond morality, beyond human dogma, to a world which man cannot hope to find, the world of God.<sup>27</sup> What he meant by this statement must be left temporarily until we are able to probe into Barth's meaning of the Word of God.

#### E. PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

To summarize the argument of Barth thus far presented, it could be said that Barth believed that everything which is not God is limited, relative, and fallible. This applied to all that might be termed part of the world which included the Bible and human reasoning. There is nothing about the world which can possibly give us knowledge of God. Certainly as a part of human attainment is therefore a useless attempt. In the light of what has been gained thus far, one would quickly wonder at Barth's own presentation. Is it not

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26. Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 18.

27. Kepler, op. cit., p. 133.



also a part of this same world as is nature and the Bible? Is it not also a product of the human reason and thus fallible? Startlingly enough, Barth would agree to exactly that. Everywhere while reading Barth, one is impressed by the scrutiny he has given his own works. Reflecting upon them again and again, he has often been caused to revise and even to depart from much of his work in the past.

Impressive as Barth's work has been, it is far from being beyond the reach of criticism. Some camp-followers of the movement have inclined to forget this, but the master himself leaves us in no doubt. He criticizes his own statements, often, by modifying them. "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often," it has been said; and one fact which makes comprehension of his thought so difficult is that in detail it changes constantly. He warns us vehemently against canonizing his results up to date. He offers clear principles, definite assumptions, but never a closed system. . . .<sup>28</sup>

Many have criticized Barth because he has claimed that his is not a system of thought. On the other hand, Dr. J.L. Neve criticized Barth because he has not system enough. At the time of the publication of the Crédo in 1936, Neve insisted that Barth went through a fundamental change of thought and could scarcely be recognized as the same individual who had published the previous works of Barth.

Whereas in 1921 Barth virtually heaped ridicule on those who look for a Second Coming at some distant future, he now speaks of Christ as

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28. Hugh Ross Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology (London, Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1949), p. 264.



our "future," our "hope". . . Only at one fundamental point Barth remained the same: he still rejects each and every acknowledgment of a theologia naturalis.<sup>29</sup>

Ridicule has often been applied to Barth because of the many inconsistencies contained in his writings. But to thoroughly understand Barth's relativism, is to understand with him that it is perfectly consistent to be inconsistent. Barth cannot be understood at all unless it be understood that everything he has stated has been stated in a framework of relativism.

Cornelius Van Til in his criticism of the Barthian movement has assumed that Barth does have a system of thought, in fact he has so stated in spite of Barth's denials.<sup>30</sup> However, Barth's definition of a system of thought would be different from Van Til's.

Barth's main charge against other religious thought, has been that they have attempted to construct the world and God into a closed system of thought. This would include the Catholics, the Liberal Protestants and the Conservative Protestants. He charged that they have attempted to marshal all the facts of history and of nature into their thought. Thus they have a philosophy of history and of nature. But to deny these assertions, as Barth did, that history and nature can be resolved into systematic thought

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29. Neve, A History of Christian Thought, II, 177.

30. Cornelius Van Til, The New Modernism (Philadelphia, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1947), p. viii.



so that men can know the general pattern of all that has happened and all that will happen is not in itself constructing another system. The human reason, Barth has charged, simply is not adequate to account for all the facts.

But if one has denied reason, how is it possible for there to be any presentation at all? How can one even express ideas which can be grasped and understood by those reading? Some criticism of Barth has been just this absurd. What Barth has denied is not the powers of comprehension and expression, but man's ability to account for all the data which is at his disposal. If one were to ask, how could it be true if it did not account for all the facts, Barth would reply, it is true because it does not account for them for they are of such a nature as not to be accounted by man. This can be done alone by God, and one must trust implicitly in Him for all the final solutions. This, Barth has stated, is the supreme value of the Bible.

And it is certain that the Bible, if we read it carefully, makes straight for the point where one must decide to accept or reject the sovereignty of God. This is the new world within the Bible.<sup>31</sup>

Before the examination of the critical point of study of Barthian theology, the Word of God, his doctrine of the church and of theology should be first understood. In such

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31. Kepler, Contemporary Religious Thought, p. 137.



a frame of reference as Barth's it is very difficult to see how either can really exist. Unless we understand thoroughly their function in the world, the meaning and the purpose of the Word of God cannot be understood.

#### F. THE CHURCH

The Church is a part of the world. As much as one might wish otherwise, she cannot be extricated from her entangling alliances with which she is bound.

And now the last point, that where the Church is, there it has an aim, the kingdom of God. This goal of the Church is bound to constitute a continuous restlessness for the men in the Church, whose action stands in no relation to the greatness of this goal. We must not allow Christian existence, that is the existence of the Church, and theological existence, to be spoiled by this. It may well happen that we might want to drop the hand that is put to the plough, when we compare the Church with its goal. . . If we really hope for the kingdom of God, then we shall not be ashamed to discover in the concrete congregation the one holy universal Church, and then every individual will not be ashamed of his particular confession.<sup>32</sup>

As a part of the world, the church is hindered in the fulfillment of her future goal because she is in a lost and damned state.

We know the Church only in its unlikeness to the Kingdom of God. The Church is, as we saw, directly constituted by the fact that the Kingdom of God has come near in the

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32. Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, trans. by G.T. Thomson (New York, Philosophical Library, 1949), p. 148.



Epiphany of Jesus Christ, but only near, and that we still live in time, which is not eternity. The phenomenon of the hiddenness of the body of Christ and the phenomenon of the disunity of the one Church bring that fact very clearly before our eyes. . . .<sup>33</sup>

Her weakness is that of utter inability to be effectively God-like. But of course this is not what has made the church, the church. What has made the church is its relationship to Christ.

. . . The homecoming of her own being, on the ground of which alone she actually ventures to proclaim, of course means for her the reversion to her proper being, which transcends herself, to Jesus Christ her heavenly Head, whom she confronts as His earthly body, bound to Him as such, and yet as such distinct from Him who possesses the Church in Himself, but not the Church in herself, between Him and Her there is no reversible, interchangeable, relationship as certainly as the relationship of master and servant is no reversible.<sup>34</sup>

If the Church then is so sinful, so enmeshed with the inhibitions which the world has her bound, why is she in existence at all? The central duty of the church, her only excuse for existence, is that of proclamation.

. . . Both according to the express declaration (Matt. xxviii. 18 f.), and according to what we can learn from the New Testament about the actual practice of the Apostles, this commission consists in witnessing by means of the preaching of the Gospel and the Administration of the Sacraments. No third

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33. Karl Barth, Credo, trans. by J. Strathearn McNab (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 148.

34. Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, trans. by G.T. Thomson (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 112.



action has a place beside these two, which are in essence one, the ministerium verbi divini. . . It is out of confidence in the worth and relevance of this command, it is out of the firm assurance that by pure proclamation and by the proper administration of the sacraments more is achieved and better results are obtained in the solution of just these pressing problems of life than by the best-intentioned measures for aid, action and enlightenment, that involve our stepping outside of the bounds of this small but mighty domain. . .<sup>35</sup>

Barth has brought to us forcibly that the Church's only reason for existence is the service which it can render to the Word of God. She has not been placed here in the world for a moral example, not to teach any form of systematized doctrine, but to proclaim. In this act she performs the vital function which Christ has commanded her.

. . . But this human activity of her is of course primarily proclamation, and anything else than the proper fulfilment of that cannot be the purpose of dogmatics. . .<sup>36</sup>

The church, even in her proclamation still remains a creature of the world. Through her own power, she has never been able to proclaim. It is not her own word she is to proclaim, it is the Word of God. And yet as she attempts to utter the Word which has been revealed to her by the sovereign act of God, it somehow becomes her own word.

Thus if human language claims to proclamation, that can only mean that it claims to serve the Word of God, to point to its hav-

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35. Barth, Credo, p. 144.

36. Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 94.



ing previously been spoken through God Himself. That is God's Word, that sanctifies the human pointer to bear witness to Himself, this it cannot take to itself. The will on man's side here brought in question can only be that of accepting a commission. It goes decisively with what all true prophecy has discerned, that no man as such can possibly utter the Word of God. If man's language about God claims to be proclamation, it claims to be not grace, but the service of grace, the means of grace. . . .<sup>37</sup>

Barth has made it clear that not just any words stated in a church are the Words of God. One definite characteristic of proclamation must be that its language is centered in and phrased around the Holy Scripture.<sup>38</sup> The proclaimer, in the form of homily or exposition, has the task of presenting the promises of the Bible. But his purpose is to make the promises of the Bible vital, to have bearing upon today, and to make them be interpreted in the light of our own problem. The scripture then is the proclaimer's pre-supposition, while the "person called must be ready to make the promise given to the Church comprehensible in his own words to the men of his time."<sup>39</sup> One can readily recognize the relativistic framework of this contention. In fact it is this view of reality which has made proclamation needful if one were to accept Barth's point of view.

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37. Ibid., p. 57.

38. Ibid., p. 64.

39. Ibid.



## G. DOGMATICS

Even as the principle task of the Church is proclamation, her principle theology is dogmatics. Proclamation in Barth's theology is prior to dogmatics, and as it has been shown that proclamation and exegesis have vital bearing on one another, so one might say that exegesis is prior to dogmatics. But because exegesis involves the human element, there is always the danger that exegesis will no longer be exegesis, but the proclamation of the proclaimer. Because of the danger of this imposition of human ideas upon the Word of God, proclamation must be carefully scrutinized to ascertain its usefulness to the service of the Word of God.

As the science of dogmatics is examined briefly, Barth's definition of dogmatics should be carefully compared to those of other theologians, either favorably or unfavorably. It is evident that Barth would disagree radically with the definition of dogmatics which Strong has given us.

. . . 'the systematizing of the doctrines as expressed in the symbols of the Church, together with the grounding of these in the Scriptures, and the exhibition, so far as may be, of their rational necessity.'<sup>40</sup>

Barth's main disagreement as one could easily see, would be in the effort to prove the rational necessity of certain doctrines. Though doctrine might explain the certain phenomenon,

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40. James Strong, Systematic Theology, quoted in H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1949) I, 28.



it most certainly cannot be demonstrated as a rational necessity, for even the theology of dogmatics cannot explain its necessity, for it is of another world. Lange's definition of dogmatics would meet with scarcely more approval by Barth.

'...It is the science which presents to our notice the material obtained by exegesis and history in an organized and systematic form, representing the sum of the truth of the Christian faith in organic connection with the facts of religious consciousness. . . .'<sup>41</sup>

There is in this definition an attempt to gather meaning from history which Barth would state as having no meaning. Barth's definition of dogmatics is as follows:

As a theological discipline, dogmatics is the scientific test to which the Christian Church puts herself regarding the language about God which is peculiar to her.<sup>42</sup>

It is evident that in one respect at least, Barth has returned to a more healthy emphasis. This is the stress which he must place upon the importance of doctrine as he also has stressed exegesis. As a science, Barth stated that dogmatics must lay an accountable path to its conclusions, but on the other hand it must not submit to the tests which are valid for the other sciences. It is the other world science and cannot undergo empirical proofs of laboratory tests as do the other sciences.

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41. H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1949) I, 29.

42. Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 1.



Though Barth expressly stated that dogmatics has for its presupposition the ascertainability of truth by the human mind, this in no way guarantees the fact that truth has actually been found. The Church knows the truth only as an act of faith, in the revelation of God which He has and does commit to her, but the very nature of this revelation is such that it cannot be held nor can it be transmitted without the laying on of unholy hands.

As an inquiry dogmatics presupposes that the proper content of Christian language about God must be known humanly. Christian language must be investigated as to its conformity to Christ. In this conformity it is by no means presented to us obviously or free from difficulties. The finally and adequately given divine answer is the counterpart of the human question which retains its faithfulness throughout unwearied, honest advance, of the cry that is sincere even amid the loftiest attainments, 'not as though I had already attained!' True, dogmatics receives the measure with which it measures in an act of human appropriation. Therefore it must be an inquiry. It knows the light that is perfect in itself, that discovers all in a flash. But it knows it only in the prism of this act, which, however, radically or existentially it may be regarded, is a human act, offering in itself no sort of surety for the correctness of the appropriation in question, being rather fallible and therefore itself in need of criticism and revision, of repeated and ever closer re-testing. The creaturely form which God's revealing action comes to take in dogmatics is therefore not that of knowledge attained in a flash, which it would have to be to correspond to the divine gift, but a laborious advance from one partial human insight to another, intending but by no means guaranteeing an 'advance!'<sup>43</sup>

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43. Ibid., p. 14.



Barth has continually emphasized that the theologian as well as the proclaimer must have experienced the truth which is known only by faith. But in this world which cannot, at present at least, know the truth in its entirety, and cannot even be certain of any of its truths about God, theology is on very uncertain grounds. Having known this truth obtained in the flash, it is by no means certain that this same truth is still present when human effort attempts to use it in ascertaining the truth of Christian proclamation.

The necessity of dogmatics is found in the nature of the church, because she is a sinful creature of this world. It is found in the very nature of proclamation itself, because it is the human publishing of the Divine Word. The need for dogmatics is found in the very nature of dogmatics itself, as a human effort to establish truth, a truth which is established not in stability, but in an environment in which all is relative.

. . . It cannot--at this early stage we may say so--have in view a system of Christian truth. All else apart, that would mean that it had the power to criticise all the Church proclamation ever made, and to put the whole of a corrected Church proclamation finally before the public. That is simply cannot do. . .<sup>44</sup>

#### H. THE WORD OF GOD

The heart of Barth's message is the Word of God. In

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<sup>44</sup>. Ibid., p. 88.



the discussion of the church, of proclamation, and of dogmatics or theology this has been evident. It is the Word of God which calls the church into existence, for without the revelatory efforts of God to man, there would and could be no Church. It is the Word of God which forms the basis of proclamation, for without this basis, proclamation becomes simply human utterance. It is the Word of God which arouses the theologian to a closer scrutiny of the Church's proclamation in its effort to arrive at the true meaning of its message.

The question which continually haunts everyone who has ever studied Barth is just what is the Word of God? According to Barth, it is God's Divine operation upon man. It is God's speaking to man. Because it is God speaking, not man speaking to himself nor any other part of the cosmos, it is different from all other events. It is the penetration of the Divine Will into this finite world. It happens not because of man's upsurge of feeling, nor because man feels the necessity for a new set of dogmas, values, or directions, but because God Wills it to happen.

Due to the foreign nature of the Word of God, the imposition of the Absolute upon the Relative, the Word of God can only hold for the moment. This has not been caused by God's limitation, but because we ourselves are the limited ones, unable to grasp that which is Eternal. So when the Absolute speaks, finite men hear, they know His voice, but



it is only for the moment.

. . . God and His Word are not presented to us in the way in which natural and historical entities are presented to us. We can never by retrospect, and so by anticipation, fix what God is or what His Word is. He must always repeat that to us and always repeat it afresh. But there is no human awareness corresponding to this divine utterance. In God's utterance there come to be a meeting and a communion between His nature and man, but not an absorption of this nature into man's awareness. There can only be a constant repetition of fresh divine utterance. . . .<sup>45</sup>

In the final analysis to the question of how one can know who is speaking, the answer which Barth has given is obvious. One can only know because God lets us know it is He. It is God's Word because He says so. It is God's mystery.

The Word of God, as man knows it, has always been in three forms, the Written Word, Proclamation, and in the Sacraments. Yet the Word of God is not written, is not Proclamation nor the Sacraments. The Word of God, though from a different atmosphere than the world, always occurs in conjunction with a worldly act. But it is not that act. This dualistic dogma can be found throughout Barth -- in Christ, in the Church, and in the Word of God. But Proclamation is the Word of God as God speaks through it; the Scriptures are the Word of God as God speaks through them; and the Sacraments are the Word of God as God uses them to speak to us.

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45. Ibid., p.149.



The language of God is and remains God's mystery above all in its worldliness (in the sense of belonging to the world: and so here passim). When God speaks to man, this happening is never so marked off from the rest of what happens that it might not promptly be also interpreted as a part of this other happening. The Church in fact is also a sociological entity with definite historical and structural features. Preaching in fact is also an address. Sacrament in fact is also a symbol in compromising proximity to all other possible symbols. The Bible in fact is also the document for the history of the religion of a tribe in Nearer Asia and of its Hellenistic offshoot. Jesus Christ in fact is also the Rabbi of Nazareth, historically so difficult to get information about, and when it is got, one whose activity is so easily a little commonplace alongside more than one other founder of a religion and even alongside many later representatives of His own 'religion.' And let us not forget that theology in fact, so surely avails itself of human speech, is also a philosophy or a conglomerate of all sorts of philosophy. Even the Biblical miracles do not burst these walls of worldliness. From the moment they took place they were interpreted otherwise than as proofs of the Word of God, and admittedly they may ever and anon be interpreted in a very different sense. The veil is thick. We do not possess the Word of God otherwise than in the mystery of its worldliness.

When one has examined the Bible, as Barth would see it, he then would see a purely fallible human book. From God's viewpoint, that which is contained there is a human attempt to reproduce the Divine Counsel and Wisdom as uttered to man. From man's viewpoint, the Bible is but a fruitless history of a wandering tribe.

. . . Literally we are, therefore, concerned with human attempts to repeat and reproduce

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46. Ibid. p. 188.



in human thoughts and expressions, this Word of God in definite human situations, e.g. in respect of the complications of Israel's political position midway between Egypt and Babylon, or of the errors and confusions in the Christian Church at Corinth between A.D. 50-60.<sup>47</sup>

Though only a human book, the Bible is of the utmost importance. This is because, it can become the Word of God. God is absolute sovereign as Barth has seen Him, and cannot be bound by any ties. As He chooses, He can and does make the Bible the Word of God. Thus, Barth has explained, God is not bound by His Word, but His Word is bound to Him. He chooses as He wills, and makes vital as He sees fit. No human fears, no human desires, can ever make or remove the Word of God.

. . . It takes place as an event, when and where the word of the Bible becomes God's Word, i.e. when and where the word of the Bible functions as the word of a witness, when and where John's finger points not in vain but really pointedly, when and where by means of its word we also succeed in seeing and hearing what he saw and heard. Therefore, where the Word of God is an event, revelation and the Bible are one in fact, and word for word one at that.<sup>48</sup>

Of equal importance, and side by side with its ability to become the Word of God, stands the fact that the Bible is the symbol of the Word of God. It proclaims the living message to the Church -- God has spoken. As the record of God's speaking in the past, it holds out the future hope that God

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47. Ibid., p. 127.

48. Ibid., p.



will again speak. Buoyed by this hope, the Church can be confident that she will always have a mission and a message in this world, and that God will not leave her comfortless, but will return again unto her.<sup>49</sup>

Thirdly, the unity of the Bible assures us of the unity of the Church and of proclamation.<sup>50</sup> This has been one of Barth's most difficult concepts to comprehend. The unity of the Bible does not guarantee that there will not be contradictions, nor does it guarantee that the Church will become united in one faith, for the Bible itself is full of contradictions. The unity here spoken of, can only be the unity of the principle behind the Word of God. That is, it will always be God speaking.--that the Church will always be the recipient, and that the method of givenness and the method of reception will always be united with those of old. In guaranteeing the unity of proclamation, he could not mean that the church will ever bear a united message to the world, but only that it will come from God, hence united. In the light of man's inadequacy, it could only be a unity of God's understanding, not of man's.

God has never spoken to man but in the veiledness of the flesh. His Word is cloaked by Proclamation, or by the word of the Bible. His supreme revelatory act, Christ, was veiled in the man, Jesus. This veiling causes a warp of

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49. Ibid., p. 124.

50. Ibid., p. 131.



the message so that it can be misunderstood or even missed by man. Barth has stated that this cosmos is in contradiction to God, and that any revelatory act through it must be made in spite of it, and not because of it.<sup>51</sup> Why then, does God reveal Himself in the flesh, or only in the veiledness of the cosmos?

. . . The facts are that God Himself veils himself and in the very process -- which is why we should not dream of intruding into the mystery -- unveils Himself. It is good for us that God acts exactly as He does, and it could be only fatal for us if He acted otherwise, if He were manifest to us in the way we should hold correct, directly and without veil, without worldliness or only in that harmless transparent form of it analogia entis. It would not be greater love and mercy, it would be the end of us and the end of all things if the Word were addressed to us thus.<sup>52</sup>

Reason again breaks down if one attempts to understand this mystery of God. One accepts it because he believes that God has ordained it, that in this way all is best for us.

But in our rational breakdown, one is even more helpless than the mere impossibility to understand God's reason for veiledness. Man cannot achieve the unveiling of the Word from its worldly content, so that to grasp God's Word, does not mean that men must be able to differentiate one from the other. If man attempts to grasp the Word of God by reason, he would see it first in its worldly form, as an

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51. Ibid., p. 189.

52. Ibid., p. 192.



event, which would be to think materially. Then man would conceive of the Word as spiritual, as full of Divine content. This would be thinking Idealistically. To be able to reason a synthesis would mean to attain the very miracle of God Himself in the mystery of His Veiledness in His Unveiling.

. . . In faith and in the thought of faith it is not a case of thinking this synthesis. Faith means rather recognising that this synthesis cannot be achieved, committing it to God and seeking to find it in God. By finding it in God we acknowledge that we cannot do it in ourselves and so can neither achieve it in a definite attitude in life nor think it systematically. But by committing it to God and seeking it in Him, we do find it, we hear the whole, the real word of God, i.e. now the divine content in its worldly form, now in the worldly form the divine content. . . 53

In spite of our inability to comprehend its mysteries, the Word of God speaks to us a new message, something which man could not have known otherwise. Its message meets us where we are, in the midst of the human situation and speaks the answer to our perplexity. It comes home to us more than any other experience of life, even more than death itself. It renews again the relationship which man has lost, because God's Word is personal. It is everywhere bound to the person of Christ, and as the Living Word, Incarnate, He is the message to us. In our desperate sinful state, this is indeed welcome news. Our human effort has led us to despair, but God's Word gives us strength to carry onward.

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53. Ibid., p. 200.



Man can never hope to escape the bondage of sin. This thought of faith, if we might call it a thought of faith, is a justified and sanctified thought, but this does not mean that in any way man is less defective, or even the thought is less defective.

. . . As such, and therefore without becoming different of and in itself, it is as the thought of faith, a justified and sanctified thought. But justification and sanctification by faith, means justification and sanctification by the object of faith, from God's side, without therefore the man of faith or his thought ceasing to be less defective. And because we cannot give ourselves faith, we cannot, therefore, by our thinking create for ourselves this justification and sanctification, cannot achieve Christianity in our thought or even merely establish its presence in ourselves or in others, can only believe in it as God's grace: believe, because of the fact that our thought from either side is faced with a wall which we can neither throw down nor make transparent, i.e. because of the unchristianity which cannot disown in our thought considered in and of itself. Thus believing now means hearing the divine content of the Word of God, although absolutely nothing, but the worldly form is discernable by us.<sup>54</sup>

In summary, it will be observed that Barth's system presents a complete breakdown of the human reason. It cannot adequately give to one a complete philosophy for in the midst of life one soon becomes aware of antithesis which cannot be solved. The resolution of the antithesis are known only to God Himself which must be accepted by faith. In this light, the relationship of faith and reason is purely

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54. Ibid., p. 200.



negative. Though God has given to man fleeting glimpses of light which reveal in a moment the solution to his dilemma, the glimpses themselves do not present a rational solution, but one which must be taken by faith alone. By faith alone, through the instrumentality of the Word of God, has man been able to see beyond the antinomies of existence into the world of God. The attestation of this fact has been given to man by that which is recorded in the Bible.



## CHAPTER III

### THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPT OF EMIL BRUNNER

#### A. BIOGRAPHY

Little information is available concerning the life of Emil Brunner. He was born in 1889 in Winterthur, Switzerland and grew to become one of the leading theologians of the Swiss Evangelical Church. Since 1924, with the exception of a brief interlude as guest professor at the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1938, he has been professor of Systematic Theology in Zurich, Switzerland.<sup>1</sup> At the present time, Doctor Brunner is under appointment to the new Japan International Christian University, located near Tokyo.<sup>2</sup>

As young men, Barth and Brunner, together with Eduard Thurneysen, constituted a group of young pastors in adjacent parishes in Switzerland. In the years directly after the war, these three in their study and discussions together made the discovery of the real meaning of the Word of God.<sup>3</sup> This moment became known as that time when the Dialectical The-

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1. W(alter) A(lexander) W(hitehouse), "Emil Brunner," Chamber's Encyclopedia (New York, Oxford University Press, 1950), B, 141.

2. "Dr. Brunner to Join Japan Christian University Faculty," The Telescope-Messenger, November 1, 1952, p. 4.

3. Emil Brunner, God and Man, trans. with an intro. by David Cairns (London, Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 35.



ology was given birth. Together, these three men labored to spread their new found philosophy. Needless to say, it faced tremendous opposition. Later, the three old friends of earlier days began to find divergences in their theologies and have chosen to go their separate ways.

#### B. BARTH AND BRUNNER

Before undertaking a thorough discussion of Emil Brunner's philosophy, a comparison of his approach with that of Karl Barth should be made. Barth's viewpoint is primarily that of the minister.<sup>4</sup> As a liberal minister, he pondered the problem of the authority of the pulpit. He realized that as he spoke, his words of advice, comfort and exhortation were eagerly grasped by the members of his congregation. These were people who were hard pressed by their everyday problems. Life and its meaning left them baffled and confused. But who was he, that he should offer them these words from the pulpit? Was not his word only that of a man? Was he not a man just as they, who was just as perplexed by the problems of the world? Why then did he presume to stand behind the sacred desk to issue advice and comfort when he too was in need? Barth came forth to meet this problem of every liberal minister with the positive affirmation that he spoke The Word of God.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Aubrey, op. cit., p. 89.

5. Cf. Ante., p. 29.



Brunner's dilemma is not so much concerned with the problem of the minister, as that of the apologist. It is not the message which the church must carry to its own constituents, but the message which she must carry against those who attack her.

The approach of Barth to theology is from the problem of what to preach. Brunner is a theological professor and sees the problem through the eyes of an intellectual facing the scientific, humanistic temper of the moderns, and throwing down the gauge to them. This is an important difference; because Brunner is forced to set his theology in relation not merely to the human needs of a parish but also to the intellectual needs of those seeking a reorientation of modern culture.<sup>6</sup>

One cannot conclude, however, that Brunner is not concerned with the ministry of the Church, nor Barth with the philosophical problems of the Church. The emphasis has merely been placed on a particular aspect of a total situation which both have recognized. There was merely a divergence of approach to the critical question of certainty. This does not, of course, preclude the possibility of their arriving at the same conclusions.

Another comparison which might be made between the two writers is that of style. Though not necessary for the formal interpretation of their writings, it does give keys into the type of character behind the writings. The divergence of style is great enough that it can readily be seen

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6. Aubrey, op. cit., p. 89.



although one is limited to reading the manuscripts only in translation. Of the two, Barth has given the impression of the profounder thinker, Brunner that of the best writer. Brunner's style might be characterized as lucid. Barth himself has spoken of Brunner's "uncanny clarity."<sup>7</sup> Brunner's attack is relatively methodical. No new step is undertaken until thorough discussion has been concluded upon the previous step which formed the foundational thought. Barth, on the other hand, gave the impression of grappling with ideas and problems too profound to be exactly expressed in words. Again and again, he has returned to the same subject in an endeavor to better express the idea which he intended. This is not only evident in the method of writing, but in the constant revision to which he subjects his works.<sup>8</sup>

The emphasis upon the relativistic environment in which the individual is found was not so great in Brunner as in Barth. However, Brunner has not ignored the relativistic attitude of modern scholars but has welcomed it as a sign of the thinkers' admission of the inability of the human reason to govern all truth.

. . . The profound upheavals of the last few years, the perception of the nature of a radically nihilistic intellectual outlook, have today made many people more inclined to listen to a clear witness to a revelation which is willing to recognize the legitimate claims of reason and culture. The relative attitude toward the whole question of truth is not always

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7. Brunner, God and Man, p. 36.

8. Cf. Ante., p. 18.



merely the desire to doubt, but very often, and particularly today, it is the admission of the insufficiency of human knowledge, and--in so far as this is the case--it is the sign of a secret longing for a truth which lies beyond the human plane. . . .<sup>9</sup>

### C. PRIMAL SIN

Brunner has visualized that all men are under the yoke of sin. The primal sin, as it afflicts all men, is the illusion which man has concerning his own autonomy. This autonomy, it should be noted, never has been a fact, but merely an illusion. This illusion has manifested itself in the subjection of all types of data to the human reason. It is the desire of every individual to govern the validity of every concept by his own reason. He alone has the only right to reach an objective decision. This, Brunner has declared, is the essence of sin.

. . . But the claim of Christian revelation goes further than this: through the revelation reason is placed in the wrong, namely, in all her attempts to comprehend and grasp the Divine which necessarily spring from reason. . . . But it is precisely this limitation which reason, or rather the rational man, does not like. Reason wishes to remain the supreme court of appeal. Reason does not wish to acknowledge the judgment passed on it by a unique fact. The will and the pride of reason rebel against faith. . . . Hence the real stumbling-block is not the theoretical paradox but the moral humiliation.<sup>10</sup>

It is, then, a fundamental axiom that God has granted

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9. Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, trans. by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 7.

10. Emil Brunner, The Mediator, trans. by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1927), p. 43.



to man knowledge of certain things. This was in spite of the fact that man's faculties have been darkened by sin. By the very nature of things, that is the nature of the world and the nature of the reason, man can know certainty.

. . . The works of God in the Creation are placed before the eyes of all, and reason is the endowment common to all men, and that which places them on a higher plane than that occupied by all the other creatures. The objective process of revelation, or the objective means of revelation, and the subjective capacity to receive revelation are made for each other. . . <sup>11</sup>

But it is the limitation of the human reason which man has refused to see. This is, in actuality, merely the self-deifying of man. This act, however, has not been committed by men in the name of reason any more than it has been committed by men in the name of religion and faith. In fact, one gets the impression that Brunner has looked more hopefully to those who do not thus err in the name of faith. An examination of the critical points on which Brunner believed the Church had erred should help to throw additional light on that problem.

The Church, in her interpretation of the meaning of "faith," has lost that which is vital for the maintenance of her existence. The reason for this mistake can be found in the Church's response to heresy. Because of false doctrines, the church found it necessary to define who was and who was not an unbeliever. Upon everyone who was formally

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11. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 68.



taken into the Orthodox Church, a set of carefully prepared dogma was imposed. To this he must acquiesce or be stigmatized as a heretic. Gradually the true object of faith was dropped and dogma substituted.

A "believer" is no longer, as in the New Testament a person who has been claimed and transformed by Jesus Christ, but a person who accepts what the Church offers him as divinely revealed doctrine, since he is aware that either the Bible or the doctrinal authority of the Church constitutes an authority to which he must submit without question.<sup>12</sup>

The Church has also grievously erred in her doctrine of the Bible. This error occurred in the Protestant churches in their desire for surety against the Roman Catholic charges of heresy. The Bible became an outward sign and symbol to which they could refer in defense of Protestant doctrine. Gradually the Bible became merely a set of doctrines rather than a real guide to vital faith. Faith was then transferred to it, rather than the true object for which faith was intended.

. . .The habit of regarding the written word, the Bible, as the "Word of God" exclusively--as is the case in the traditional equation of the "word" of the Bible with the "Word of God"--an error which is constantly on the verge of being repeated--is actually a breach of the Second Commandment: it is the deification of a creature, bibliolatry.<sup>13</sup>

Another mistake of the Church, which has a very close

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12. Ibid., p. 9.

13. Ibid., p. 120.



connection with the preceeding two, has been her misuse of doctrine. With her doctrines, the Church has attempted to construct an entire world view. That is, the church has subjected herself to the illusion that all reality, including God Himself can be known in a rationally ordered set of doctrines. This has come about through the unholy wedlock of Christian thought to Greek philosophy. Thus God can be proved to be from the order of nature around him. To Brunner, this is a supreme delusion.

The self-confidence of the reason is nowhere more evident than in the attempt to prove the existence of God.<sup>14</sup>

#### D. FAITH AND REASON

The heart of Brunner's criticism can be found in his meaning of the word, "faith." His criticism of the Church was basically the fact that "faith" has no longer the meaning of "faith," and has been changed to reason. Instead of faith in God, Christianity now asserted it has faith in reason because by that method she can know God. Instead of faith in God, dogma has been substituted, particularly as found in the doctrinization of the Bible. Thus the church had faith in a book, not in God.

To make the distinction clear between faith and knowledge, Brunner has set forth the ways in which faith differs from reason. But though faith differs from reason, it was

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14. Ibid., p. 338.



only through faith that reason could preserve and maintain its true validity.

Revealed knowledge is poles apart from rational knowledge. . . Jesus Christ is not the enemy of reason, but only of the irrational arrogance of those who pride themselves on their intellect, and of the irrational self-sufficiency of reason. . . In spite of this, however, it remains our duty to inquire into the positive relation between the two, precisely because we must make this contradiction intelligible.<sup>15</sup>

The process of reason, as it is related to this world, has given to man during the process of history, a gradual command over his objects of knowledge. Thus man has gradually been able to make this world an easier place to live through the progress of science. Revealed knowledge, however, is in direct contrast to this type of knowledge.

. . . Natural acquisition of secular knowledge makes us masters of that which we know. . . God through His revelation, becomes Lord over me; He makes me His property; by this very fact I become free, and indeed only then do I develop my true "I".<sup>16</sup>

Reason has enabled man to accumulate a vast amount of data concerning the world around him. Many men of today are acquainted with almost every aspect of life as it is known in this world. But revealed knowledge, which comes by faith, is not of this nature.

. . . The knowledge of revelation does not add to my knowledge; it does not make me "educated";

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15. Ibid., p. 11.

16. Ibid., p. 26.



it does not enlarge my "sphere," but it transforms me myself; it changes the one who receives it. . . .<sup>17</sup>

The knowledge of faith is in antithesis with the ordinary knowledge of reason for still another reason. Rational knowledge is gained in a solitary process. When man has finally mastered a particular subject of study, this mastery is his alone. There is no sharing of the actual learning process because he cannot learn for someone else. True, he could share his new found learning, but the one with whom he shared must likewise learn for himself or it would not be his own. Brunner has stated that revealed knowledge is a process that is exactly opposite to this one.

. . . In revelation, however, the exact opposite takes place: since God makes Himself known to me, I am no longer solitary; the knowledge of God creates community, and indeed community is precisely the aim of the divine revelation.<sup>18</sup>

#### E. ORIGINAL REVELATION

The presupposition to revelation, is sin. If there were no sin, there would be no necessity for revelation. Though sin is and can be a state, that is, the state of being far distant from God, primarily sin is the act of rejection of God. This act of wilful disobedience is not static, in other words, but it is dynamic.

. . . Sin, fundamentally, is the revolt of the creature against the Creator, the attempt of

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17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 26.



the creature to escape from dependence on God, in order not to be under God, and related to God, but to be without God, that is, not only to be conditionally, but unconditionally free. . .<sup>19</sup>

The presupposition to sin, is original knowledge of God. If man is to turn away from God, must he not know from whom he turns? This knowledge of sin, of lost possession dominates man's life. He may and probably will do his best to ignore his lost condition, but ever again is he reminded of his desperation.

. . . Sin, however, is a conception connoting personal action, active personality. Sin means that I am in wrong relation to God and that I have torn myself away from an original divinely given possibility. Sin means, then, neither a "not-yet" as evolutionism says, nor a "not-now" as the moralists say: it is a "no-longer." It is an alienation, a disrupted relation, a having left the Father. . . Guilt, as a necessary aspect of evil, presupposes that the original fellowship with God is broken. Something has happened over which we have no longer any control; and the damage is beyond our ability to repair. Only when sin is defined as guilt is evil comprehended in its personal form. It is not something that is wrong between God and myself. Evil is not a something between God and man; it is myself in the wrong position. When this position is taken, I cannot change it. Guilt means the loss of ability to return to my original place. Evil is taken really seriously only when it is understood as guilt.<sup>20</sup>

However, if one supposes that this break with the

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19. Ibid., p. 50.

20. Emil Brunner, The Theology of Crisis (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 54.



Father can be conceived of as an historical event, an occurrence which can be dated and known by the sinner, he is mistaken. Without revelation, and its knowledge, man can be almost blissfully unaware of any sense of guilt. But when God has spoken, when one has been confronted by that which has been revealed, then he suddenly becomes aware of the intense span which has separated him from God.

. . . Hence the converse is also true; the more personal is our relation to God, the more plainly do sin and guilt stand out. The obstacle which blocks the way, the great boulder on the path, owes its weight to the divine nearness, through which guilt is maintained, so that it cannot be dispelled by any specious arguments: thus our sense of guilt is due to the presence of the Divine Holiness.<sup>21</sup>

According to Brunner, man has been separated from all other creatures by the fact of responsibility. The core of human personality is not rationality but responsibility. To a limited extent, psychologists have demonstrated that animals do have intelligence, but none but man feels guilt. To think of God, is for man to feel his own sinfulness and guilt. He is ever impressed, if he chooses to think seriously, of the impassible span which has separated him from God. But every rational act of man reflects his responsibility, his relationship to God. Man cannot think of number without also the thought of infinite number. He cannot state the truth without thinking in turn of absolute truth. This does

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21. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 320.



not mean that simply because of the awareness of reason to God, that man can really know God through reason. Reason simply has made man constantly aware of his own responsibility.

. . .The reason is not God; but what it is and does can be understood only in the light of the original revelation. Man's reason therefore is also the cause of his eternal unrest, due to the fact that it is derived from God and has been made for God. It is precisely the activity of the reason which is the unmistakable sign that man comes from God, and from a divine revelation, even when the activity of the reason takes the form of denying God.<sup>22</sup>

In the above quotation, Brunner has man involved in one of his many paradoxes. Though man has attempted to make reason supreme, it is precisely this rational activity which constantly has reminded him of his guilt. Reason, in its very attempt to make itself supreme, does in that very act, indicate that it is derived, hence not God. This is called by Brunner, original revelation.

Original revelation is closely connected with Brunner's concept of revelation in creation. Revelation has always been apparent to men in the works of God. It was most reasonable for him to assume God from creation, but it did not lead to a knowledge of God. This has not been the fault of the revelation, but the fault lay in man. Hence, through general revelation, man's responsibility has been pressed upon him. Having known of God, man refused to use his knowledge aright until God has spoken personally to him through

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22. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 56.



special revelation.

Thus we see clearly that while the Bible teaches a general revelation, or a revelation in the Creation, it does not teach "natural theology." . . . Rather, it is an integral part of the sin of man that the knowledge of God which begins to dawn upon him through revelation is suppressed by him, so that the revelation which God gives him for knowledge of Himself becomes the source of the vanity of idolatry. . . .<sup>23</sup>

There has ever been only one true theology. But true theology can only arise in an environment conducive to its growth. This is a Christian environment. That atmosphere of which knowledge must partake, Brunner has stated is the attitude of belief.

. . . Dogmatic thinking is not only thinking about the faith, it is believing thinking. There may be various ways of solving the problem of the theory of knowledge which this raises: this, in any case, is the claim which dogmatics makes without which its effort ceases to be dogmatics, and it becomes the neutral science of religion. . . .<sup>24</sup>

As one examines these statements, it becomes evident that although right thinking is possible, right thinking is not probable. The man untouched by the Word of God, naturally suppressed the message of general revelation, while dogmatics was only possible in the attitude of "believing thinking." This perversion of reason has been caused by the fall of man. This faculty has remained, to deny the fact would be absurd, for through this alone, could man be made a truly responsible

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23. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 65.

24. Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, trans. by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1950), p. 5.



creature. What man has lost, is the moral direction which reason originally had, that is, the right use of the reason. The Old Testament understanding of the Image of God which considered the reason in itself did not consider the image as lost, for that is what makes man, man. The New Testament, considering the moral nature of the Image, has concluded that the Image has been lost.

. . . All that is left of the divinely created nature of man is the rational nature, but not the right attitude of the reason, in conformity with the will of God. Thus, in point of fact, the imago, understood in the Old Testament sense, is merely a "Relic" of the original, total imago. . .<sup>25</sup>

One might well ask, what is the content of general revelation. Brunner has answered this by stating that man does have a concept of law. Human existence without law, without an idea of right and wrong coupled together with a moral idea would be impossible. That the idea of right and wrong often differs in cultures throughout the world is not important. What is important is the fact of law.

Therefore, the moment that human consciousness exists the problem of ethics is raised, the question of right conduct must be faced. Further, it is also impossible to avoid setting up a principle of order, a definite scale of values to express preference, whatever theoretical position may be afterwards adopted towards this principle. For we cannot make the smallest decision save in the light of a superior purpose

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25. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 70.



a norm, a commandment; indeed, we cannot avoid having one supreme idea of purpose and order-- although this may be still very indistinct, and we may be only dimly aware of it. . .26

Natural man, however, not only has this "Thou Shalt" of Kantian ethics, but also, the "Therefore I Can." Again the illusion of autonomous man has reared its ugly head. The distorted natural ethic has failed to really note the heart of the divine message of general revelation, that man is sinner. Not only did natural reason fail to notice the real message, in the very act of misconstruing the message, he committed even grosser sin. Basically, the natural man thinks he is good. He ever realizes that he does not do what he is commanded, but if ever he would really put himself to the task, that is really ever become morally in earnest, then he could keep the law. This is a complete perversion of the message that man is sinner.

Further, it is this very moral effort in itself, or rather the assumption which is bound up with it, that the Good can be attained along this path, which is evil. For this is the evidence of self-confidence, self-security, self-reference, belief in the power to redress the situation for and by oneself. Therefore evil does not come out most clearly, in its most obvious form, where natural morality looks for it, namely, in vice, in moral reprobation which everyone can recognize as such, but it appears in the self-righteousness of the legalist, whether the latter be a Pharisee, who regards himself as justified in the sight of God, or a Stoic, who suns himself in his own Divine

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26. Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative, trans. by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1947), p. 18.



goodness, or the mystical saint, who thinks that he has traversed all the stages of sanctification to the end. These all walk in the way of the just, thinking that this path will lead them to the goal. They are all living under the illusion that the Good is that which they are able to realize. None of them know that God alone is good.<sup>27</sup>

#### F. THE NATURE OF GOD

From the necessity of revelation considered from the viewpoint of man, the thought of revelation can be considered from the viewpoint of God. The necessity of revelation can be found in the very nature of God. Again, this will cast new light on the nature of revelation for revelation to be revelation must have two poles. If revelation were not adequately adapted to man, then it would not be revelation at all. If it were not adequately adapted to the nature of God, it would not be revelation at all. For revelation must both reveal and be received to be true revelation. Without reception nothing is revealed, without content, nothing could be revealed.

God, by His very nature, is not the God of the concept of philosophical thought. A man-thought God is not that God which has revealed himself to men in history.

Whatever the content of the philosophical ideas of God may be in detail one trait of character is common to all: it is a man-thought God, a God who is found by way of thinking, or negatively it is not a God who reveals himself in

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27. Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 70.



history. . . Even if we knew nothing else of the philosophical idea of God than this one thing, that it is reached or acquired by philosophical thinking, we would know by that the most essential thing, namely that this God is not a God of revelation. . .<sup>28</sup>

This has brought us once again to the traditional proofs given for God. It has already been demonstrated that Brunner feels that the very attempt to find a logical necessity for God is in itself an arrogant attempt of the autonomous man. While Faith, which has contact with the God who is ever revealing Himself, has no interest in the traditional proofs, nevertheless they do demonstrate that reason leads toward God.

. . . No "proof of the existence of God" leads to the Lord God; by this I do not mean that such "proofs" have no value, but that they do not lead to the knowledge of the Living God.<sup>29</sup>

The God of logical necessity cannot be a Personal God. It is the very nature of personality that it cannot be known through reason. One knows personality only as it reveals itself. Though this is relatively true concerning human personality, God is the Absolute Personality making this an Absolute truth. As logical necessity, God is robbed of Personality and the Absolute Freedom which the God who reveals Himself has demonstrated.

Here a remark on "person" may be useful. What is personality as distinguished from anything else? A person is a being of such a

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28. Emil Brunner, The Scandal of Christianity (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1951), p. 33.

29. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 45.



kind that we cannot ourselves think it, but it reveals itself to us in an act of revelation. What I myself think is the object of my thought. Even when I think God as personal being this God is the object of my thought and therefore not truly personal. He can be something different from an object of thought only if it is not myself who think him, but himself who reveals himself by an act of self-disclosure. Everything which I think myself, or the reality which is disclosed by my own mental activity, is therefore not a person. A person is that unique being which discloses itself and therefore enters into my thought-world, so to say, as a stranger, affirming itself as an I in its own right. In my own thought-world I am the unchallenged centre, I am the subject of all objects of my thought, and by that, so to say master of them all. When, however, a person encounters me, a rival world-centre faces me, a kind of being which refuses to be a part of my thought system. This is the absolutely unique fact of meeting a Thou. God as personal God is the God who does not allow himself to be placed amongst the objects of my thought, but claims not only to be a self, like myself, but the real centre of all I's and I-worlds. And this is exactly what is meant by the Lord God revealing himself as Lord. Perhaps this becomes clearer when we come to consider the second fundamental trait of the revealed essence of God, namely divine love and mercy.<sup>30</sup>

To return for a moment to general revelation, it can be clearly seen that the vital reason that man cannot know God in this manner, is because in general revelation, God cannot be known as Person. Only as God speaks to us, in the Special Revelation of His Person, can man really know Him. Where can one then expect to encounter this Special Revelation of His Person? One would naturally turn to the Bible

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30. Brunner, The Scandal of Christianity, p. 41.



as the greatest single witness to revelation, and examine its contents to learn of the nature of revelation.

Brunner has often referred to the Bible as the Word of God. It is this, only by virtue of the fact, and only in so far as it bears witness to Christ. To call the Bible the Word of God does not in anyway imply that it is infallibly inspired.

First of all comes the tradition of historical facts, as they appear in the Gospels, in the book of Acts, and, to some extent, also in the Epistles. This early tradition was guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, but was also a product of human research and selection, and, therefore, it is not verbally inspired. Even this simple tradition of facts is intended to be a witness of faith, a testimony to Christ; it is the tradition of the kerygma. No one today who keeps his eyes open to facts fails to be aware that this tradition has certain errors and inconsistencies. At the present time only an ignorant or insincere person can produce a complete "Harmony of the Gospels," or an account which reconciles all contradictions in the reports of the Lucan and the Pauline explanations and discussions. The Apostles who, in the "Council of the Apostles," first strove with one another before they could come to a common decision, are also in their accounts of events not free from inconsistency and error.<sup>31</sup>

#### G. THE BIBLE

It might be inserted here that the Church also can deliver the Word of God. Its relationship, however, must be the same as that of the Bible to Christ. Exposition of the

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31. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 128.



Bible is not a necessity, but the Word of the Church must be in harmony with the Person of Christ.

The Word is preached not only where the discourse is explicitly expository in character, but it is preached wherever Jesus Christ is proclaimed in harmony with the witness of the Bible. God is not a "Book God;" what matters is not the Book, but the Person. The statement "We have not Christ apart from the Bible," is true for the Church as a whole; it is only indirectly true for the individual who passes on his faith to another, or who receives faith from another. . . The decisive element, the process of creation, may happen without the opening of a Bible at all, without the quotation of a text from the Bible. But it cannot take place apart from the fact that the one who gives his testimony lives in the Bible, and in a Christian community, which is spiritually nourished by the whole expository tradition of the Church.<sup>32</sup>

Returning to the thought of the witness found to Christ in the Bible, one can find this witness in several forms. The primary witness is that given by the disciples as the Word of God broke through to them. Their first witness was a response to this revelation, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."<sup>33</sup> This is the word of personal encounter. From this word of personal encounter, the word of witness was changed to teaching, the telling about Jesus. Although this was a direct result of the first experience, it is only a secondary witness to Christ.

The Old Testament has found its way into the canon because it also bears witness to Christ. This does not mean that it has the same viewpoint as the New Testament. In

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32. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 141.

33. Matthew 16:16.



fact, it has an altogether different viewpoint, for the Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Christ, while the New Testament looks back as the mission accomplished. Christ is the unity of all revelation, whether Biblical or that given to the church at a later date.

The unity found throughout the Bible does not mean the unity of doctrine. It is not a unity of doctrine, but a unity of the divine revealing action. In order to maintain unity of doctrine, one is continually caused painful embarrassment because of the differences in the historical situation. The doctrine is not the same because of the limitations of the human recipient of revelation, for one act of revelation builds upon another, and without the first the second would not be understood.

. . . When, however, men try to read the same truths into the Old Testament as are in the New, they are not using Scriptural exegesis, but allegory. On the other hand, expositors who fail to see the Old Testament reveals and bears witness to the same God who speaks to us in the New Testament are not expounding the Scriptures in harmony with their central message. . .<sup>34</sup>

The basic reason that the attempt to make the Bible a unity of doctrine was in error was that it destroyed this one central purpose of the Bible. The purpose, according to Brunner, is to reveal Christ. It is the revelation of His person. As one changes the Bible into unity of doctrine,

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34. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 197.



the focus faith is turned away from God to absolute truths. The idea of personal encounter which takes place by faith will be lost. Doctrine only serves its purpose by examining the message of the Church to see if it fosters this personal encounter. But this doctrine, is in itself, not an attempt to arrive at final truth through reason.

. . . In order to achieve as correct a doctrine as possible, we must take pains to express it ever more truly and clearly, and yet we must not imagine that we have really said "it" when we have dissected and refined our definitions a hundred times over. Were Christ not the Word made flesh, the content of the definite doctrinal statements of Apostles or Prophets, all this effort would be in vain; but because He Himself is the Word, and therefore can never be fully expressed in human words, no doctrinal formation, however excellent, can claim to be the Word of God itself, or even the infallibly "correct" doctrine, which has been formulated and laid down once for all.<sup>35</sup>

Apostolic doctrine about Christ cannot be harmonized. Often contradictory, from this viewpoint and that, the Apostles sought in vain to express the Person of Christ. But He is beyond human words and human powers of comprehension.

That which makes it so important that the Bible be judged in the light of the person of Christ is that He is the revelation. For this reason revelation must be personal encounter. The words of prophets in the Old Testament bore authority because they had received them from God. But the identity of the prophets was of little importance. Their

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35. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 153.



authority was given them in the message of God. In Christ the message and the authority have been brought down to one. He is the message to the world, the supreme revelation, as no one else could ever be.

Concerning revelation and Biblical criticism, Brunner is more in difficulty than is Barth. The message of revelation is a little more closely connected with this world. To Barth, Biblical criticism simply does not matter. At this point Brunner charged Barth with Docetism. In so far as the Bible witnessed to us concerning Christ, Brunner believed one must accept it. It is the message of faith, not that of reason. In so far as the Bible witnessed to natural events, to things of this world, Brunner did not object to the scrutiny of higher criticism. In fact, he welcomed it for the part it played in the destruction of Bibliolatry.

. . .He binds us to the Scripture, in so far as it witnesses to Christ, in so far as it discloses the will of God and His nature, but not in so far as it teaches us ordinary facts about the world. The letter of the Bible is not the object of faith, but the means of the divine self-revelation. . .We are not told to "believe in the Scriptures," but in faith in Christ to know and to experience the word of Scripture as the word of God.<sup>36</sup>

Whether Brunner has escaped from the dilemma which has so plagued the so-called Orthodox groups is doubtful. He must constantly be defining that which is of Christ and that which

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36. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 181.



is of the world, and is constantly in danger of completely denying the world and falling into mysticism. Already, he admitted that some criticism has gone too far, that it must be tempered. But in the long run, Biblical criticism, he feels, did Christianity a favor. By destroying a false faith in the Bible, men are now able by the aid of the witness of the Holy Spirit to leap over the barriers of historical relativism and become contemporary with Christ, in a sense not even Pontius Pilate could ever become a contemporary.

#### H. THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF TRUE FAITH

Even though faith is a personal encounter with Christ, though revelation comes from a sphere outside the legitimate bounds of reason, yet the message of revelation is adapted to man and passes through a process of rational understanding by the recipient.

. . . Revelation is always a mystery but it is never magic. In revelation the unconditioned and the conditioned subjects, the Absolute, the Infinite, and the creaturely spirit meet. Therefore, revelation always passes through a process of understanding by man. Even if revelation creates a new understanding, it does not create this without laying claim upon the natural understanding. . . .<sup>37</sup>

True faith is never a neutral act such as the assent given to what the Church has set up as infallible dogma. True faith is the giving of oneself completely into the

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37. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 15.



control and power of the Saviour. This is not done blindly, but it is done because man has become convinced that this is what is best for him. These convincements are in the sphere of the rational, in the sphere of the comprehension of the natural understanding, which tell him the need of a complete surrender.

To use an illustration from ordinary human life, "faith" in the genuine, Biblical, sense is not the acceptance of the statement of a reliable authority, but it is the relation of trust in another person; it is personal relation between two human beings. It is true, of course that the personal act of trust, obedience, and love is preceded by some elements of objective knowledge--as also they precede the act of faith--but they are not the personal act itself. . . . When I give myself to God in the obedience of faith, I become free from the anxious intensity of self-absorption, and I love my neighbor as myself. For when I give myself to God, I will what He will, I love with His love. . . .<sup>38</sup>

The knowledge which has come by faith does not destroy reason. It merely sets it aright. That which is destroyed, is the arrogance and the pride which has tended to make the reason to become its own God.

. . . The Word of God, which in its decisive content, as the word of the Cross, is folly and scandal to my natural reason, is the divine hammer which knocks on the closed door of the autonomous self-imprisoned reason. But it does not destroy reason; rather, it liberates it, by setting it free from the curse of sin, namely, from that illusion of autonomy, the desire to being like God, and it reverses the Fall, which consisted in the fact that man wanted to eat of the fruit

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38. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 39.



of the tree in the center of the garden, as well as the fruit of the other trees, in order that he might be equal with God.<sup>39</sup>

This leaves to reason the field of its legitimate concern, the world. In this field the reason ought to dominate, for man must progress. Thus, true faith is not opposed to Science as long as Science does not go beyond the sphere of her legitimate area.

. . . On the other hand, there is nothing wrong in the insistence on autonomy in the sphere of knowledge; indeed, this should be recognized as the proper goal of knowledge. In everything which concerns this world, it is part of our destiny and our duty to seek, as far as possible, to reach our "own" knowledge by the use of our reason. . . The autonomy of the knowledge of this world is enveloped in the theonomy of the knowledge of God. We cannot, and ought not, to try to know God in the same way that we know the world. We are intended to know Him, and can know Him only through His own Word, from His own self-revelation.<sup>40</sup>

# I. THE DEFENSE OF FAITH

The world continually has called upon the Church to prove that the truth which She has, has been Divinely revealed. By this challenge, the world has been able cleverly to entangle the Church in a question, the very presupposition of which eliminated the possibility of its being answered. To prove this truth is, of necessity, to give the

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39. Ibid., p. 179.

40. Ibid., p. 177.



rational grounds for it. This is beyond the sphere of reason.

. . . Were faith to try to deal with the unreasonable demands implied in that question, by which it is confronted, it would no longer be faith at all. Revelation, as the Christian faith understands it, is indeed, by its very nature, something that lies beyond all rational arguments; the argument which it certainly claims in its support does not lie in the sphere of rational knowledge, but in the sphere of that divine truth which can be attained only through divine self-communication, and not through human research of any kind. That question or assumption therefore proceeds from an a priori rejection of revelation, from the denial of the possibility of a knowledge that transcends rational knowledge. Hence it is the question of doubt or of unbelief.<sup>41</sup>

The Church, instead of permitting the world to scorn because She refuses to answer this question, must in her turn gain the offensive. She must not only demonstrate to the world the illegitimacy of this question, but also take the offensive by revealing the insufficiency of reason to subjugate all things, even God Himself, to itself.

While the autonomous reason maintains that it must be possible to incorporate all that is true into the sphere of the criteria which it has itself set up--reason that is transcendent is said to be untrue--faith reverses the whole problem, and shows that it is precisely this demand that falsifies knowledge and the concept of truth. It is not that God and His truth must have room within the sphere of reason, but reason and its truth must find its place in God. For it is not man who is the measure of all things, but God. Within the truth of revelation all that reason knows and recognizes falls into place. Faith

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41. Ibid., p. 205.



does not come into conflict with reason itself, but with the imperialism of the human reason; we must, however, add that this "imperialism" or this "illusion of autonomy" is not a matter that affect certain people only, but it is common to all the sons of men.<sup>42</sup>

#### J. THE RECEPTION OF REVELATION

Throughout his writings, particularly in his book which dealt specifically with the problem, Revelation and Reason, Brunner has attempted to lay aside the stigma of irrationalism by which he has been known. His defensive effort has been turned into an offense by his charge that basically the ones who oppose him are the ones who are the irrationalists. Man yields to faith because he has been convinced rationally that it is in his own best interest. Faith does not destroy reason, it strengthens it. It shatters the self-centeredness of reason and imparts to it the quality of objectivity.

Brunner, however, believes that reason does have a positive relationship to faith. This relationship is in the process of cloaking of revelation which God does to permit man to receive it. It is the garb of flesh which enables the spiritual to be seen and understood by the one to whom the message is intended.

To the Greek, He comes as one who speaks Greek, to the Chinese as one who speaks Chinese, in order that man may be able to understand Him, just as a tall man will bend down

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<sup>42</sup>. Ibid., p. 213.



to a little child and take him on his knee in order that he may be able to look into his face. God does not talk over the heads of His human children, and He does not pour His Spirit into their hearts by force; but He speaks to them in a way that they can understand. The understanding of the Word--in so far as it is the grammatical and logical understanding of something that has been said; also in so far as it is the grammatical and logical understanding of the preaching of the Gospel--is an act of mental and rational self-activity on the part of man. Without this rational self-activity on the part of man no faith arises. We do not say that faith is this rational self-activity of man, but that it is the logical grammatical understanding of that which is said, even if said by an Apostle or a Prophet; without this mental, rational self-activity the Word of God cannot be understood; without it no faith arises. Reason is the conditio sine qua non of faith.<sup>43</sup>

One can still understand this part of the revelation of God and yet not have faith. The message of Jesus or the Apostles can be understood perfectly by all rational men, and yet there may be a failure of all of them to obtain faith. On the other hand the same message may be apprehended by the most rabid believer and still no act of faith occur. It is only when the message comes home to man, when it speaks to him in his sinful condition of his sinful condition, that man makes the act of faith.

In this judgment on man, which, it is true, is not given by faith, but with the aid of faith, the naked reality of man's need stands out clearly. Hence this judgment includes all that man already knew about himself--that he is in distress; that he is sinful,

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<sup>43</sup>. Ibid., p. 417.



guilty; that he is dissatisfied with his existence. Only now, however, do all these perceptions come wholly to the surface, whereas formerly they were forcibly suppressed. Now alone, do they come out into the open, just as they are without any illusions, no longer repressed by the censor of the self which loves itself and is anxious about itself, but in the stern severity of the truth, which sees things as they are in the merciless light of the law. Here all "immanent" self-knowledge comes into its own, only without all the modifications connected with the insistence on the autonomy of the reason. Thus faith does not reject the rational judgment of man on himself, but it merely impels man to express fully what previously he had only half admitted. Faith forces the reason to complete honesty. For it is only in this honesty, which unveils man's real situation as a whole, that faith--or, rather, Christ--can speak His own word, which was not within man's power at all. Here, then, something quite new emerges, a paradoxical self-knowledge, namely, identification with Christ: Christ my Righteousness.<sup>44</sup>

It might be concluded then, that faith in its true nature, becomes evident in the light of the fall of man. Faith does not shatter the reason, it sets it once more aright. No longer does reason suppress what it knows to be true, that man is sinner, but it accepts through the enabling power which comes by faith the truth of reason's own self-centeredness and insufficiency. Faith has done its work. The Divine Person has revealed Himself. That flash of recognition having gone, reason once again resumes its arrogant ways until once again it is struck down by the revelation of the Divine Holiness.

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<sup>44</sup>. Ibid., p. 426.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONSERVATIVE POSITION OF E.J. CARNELL

#### A. BIOGRAPHY

Edward John Carnell is one of the bright lights of American Conservatism. Relatively only a young man, the future gives hope for his becoming one of the great apologists of this age. In addition to the publishing of three books concerning Christian philosophy, Carnell not only has won the William Brenton Greene Jr. prize in Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, but also first prize in Eerdmans Evangelical Book Award Competition in 1948.<sup>1</sup>

Carnell received his college training at Wheaton College. After attending Westminster Theological Seminary, he also attended Boston University, from which he received the degree of Ph.D. and Harvard Divinity School from which he received the Th.D. degree. He has taught at Gordon College of Theology and Missions in Boston and Gordon Divinity School, Brookline, Massachusetts. At present, he is instructor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.<sup>2</sup>

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1. From the Book Cover of An Introduction to Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948).

2. Ibid.



While attending Boston University, Carnell was greatly influenced by the teachings of Professor E.S. Brightman, from whom he has borrowed much in his epistemological study. Under no circumstance, however, can this be taken as an implication that Carnell has necessarily reached the same conclusions as did Dr. Brightman. This could only be determined by a thorough study of both men which is beyond the scope of this paper.

## B. THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

Carnell has started where man is. In the gradual unfolding of day to day occurrences, the greatest problem which faces every individual is the problem of happiness. It is evident that by happiness he does not mean it in the hedonistic sense of the term. This is a happiness which involves final ends, not the immediate satisfaction of our desires and wants. Bound to the earth by his physical being, man has been subjected to pain, disfigurement, disease, and worst of all, death. But freed from this environment, man's soul can soar above the grime and the mire of mere physical existence and envision ideal existence. In this existence, the problems of his own physical existence disappear into what man believes to be the ideal existence. What he envisions and the method by which these ideals are to be gained are simply known as values.

That which men choose seeking an increase of happiness is known as a value. Nothing



mystical about it, a value is simply anything which we prize or esteem. Values comprise the very stuff of satisfaction, the magnetic power which draws a free man into commitment.<sup>3</sup>

In this quest for happiness as found and made objective in the choice of values, man's greatest issue which must be settled is that of certainty. The possibility of values which might be chosen are infinite in number, but man's time here on earth is limited. At best, one can only scan a few of the multitude of possibilities. How then can he hope to know with certainty that he has the truth?

Carnell, to aid in the search for values, has attempted to set up what he believes to be a working criteria. Without some sort of criteria man would be floundering about without direction or goal. Whether man does so knowingly or not, he must have purpose, whether it be immediate satisfaction or long range and ultimate happiness. In some way, man must attempt to link his ideal world with the world which he experiences in the cold and hard facts of physical existence.

If the practical problem of man is dispelling the fear of death through a successful union of the ideal and empirical worlds, the theoretical problem is the location of a rational connection between these realms. Philosophically this difficulty is known as the problem of the one within the many. The many are the particulars of the time-space universe while the one is the logical or teleological connection between

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3. Edward John Carnell, A Philosophy of the Christian Religion (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. 16.



them.<sup>4</sup>

The problem of the one and the many has always been one of the vital points of philosophy. Empirically, man has gathered the facts of reality, rationally he has attempted to place them into a logical system. On the one hand, if man has ignored the reason in his philosophy, it will be slanted toward the many. Consequently, everything in reality will be observed in the state of change. Empirically, man has always been impressed by the vicissitude of nature. But, on the other hand, if man withdraws from empirical observation so far as to place nearly all the emphasis upon the rational, he forgets the cosmos of movement. From the many, he sees the one. Becoming is forgotten in the light of rational being. Only the eternal, changeless realm is the real.

We are still tempted to make an either/or affair of what must be a both/and. We cannot choose between logic and experience. Without logic our experience cannot be normative; without experience our logic cannot be relevant to the human situation. This problem, like the poor, is always with us.<sup>5</sup>

The Christian view of reality, then, must include both points of view, ignoring neither the rational nor the empirical. To form this unity, Carnell has stated his criteria for truth as systematic consistency. If a truth is stated and proven without doubt, then it necessarily implies the falsity of its

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4. Edward John Carnell, An Introduction to Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 29.

5. Ibid., p. 39.



contradiction. Hence, any system of philosophy must first of all be proven to be consistent. But sheer consistency is not sufficient, for if the philosophy does not pertain to the actual world in which man has found himself, then his philosophy is of no value to him. So man must also be able to observe the facts of sensory data which have come to him in the totality of his experience. The mistake of the rationalist has been the attempt which he has made to find a rational relationship between the many parts of the empirically observed flux.

. . . Truth is a systematic account of reality. We do not wait until we can see rational connections in reality before we affirm such reality. The reason for this is two-fold. First, if we waited until we saw the rational connection between things, we would not know anything in nature. There is no demonstrable reason why one atom of oxygen and two atoms of hydrogen should logically form that colorless fluid called water. Science describes nature by showing us that this combination always produces water, but there is no law of logic which says that it must. Second, and here we presuppose the Christian major premise, the discrete facts of the empirical universe are related to each other, not by demonstrable necessity, but the teleology. The world is knit together according to a plan which existed in the mind of the Creator. The relation, therefore, between the number of goats in Albania to the weight of the nearest star, or the relation between the depth of the Atlantic Ocean in its center to the death of Christ on the cross, is teleological. God freely elected to create the world. There was no antecedent compulsion, either from within or without, which determined that God should make this world, rather than another. God freely elected to display His glory in this world, and the motive behind the choice was that it pleased God, this and none other. The present world is a consistent world and it is the best world,



because God made it; for God is consistency and goodness.<sup>6</sup>

Negatively, Carnell has attempted to prove that systematic consistency is the correct criterion for truth by exposing as inadequate other criteria which have been presented. How well he actually has disproved each of the criteria is a matter of conjecture, no doubt depending upon the reader's personal attitude. An illustration of one of the refutations is sufficient to demonstrate how Carnell has handled each of the tests for truth.

Custom is any habit or practice which has come to be associated with the uniform actions of a given individual or group by reason of its long continuance or uniformity, as saluting the flag, or following certain rules of etiquette while in Rome. But customs can be good or bad, true or false. Something beyond and outside of custom, therefore, must test the validity of customs themselves.<sup>7</sup>

Let the reader suppose that he has just presented to one who thoroughly believes in custom the argument just presented. Throughout his lifetime, his ideals and purposes of life have been centered around tradition and custom. Furthermore, he has agreed to your definition of custom. But he does not, nor will he ever agree with you that some customs are good or bad, true or false. It is intrinsically the very basis of his belief that all customs are good and that none are false. One cannot prove the truth or falsity of

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6. Ibid., p. 61.

7. Ibid., p. 48.



this claim unless there is brought to this assumption some other criterion of truth upon which both can agree. The case of the above argument would simply end upon the "it is" and "it isn't" sour note. The assumption which Carnell has brought to all the tests of truth, and which he has used to defeat them, is the very assumption which he has sought to prove as the only valid test for truth. This is indeed a faux pas, for he assumed to be true that which he hopes to prove true. He has no logical grounds for this assumption, though he probably has shown its superiority.

The law of contradiction is so basic to meaningful thought and, consequently, to truth, for truth is concerned only with meaning, that it cannot be demonstrated. The only proof for the law is that nothing is meaningful without the law's validity being presupposed.<sup>8</sup>

Behind the assumption of the law of contradiction is still another assumption. For who can be certain that tomorrow this same assumption will work. Truth, in its very nature, assumes that once applied, that every following opportunity will give you exactly the same results without fear of contradiction. What assures men of this regularity of the truth? The Christian assumption is that God is the guarantor of truth. Hence, to think truthfully, is simply to think God's own thoughts after Him.

We say that the more perfect a mind is, the more perfect is the meaning that that mind has in any act of judgment. The mother

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8. Ibid., p. 57.



is more perfect than the child, and the expert is more perfect than the mother (unless the mother is an expert, too). When we carry this through what mind is the most perfect receptacle of all meaning? There is no alternative. It is God's mind, for such a mind is His than which no greater may be conceived. He, then, is truth, for, being perfect, He cannot err. The meaning He gives to things is absolute, for He is the Author of things. Truth, therefore, is correspondence with the mind of God. The test for truth is systematic consistency, for God is consistent and the world that He teleologically orders gives system to this consistency. As we united validity with experience, we have a perfect test for truth.<sup>9</sup>

### C. THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF FAITH

So far, Carnell has been primarily concerned with some of the difficulties connected with the reason as it is related to sensory experience. Is this test for truth valid when it comes to matters of faith? Defining faith as "commitment or trust,"<sup>10</sup> Carnell would not hesitate in answering this question in the affirmative. One does not commit himself to anything for which he has no apprehension. To have knowledge means that man must have truth. To have the truth implies that the test for truth must then be applied.

Second, and perhaps more to the point, a straw-man opponent is attacked when faith and knowledge are antipathetically related. The Bible is a system of propositions which address the reason as decisively as any other faculty in man. Knowledge is the light which clarifies

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9. Ibid., p. 62.

10. Carnell, Philosophy of the Christian Religion, p. 29.



the nature of things to which man ought to be committed. Reason tests, segregates, orders, and classifies. Proper commitment does not follow through until the whole man is convinced of the reasonableness and coherence of a value proposition. Knowledge describes and orders the alternatives, separating the worthy from the unworthy, the good from the bad, the true from the false, so that the heart may have an unambiguous place to rest.<sup>11</sup>

Faith then is limited by knowledge. One cannot trust in or believe in the unknown. But faith means more than rational knowledge. It is commitment, a commitment that man himself is not willing to make, indeed cannot ever make in his own power. Special illumination is given by God Himself in the witnessing He does directly to the heart of man and through the truth of general revelation. The former is special grace, the latter is common grace. Because of the latter grace, all men everywhere should be convinced of the truth of their own sinfulness, repent and turn to God.

. . . Faith is but a whole-soul trust in God's word as true. . . The power by which the heart is enabled to see that the word of God is true is the Holy Spirit. The word of God is thus self-authenticating. It bears its own testimony to truth; it seals its own validity. If the word required something more certain than itself to give it validity, it would no longer be God's word. If God, by definition, is that than which no truer may be conceived, then His word is that than which no truer may be conceived. It would be a derogation to the efficiency of revelation to suppose that any more than God's Spirit is needed to seal the word to the hearts of believers. . .<sup>12</sup>

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11. Ibid.

12. Carnell, Apologetics, p. 66.



Because God's word, that is the Bible or Holy Scriptures, does not need any authentication than itself, will it therefore mean that the law of systematic consistency will not apply? This is not a contradiction, which might be supposed, with the former statement that all knowledge must be systematically consistent. Rather, it is in the greatest of all harmonies with it. For who could be more in accord with the law of contradiction than its Author? Apprehending of truth means an inward apprehending whether this be of faith or of the world. In matters of faith, however, special grace is given to gain certitude that our hearts might be assured of its truth. But the test of truth must still be applied to see that faith itself is consistent with general revelation.

Carnell has warned his readers that one dare not rest in reason alone. If he were to do this, then he is likely to fall into the error of a cold fundamentalism. Dead orthodoxy is a contradiction in itself. To reach any kind of orthodox position, it is necessary to rely upon special revelation. But special revelation most certainly is not satisfied with mere rational assent. The Bible teaches that man's basic need is fellowship.

. . . Knowledge by inference is a handmaid to knowledge by acquaintance. Man must employ his mind with astuteness; he must use the laws of logic to guide him into paths that are rationally coherent, for contradictions he cannot assent to. We should only commit ourselves to that which is rationally consistent. Foolishness we must not believe. But the highest knowledge terminates in fellowship. Less than this draws out less than the whole man. The



Bible defends the primacy of reason as the faculty through which all options must clear. But it likewise teaches that formal rationality performs its job only when it remains a humble voice in the wilderness, preparing the way for fellowship.<sup>13</sup>

Fellowship has been presented by Carnell as the most rational of acts. It is the purpose of every rational evidence which concern itself about God. When man has examined that in which he is about to place his trust, and finding the individual worthy of trust and commitment, even to one's own benefit, the culmination of these rational acts could only be fellowship. Under such circumstances, to refuse fellowship would be the irrational act.

When addressing the heart, therefore, the Scriptures use rationally intelligible propositions. Spirit can be led to the God worthy of being worshiped only through the avenue of objectively veracious evidences. If our knowledge of God were discontinuous with good scientific-philosophic inquiry, we would never know God at all. Faith in God is not generically different from faith in either another individual or in the body of scientifically veracious knowledge. Generic faith is a resting of the mind in the sufficiency of the evidences. Saving faith may go beyond this general expression, but it does not exclude it. Whoever does not first have generic faith can hardly be said to possess the richer form. Even the highest surgings of spiritual ecstasy own no powers which are free from the veto of the understanding. "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also." (I Corinthians 14:15) If Biblical Christianity rested on rational paradox or absurdity, it would quickly reduce to foolishness.<sup>14</sup>

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13. Carnell, Christian Philosophy, p. 183.

14. Ibid., p. 450.



Carnell has described this act of fellowship as the third locus of truth. In philosophy, one is limited to only two loci. The first locus is "the sum total of reality itself."<sup>15</sup> The second locus is the proposition which the philosopher made when experience has been examined in the crucible of the reason and found to be systematically consistent with the total of reality. But the third locus of truth which Christianity brings to the forefront, is the truth found in the heart. This is fellowship. Thus it is not sufficient for man to be satisfied simply to know that there is truth around him. He must grasp that truth by making and proving rational propositions concerning that truth and thus to have the truth itself. But this is still not enough to satisfy the desperate need of man's existence. He must conform to real existence. He must be truth. This conformation was most highly exemplified in Christ, but in a lesser degree must every true Christian also conform.

The Christian philosophy of truth may be summarized as follows: (a) Reality "out there" is the truth. This universe is truly God's creation. (b) Truth is a property of a judgment or proposition which corresponds to reality. The mind of God forms a perfect system of truth. "Thy word is truth." (John 17:17) Finite minds approach this perfection only by degrees, by systems of thought, in short. Since their systems are never complete, however, propositional truth can never pass beyond probability. (c) Truth in the heart is a quality of personal character which coincides with the law of love. Love is the stuff which

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15. Ibid.



forms the character of God. Men become the truth as their character becomes good.<sup>16</sup>

#### D. THE THOMISTS REFUTED

One of the serious difficulties which faced Carnell was how sensory data became meaningful. How was it possible for man to make predications concerning that which he has observed, expecting them to be normative for future experience? If man were not able to do this, science, faith, and reason would not be possible.

Carnell has emphatically rejected the purely empirical approach of the Thomists. That which has eliminated the famous proofs of God from rational thinking, is the Thomistic insistence that nothing exists in the mind other than which has come through the senses. Since space is limited so that Carnell's full discussion of the proofs is impossible, the following two arguments seem sufficient to give the crux of the whole matter.

1. Empiricism ends in skepticism. Hume took Thomas' dictum, nihil est in intellectu nisi prius fuerit in sensu, seriously and showed that by it nothing normative can be found. If all the mind has to work with are sense-perceptions as reports to the mind of what is going on in the external world, knowledge can never rise to the universal and the necessary, for from flux only flux can come. . .<sup>17</sup>

2. Principle of economy eliminates the

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16. Ibid., p. 453.

17. Carnell, Apologetics, p. 129.



Christian God. Hume has set the pace for all empiricists by dictating that the cause be proportionate to the effect, meaning that one may inductively introduce no more to explain an effect than a cause great enough to account for the effect, but no greater. . .<sup>18</sup>

The Thomistic empiricists have twice violated the rule of contradiction. This was more than enough to force their system into disfavor. St. Thomas Aquinas was blind to the a priori concepts which he had brought into his system. It was no accident that such proofs were developed only in a Christian world. Since all admit that universals are not actually the object of sense data, from when did they come? All one can ever hope to do is to give a series of disconnected impressions if he were to rely solely upon empirical observation. In the same sense, empirical perceptions cannot, even at very best, possibly account for a cause which is greater than that which is required to produce a given effect. According to sensory data alone, the God who created matter must either have exhausted Himself in this creation, or one can know very little about Him through sensory perception alone. Under no circumstances, could the God realized through sensory perception be the One of Infinite Power with Whom Christians claim to fellowship.

#### E. POSITIVISM'S LIMITATIONS

With this analysis before us, the views of modern positivism should be examined in the light of what Carnell has

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18. Ibid.



to say about them. Carnell is under continual obligation by the formula which he himself has chosen, continually to do battle with all rival systems of thought. Not only must he do battle, but he must prove that the systems which he opposes are fraught with more and greater difficulties than his own, or he himself will be a victim of his own criteria.

Modern Positivism began to be popular during the period of the Renaissance. Casting aside every a priori concept, the Renaissance mind began to study the cosmos with great intensity. Once the a priori was fully cast aside, the scientific method and science herself were in a position to dominate the lives and minds of the men of the western world. The new method, instead of glancing at a leaf and therefrom deducing the entire nature and attributes of God, began to examine the cosmos with the expectation of finding results which would influence the here and now. This was not man's attempt to submit himself to God, but to submit the forces of nature unto himself.

A glance at this chart will show that positivism has carried Kant's epistemology to its logical conclusion. Only factual propositions -- those which science can process in the laboratory by an operational experiment terminate on reality. The rest may involve either a wish or just plain imagination. Non-cognitive meanings perhaps have the pragmatic value of getting people to do things in their practical life or of giving them solace in poetry and religion, but they have no informational function. They leave the formal and quantitative for the biological and qualitative. While they sometimes express how we feel or how we wish things were, only factually meaningful propositions can suggest experimental



operations. John Dewey describes the steps in this epistemology as follows: A felt difficulty in our experience; careful clarification of what the difficulty is; careful preparation of hypotheses to account for a solution; mental elaboration through definite if/then cause-sequence relations; and a final testing through actual observation or experiment.<sup>19</sup>

From the a priori bondage characterizing Thomistic empiricism, positivism has been fettered with the bondage of the a posteriori. Whereas the a priori philosophy scarcely glanced at nature, the new philosophy cannot get its eyes away from the cosmos. Unless a statement is subject to the direct scrutiny which can take place under the carefully controlled conditions of a laboratory, it can be said to have no bearing upon reality. Ethics, prayers, metaphysics, appeals, or other such statements, though of value in the emotive sense, bear no relationship to reality.

And so the swing of the pendulum has been completed. In classical philosophy the only sentence worth-while was the normative, while in modern scientific empiricism the normative is altogether disclaimed. Men once believed they could reach reality through data intuited by the inner light; positivism knows only the light of science. It was previously supposed that propositions were objectively true whether or not they could ever be carried out into concrete experience; positivism now scorns the notion as prescientific. No statement is factual which cannot terminate on an operation.<sup>20</sup>

Carnell does not fail to demonstrate that the basis of

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19. Carnell, Philosophy, p. 139.

20. Ibid., p. 141.



Positivism is a contradiction to the criteria set up for truth.<sup>21</sup> It is impossible to verify the statement in the laboratory that all statements must be verifiable in a laboratory experiment which terminates in an operation. Hence, that statement that all statements which terminate in an operation are cognitive, is no more than emotive language and could only be used religiously, ethically, or perhaps prayerfully. And besides, since the idea of truth is not cognitive, how can anyone be certain whether the reports which other scientists bring out of the laboratory are true or false? Or even worse, if one were reasonably assured that the previous scientist has reported accurately, by what method could he be certain that it would be true tomorrow since science knows only what it observes? If it would take for granted that the basic sentence that all statements to be factual must terminate in an operation were true today, how could one ever be certain of tomorrow? One can never put tomorrow in a laboratory.

Carnell has pushed Positivism into an even worse predicament than this. Since it has recognized no ultimate values, one can well ask Positivism what the purpose of the accumulation of so great data is. One searches in vain in the laboratory for some presupposition which might infer the moral limitations of laboratory findings' uses. Without

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21. Ibid., p. 148.



moral values, without Christianity, Positivism possesses within itself the power for its own destruction. Though this destruction may terminate in someone's laboratory, unfortunately the destruction may be so devastating that there might be a shortage of laboratory technicians for proper recording of statistics so that in the final analysis this destruction itself would have very little to do with reality, but would be only of emotive value.

There is little doubt but what scientific empiricists are (in general) most amiable and pleasant individuals, ones who would be first in their own actions to disclaim violence and destruction. But that is not the point. The point is that in his teaching, the positivist is undermining the very moral and spiritual vitalities upon which our culture was founded and which alone can dignify man. His personal piety may stem from his Christian heritage, but where shall the piety of his pagan students come from? Certainly it cannot come from positivism. It must come from a structure of values which disavows the pretension that all cognitive sentences are resolved by operations. Respect for human dignity, respect for justice, the preference of truth to error, goodness to wickedness, beauty to ugliness are normative values which have a priori justification. Who will be around to check the results if the following sentence is carried out into an experiment: "Destroying civilization through hydrogen bombs is a bad thing." In this instance truth crushed to earth will not rise again, for no scientists will remain to construct new operations.<sup>22</sup>

From the foregoing facts, Carnell is persuaded that as surely as Christianity needs science, so science has ample need for Christianity. Christianity needs science to search

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22. Ibid., p. 168.



general revelation and amass the facts of nature. This very important task must not be depreciated as it was in the a priori Thomistic empiricism. But science needs the resources of Christianity to lay the metaphysical groundwork for laboratory science. Through Christianity alone, can these factors be amalgamated into a systematic coherent viewpoint of reality and thus be assured of their usefulness to society.

This is what we mean by rapprochement between Christianity and the scientific method. Without the help of the scientific method, Christianity cannot make accurate contact with the details of God's providential working in nature; and without Christianity, science has no metaphysical, epistemological, or ethical frames of reference within which to give world-view meaning to the facts it colligates.<sup>23</sup>

#### F. THE NATURE OF TRUTH

In previous discussion, it has been noted that truth can be said to reside in three loci. For epistemological purposes, only the first two are of importance. These two loci are the truth which resides in nature, and the truth which might be predicated concerning them. Positivism and Thomistic empiricism have demonstrated their inability logically, that is without contradiction, to united predication with the truth which actually resides in reality.

The truth which men have is, of course, the truth which rests in propositions or statements about reality. Man

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23. Carnell, Apologetics, p. 232.



cannot have the truth in reality itself, for it ever remains in actuality. Only in propositions about reality which he believes to be true, can man hope to have the truth about reality. One can make an assertion or proposition about sugar-coated sweet peas but he can never actually take them into his mind. So man must carefully check whatever statements he might make against the actual reality of sugar-toasted sweet peas as he has observed them empirically. However, because of man's inability, and because of the nature of that which man wishes to verify, he cannot have absolute certainty that his propositions about reality are true. At best, he can have only probability. Even in a laboratory, as men carefully measure again and again, they will never obtain exactly the same answer twice. The answers must be written in graphic form so that the mean may be obtained which is considered very near to the correct answer. Yet it is only probably the right answer. In real life situations, so many causal factors enter into a situation, that one can never be absolutely certain that he has eliminated them all as possible participants in the produced effect. Because Christianity is historical, it is impossible to demonstrate that which it holds true, for history never can be repeated. All one can do is gather historical witnesses to the facts, then he has probable knowledge. But this probable knowledge is just as much at home in the laboratory as it is in the field of ethics or Christian dogmatics.



First, let us establish securely the fact that proof for the Christian faith, as proof for any world-view that is worth talking about, cannot rise above rational probability. Probability is that state of coherence in which more evidences can be corralled for a given hypothesis than can be amassed against it. The more the evidences increase, the more the strength of probability increases.<sup>24</sup>

Even the Positivists must agree to this statement, for their world view cannot be proven beyond doubt. Of course, to agree with this statement would also make the Positivist contradict himself. But Christ cannot be declaimed simply because He cannot be observed today. If we were to discount Christianity's claim on such a basis, history would be impossible. To discover historical truths, historical evidences must be carefully weighed before decision can be made. In the case of world views, since to be a world view at all they must account for history, this is the only method possible.

For some reason, not all theologians have seen that rational probability and perfect moral, or subjective, assurance are quite compatible. The Ritschlians went headfirst into feeling theology, believing that "the characteristic certitude of the religious believer tends to be impaired, at least temporarily, when the doctrines of the faith upon which he has been building his life and his hopes for the future are treated as mere metaphysical theories, to be tested by their rationality and their agreement with empirical fact." This divorce of faith and rationality has given the coup de grace to modernism, for faith without objectively verifiable truth is comparable to the sort of certainty which goes along with

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24. Ibid., p. 113.



snake-handlers, sunadorers, and esoteric faith-healing cults of sundry species. That private insight which exclaims, "I have it but I cannot express it," is not the type of coherence which is necessary for science. Faith must be founded in objectively verifiable metaphysical theories even if they fail to provide perfect demonstration. Apart from this, theology has no logic.<sup>25</sup>

#### G. THE STRUCTURE OF THE MIND

During the ensuing discussion, an attempt will be made to examine the starting point of the epistemological theory which Carnell purports to be correct. This paper has dealt already with two view which have for their synoptic point effable external experience.<sup>26</sup> In both cases, the attempt was made to show that neither their conclusions were warranted by their starting point, nor their basis was adequate upon which to build any structure which purported to be a world view. According to the probability theory of knowledge, Carnell discarded these two theories in favor of internal effable experience.<sup>27</sup> The only other option for a synoptic point, internal ineffable experience,<sup>28</sup> is not worthy of discussion since it is nothing but mysticism and has no relation to reality. It cannot, therefore, be proven or

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25. Ibid., p. 116.

26. Ibid., p. 126.

27. Ibid., p. 125.

28. Ibid.



disproven, but it has, as a result, no real relationship to actuality.

Since sensory experience is limited to the flux, and from flux only flux can come, Carnell has posited in the mind that which makes sensory experience meaningful.

2. Internal effable experience. Not all experience in the soul is incapable of being expressed in words. As the history of rationalism proves, myriad are those keen minds which have been convinced that through a search of the soul's resident abilities universal and necessary principles, which are independent of sense perception, can be located and plotted. This is the course which the Christian will follow, so let us bypass it for the time being to return to it later. The security of this position is not to be confused with mysticism's ineffable subjectivism, however, for by the method of effable internal experience, "a truth is seen in its relations to other knowledge, and so with something of the certainty that goes with demonstration," but it is "no unique and mystical warrant that guarantees it, but mere coherence."<sup>29</sup>

Christian Rationalism, as Carnell has termed this position, has held that normative truths, such as the Good, the True and the Beautiful, depend upon innate knowledge. After looking upon the flux of nature, how does man decide what is beautiful? Certainly, his sensation does not give a criteria alone for this. It is only innate knowledge which can assure one of the finality of truth and of goodness. This innate knowledge has been termed the "rationes" which Carnell believes can be identified with the scriptural doctrines of the image of God which is in man.

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29. Ibid., p. 125.



This structure blends nicely into the Christian doctrine of creation, for man is made in the image and after the likeness of God. Christ is the true Light which enlightens every man. The Christian shares the conviction of Descartes, therefore, that "one certainly ought not to find it strange that God, in creating me, placed this idea (God) within me to be like the mark of the workman imprinted on his work; and it is likewise not essential that the mark shall be something different from the work itself." . . . 30

Having relied wholly upon sensation for knowledge, the empiricist has always involved himself with the difficulty of the finality of truth. If all truth and knowledge are subject to fluctuation, why then is not their basic premise also subject to the same conditions? But by its very nature, it has already been demonstrated that this type of premise cannot be sustained by the very criteria which it purports to lay down. Hence, all empiricists are involved in an initial contradiction which cannot be resolved. It is impossible to start with any other synoptic point other than that of internal effable experience.

Empiricists of all sorts are faced with another difficult explanation. Who is the one who observes, and upon whom do sensations have effect? Is there such a thing as mind, and if there is, how can I know it simply through empirical observation alone? The depths of mind can never be known by empirical methods because instead of being the object of sensations, the mind is always the recipient of all sensation.

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30. Ibid., p. 160.



. . . It lies in the very nature of the case that the self can never become the object of experience, because the self, whatever else it might be, is in the indefeasible situation of being the subject of experience. A knowledge of the self seems, then, in the very nature of the case fore-doomed. However, the "I think" is quite inescapable and it is not sufficiently accounted for in Hume's laws of association. . . 31

Knowledge of self, the existence of the mind, can never be explained satisfactorily by empiricists. The rules of logic are an enigma. Certainly these a priori laws have never been fully accounted for by the sensationalists.

. . . In order to think clearly, men are obliged to accept the validity of certain laws of thought. These would include: the Principle of Identity, that we must stick to our meaning or definitions throughout an argument; the Principle of Contradiction, that two contradictory propositions cannot both be true; and the Principle of Sufficient Reason, that there must be a cause of every happening. . . 32

From these laws of logic which give to all of life's sensation their meaning, man became aware of the existence of God. God cannot be deduced from the flux alone, but He can be deduced from the changeless, eternal rules of logic.

From the awareness of the soul of its own endowments it knows God, for only a trans-temporal, trans-spatial Mind can sustain the timeless character of logic. We have not elected to be logical; another has made us that way. The smoothest hypothesis to account for this

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31. George Thomas White Patrick, Introduction to Philosophy (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), p. 246.

32. Harold H. Titus, Living Issues in Philosophy (New York, American Book Company, 1946), p. 179.



making is, not the brute bumping of undirected atoms, but the creation of man in the image of God. This is the structure the Christian chooses to follow, for he believes the postulate of a rational God to be a workable hypothesis in the light of the evidence.<sup>33</sup>

Knowledge of self in quite a different way makes us aware of God. Not only is man made aware that there must be a God because he does not resemble nature, but also because he does resemble the flux, hence unlike God.

. . . Without the aid of sensation, man knows that he is finite, dependent, and wretched; but these adjectives would be absolutely meaningless without a prior knowledge of their correlatives, infinity, independence, and felicity. These belong to God alone. "To know self implies, therefore, the co-knowledge with self of that on which it derives, by the standard of which its imperfection is revealed, to which it is responsible." We know God as that Being over against Whom we are perpetually set, upon Whom we completely depend, and to Whom we are finally responsible. All of this we know from a knowledge of our own finite, sinful, infelicitous condition. . .<sup>34</sup>

But the rationes not only bids us be aware of God because of ourselves, but because of General Revelation. Without the presupposition, or the existence of the a priori, a demonstration such as Thomas attempted would be impossible.

. . . If we know not the truth before coming to sensation, the world is neither rational nor irrational, for the terms are meaningless. If we know not the standard for good, the world is neither good nor bad. So with beauty, it is neither lovely nor ugly. But these criteria

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33. Carnell, Introduction to Apologetics, p. 164.

34. Ibid., p. 159.



depend for their existence upon the mind of God.<sup>35</sup>

Though man catches the meaning of nature and of general revelation, he is hindered from acting upon his knowledge in a rational manner because of his own defection. Seeing the beauty of the lilies, man should cast himself prostrate at the feet of God, but sin has always prevented him from pure rational insight.

Because he speaks of both "natural" revelation, i.e., the revelation of the meaning of reality in the facts of time and space, and "special" revelation, i.e., the propositional content of the Bible, the Christian can meaningfully speak of the "incompetence" of the human reason. The reason of man, in addition to being partially corrupted because of sin, is incompetent to work out a complete view of God and man because it, in its unaided state, is not supplied with enough information to complete its philosophy. The data which special revelation supplies is needed to supplement the data which natural revelation displays. . . Just as the intellect of man is incompetent to demonstrate that there is another side of the moon, because of the inaccessibility of the data, so also it is incompetent to complete a philosophy of life without special revelation from God. Because of our sinful hearts, which vitiate the evidence of nature, a more sure voice is needed to lead us into a theory of reality which is horizontally self-consistent and which vertically fits the facts.<sup>36</sup>

Because of the rationes, man has been able to do many good things, propound many good philosophies, and make religions which contain many truths. But because of sin, none

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35. Ibid., p. 169.

36. Ibid., p. 156.



of them contain the whole truth. None of them contain truth only, for all of them are truth mixed with error. Only by special revelation, could all men's quest for happiness be satisfied. It answers the question of death itself and assures all men of the hope of life eternal. This special revelation is none other than the Bible. Its appeal is worded strongly, and directed toward the rationes so as to be irresistably logical. No other form of philosophy or religion can possibly make this claim.

. . . From Genesis through Revelation, these men wrote sober truth. One self-consistent, historically accurate, plan of salvation runs through their hundreds of pages of manuscripts which, astoundingly, were written by men relatively ignorant of the existence of each other. Moses gave the plan of salvation in Genesis 3:15, thousands of years before its fulfillment: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The prophets passionately unfolded it; the gospels carefully outlined it; and the epistles immaculately completed it. Toward the end of special revelation, Paul said, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20), pointing to the last jot-and-tittle fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. In this entire system of salvation there is nothing repulsive to the reason of man; there is nothing impossible, immoral, absurd, nothing inconsistent with the corpus of well-attested truth.<sup>37</sup>

#### H. THE BIBLE

Equating the Bible with Special Revelation, Carnell

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37. Ibid., p. 179.



must face the difficulties of higher and lower criticism with which neither Barth nor Brunner were forced to contend. Higher and lower criticism has purported to find many errors in the Bible, so many in fact, that the Bible could not possibly be accepted by a rational man. These errors are both historical inaccuracies and errors in logic. Carnell has admitted that the Bible does contain many problems. To not admit them is simply to deny the facts.

. . . These efforts have left the conservatives in a predicament. On the one hand, he admits that the Bible is the infallibly inspired word of God, and yet, on the other, confesses that there are not a few difficulties in the present text. "The conscientious student has, therefore, great difficulty sometimes in resolving problems raised by apparent contradictions. . . and he may frankly confess that he is not able to explain an apparent discrepancy in the teaching of Scripture." To the modern mind the conservative position seems like weasel-wording.<sup>38</sup>

Carnell has avoided much of the difficulty by limiting infallibility to only the original autographs. As the Bible is a very ancient book, this would mean that it was subject to a great many errors in the process of copying which took place. As the living Word of God was broken at the hands of sinful men, so also has been the fate of the written word of God. As general revelation was marred by sin, so also was special revelation. But as in general revelation, there has remained sufficient truth in special revelation to bring all men to repentance. The major radicals upon which the

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38. Ibid., p. 191.



Christian religion is built, are not subject to the dispute.

Christianity knows no contradiction of its radicals. All the work of the higher critic has fallen short of refuting the system from this perspective. As for the minor difficulties, we appeal to the complicated character of reality, the parallels to science, and the fact of our own finitude and ignorance. . . .<sup>39</sup>

Carnell's basic assumption is then, that the original documents, not copies nor translations, were inspired. This is a rather difficult theory either to prove or to disprove with finality since none of the autographs are available for scrutiny. The reasons for believing must be purely rational ones since no empirical evidence exists. On this assumption Carnell's basic argument is that if God did not deliver to man infallible words then either He would not and was intentionally deceiving man, or that He could not, hence was only a finite God. For if God could not, then there must be some force greater than He which was preventing Him from doing as He wished. The reason for errors in the copies, was the sinfulness of the copyers.

. . . Thirdly, permitting man to fall into transcriptional error in so holy and religious an assignment as copying the originally inspired manuscripts, is the highest possible testimony to that complete penetration into our inward lives that sin enjoys, and shows that, no matter how hard a zealot may concentrate, pray, and petition for grace, he still falls short

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39. Ibid., p. 209.



of the immaculate Son of God. . .<sup>40</sup>

At first glance, one might be satisfied with this explanation of the problem, but this investigator seriously questions the value of such an explanation. Looking at the issue from one point of view, the sceptic would ask if God were not limited in that He could not preserve the copies made from error? If God could give us infallible autographs through sinful men, why not faithful copies through sinful men? From the other point of view, if the copyists were sinful men and erred because they could not reach the perfection of the Son of God, why did not the original writers also err for were they not also sinners such as we and not gods? Certainly, the scriptures cannot be denied to reflect the fact that human personality influenced not only what was said, but the manner in which it is expressed. The answer which Carnell has given to this question is that God elected not to have the copyists inspired, just as He elected to let His perfect universe fall into partial corruption.<sup>41</sup> This would lead us into further difficulties which will be discussed in the problem of evil.

Having retreated, Carnell has still another dilemma which he has not solved. If only the radicals are not touched by modern higher criticism, who is to define the radicals?

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<sup>40</sup>. Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>41</sup>. Ibid., p. 198.



If only the radicals remain why then not only the radicals inspired if that is all that is necessary? Hume's rule of efficient cause would certainly imply that this would be true. Since error has entered into Revelation, and all error is evil, then the whole issue is bound to the question of moral evil. Let us turn to this chapter in Carnell and attempt to determine how he would solve the problem. The basic proposition of Christianity, the God who has revealed Himself in Holy Scriptures, is at stake on this issue.

### I. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Carnell has made the fact of the Personality of God basic to the understanding of the problem of evil. As a Person, God is not an impersonal rule of changeless logic, but makes free decisions.<sup>42</sup> One of these free decisions, was the creation of the world. God is never under necessity for necessity would mean that He lacked something in Himself.<sup>43</sup> The creation of God was a perfect creation, reflecting the majesty and the glory of God. But into creation, man and angels have brought the fact of sin.

Into this perfect universe, man and angel brought sin and disruption through their defection from the Divine commands. The creature, therefore, not God, is responsible for all of the sin and sorrow which make up both natural

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<sup>42</sup>. Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>43</sup>. Ibid.



and moral evil. . .<sup>44</sup>

But Christianity avows that before Creation, God had a plan for the redemption of the world. This was not an emergency plan in the case sin did occur, for this would limit the fore-knowledge of God, making Him finite. Sin was not only known by God, but it came about only because it was divinely decreed.

. . . This means that God infallibly knew that, if He created man upon earth, man would fall into sin and require the restoring merits of the God-Man, Jesus Christ; and yet He went right ahead and created man in the garden of Eden. The crucifixion, the worst example of evil, was not only permitted by God; it was sovereignly decreed. . . In history, then, there is no surd, inexplicable, or antinomy. History is as rational at every point as the rational God Who decrees its movement. There is no strength but what comes from the strength of Israel; there is no being but what stems from the Almighty.<sup>45</sup>

If God has decreed evil, why should men then resist it? Carnell answers, simply because God has so commanded men to act.<sup>46</sup> Then the Almighty, All-Powerful, All-Sustaining God has not only always enabled the powers of Good but the powers of evil. Why then cannot man call God before the courtroom and in solemn assembly commit Him to be banished forever from the universe? Did He not decree the greatest of all

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<sup>44</sup>. Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>45</sup>. Ibid., p. 295.

<sup>46</sup>. Ibid., p. 299.



evils? But Carnell answers, to whom would God be responsible? As Sovereign God, He cannot be held accountable to anyone for His actions. Because He is not responsible to anyone or anything, how can God be responsible for sin? It is God who is right and not man. God does not have to do good exactly as society conceives the good. If He were limited in any such way, then He would be a finite god, His actions having been controlled by the reason of man. Though man through reason cannot account for anything good except that which is bound to the ten commandments, yet God's actions are not so bound. The rightness or wrongness of an action then is plainly whether or not God has placed His approval upon that act.

In short, the decalogue is of force only where sinners are concerned; but God is the Holy One. Of what, then, does Mill speak when He says that God must possess the same moral attributes which one finds in a good man here in society? God cannot be compared to man; it is man that is to be compared to God. . . .<sup>47</sup>

Does the world seem to fall short of man's expectations? Does one wish that sin did not exist? Then he envisions a world which God does not and never did see. For this world is the best possible of all worlds.

. . . The universe, with all of the evil in it, is the best possible of all worlds, for the very reason that God, the standard of good, has called it good. But it is part of the goodness of this universe that the

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<sup>47</sup>. Ibid., p. 310.



sin which God permitted to enter that He might display His grace and love to the sons of men, is to be extirpated by the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. . . .<sup>48</sup>

Is it possible that God did intend for sin to emerge into the universe? Carnell affirms that He did. Since it is logical that God is an Absolutely free individual, Carnell argued that He can do as He chooses. Since He is all Powerful and could have prevented sin, He chose that sin should exist in the universe since that is the only possible way that it could exist.

Should one persist in his affirmation that God did not intend to create a world in which sin would emerge, we can only ask where this one has received his information on the subject. Unless he appeals to a private revelation which cannot be checked by the law of contradiction, we know of no source. It does not come from an analysis of history, for history bears out that Christ did die on the cross. If God did not want Him to do so, then we are back on the finite God position and we have no hope. And the Bible certainly does not teach God was displeased with the death of Christ. On the contrary, "it pleased Jehovah to bruise him. . . he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:10-11). Logic cannot be appealed to, for we have elsewhere shown that it is logical to suppose that God is free to do what He wants without being called into account. What new source, then, does our objector appeal to? Until it is forthcoming, we cannot continue the argument at this point.<sup>49</sup>

At two very difficult points, Carnell leaves his reader with unanswered questions. What does Carnell mean by the holiness

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48. Ibid., p. 300.

49. Ibid., p. 304.



of God? Certainly this answer cannot be rational in the light of what has preceeded. In addition, how does Carnell define the freedom of man, which he had already averred,<sup>50</sup> and still be consistent with his theory of divine decrees which govern history? If one were to ask Carnell the question, who is responsible for sin, man or God, Carnell certainly has thrown his effort on the side which attempts to blame God.

Carnell's position, which might be described as Christian Rationalism, might be summarized as an attempt to place and to find the proper emphasis and balance upon both the a priori and the a posteriori. The a priori, which enables man to make predications concerning that which he is aware of empirically, is made identical with the Biblical image of God in man. Wherever these predications conform to reality, it may be said that man has the truth. Because of man's limitations, he is unable through this method to complete a philosophy which adequately includes all of reality. Hence, God has Divinely revealed that which man must know to complete his philosophy, which revelation also appeals to the human reason. Thus it may be said that the basis of faith, which Carnell defines as trust or commitment, is the reason. Without reason there can be no faith. However, it may be seriously questioned whether Carnell can defend his view through reason.

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50. Carnell, Philosophy of the Christian Religion, p. 16.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### A. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE STUDY

A purported new theology has sprung into existence during the past few decades. Like Conservative theology, it has claimed direct descendance from the reformers. In like manner, it has made its appeal to the Word of God for direction and guidance. But is this new theology really a return to reformation teachings? Certainly, without fear of denial, it can be said that it has been a return to reformation terminology. Unfortunately, the appearance of theological terminology alone does not guarantee the validity of the claim of this new theology. Terminology must be examined in the light of its context, and in this way the concept which lies behind the use of the terms might be learned. Again, one would be forced to concede that the new theology has evidenced a desire to return to the methods of the reformers. In this respect, it has emphasized the importance and the sacredness of the pulpit and the calling of the ministry. A new and vital function has been given to the field of dogmatic theology. But when one has examined these points of similarity, there is still the certain feeling that one has not really gotten to the issue. It has not yet been raised.

The point of contact upon which this study has chosen to force the issue, is the relationship of faith and reason



as found in the two leading continental proponents of the new theology. Of course, these concepts never appear in isolation and can only be judged by their appearance in the over-all system. Hence, it has been a conclusion of this paper, that a complete understanding of the intended relationship of reason and faith cannot be understood without some basic understanding of and use of their basic terminology.

## B. SUMMARY

As a summary, some of the terminology which has appeared frequently in the reading will be examined, and its use, as well as it can be determined, succinctly given. In this way, the relationship of faith and reason as considered by each of these men will be brought to focus.

### 1. Karl Barth

a. Philosophy - A complete philosophy of the world is not possible. The antinomies of existence are beyond the scope of reason, their solution being known to God alone. The relationship of theology and philosophy is purely negative.

b. God - God is the Wholly Other. In no sense can He be considered as a part of this world. He must directly reveal to each individual all that can be known about Him. As a Revealing God, He is bound by no restrictions whatsoever.



c. History - History has no rational relationships. No theory of its development, and hence its culmination is possible.

d. Revelation - Revelation is God speaking to man. It is always accompanied by an act of history or nature in such a way that it can be mistaken by man as that act alone. Primarily, revelation occurs in three forms: The Bible, Proclamation, and the Sacraments. Revelation is given to meet the needs of a specific individual at a specific occasion.

e. Biblical Criticism - A critical study of the Bible is justified, since the Bible as a part of the world, is a finite book. This pertains to both higher and lower criticism. Its conclusions are not really a matter of concern since God can use any portion of the Bible He wishes no matter what the critics might say concerning it.

f. The World - The World is not God. Nothing in it, in anyway, resembles Him. From the world, nothing can be learned of God. The basic reason for this is that the world is limited, relative, and finite.

g. Evil - Evil is an integral part of human existence. It is a condition from which man cannot hope to escape. Man is not God, therefore, he is evil.

h. Image of God - Between man and God there is no similarity. There is no point of contact between the two, nothing inherent in man which makes him particularly receptive to the Word of God.



i. Theology - This is an attempt to ascertain the true message of God. There is no assurance that the church, by application of theology, will ever be able to arrive at final truth. The Church cannot even be sure that she is even approaching it. The basic presuppositions to theology are faith and revelation.

j. Faith - Faith is the reception of the Word of God. It is the recognition that reason cannot of itself and by itself solve the radical problems of life. Though faith is the reception of the Word of God, it does not comprehend its nature. That is the divine mystery.

k. Reason - Reason is the ability of man to organize the data which comes to it through the experiences of life. Though comprehension and understanding are possible, reason is frustrated whenever it attempts to resolve the great dialectical antinomies of the world into a coherent system. This is the miracle of God.

## 2. Emil Brunner

a. Philosophy - Philosophy is possible as far as it is related to the present world. In this realm, reason is supreme.

b. God - God is Absolute Person. As Person, He can only be known as He reveals Himself in personal encounter.

c. History - History is of importance only as it bears relationship to the person of Christ. It has two forms, preparation and fulfillment.



d. Revelation - Revelation is two fold. There is an original or general revelation by which man can know the law. This makes man responsible, hence a sinner. But general revelation is inadequate to create in man a new will, so that man has never fulfilled the requirements of the law. God can not be known save as He reveals Himself in Personal Encounter. The supreme revelation of God is Jesus Christ. He is the Word of God.

e. Biblical Criticism - Within limits, Biblical criticism is beneficial. Criticism has served to breakdown the Bibliolatry of conservative Christianity. However, Biblical criticism is limited to that which pertains to this world only. Concerning that which pertains to God, criticism has no validity. This step, when taken, is to be deplored since it is the rearing of the ugly head of autonomy.

f. The World - Though man's knowledge of the world is relative, this is basically caused by the sinfulness of his reason. The world bears upon it the imprint of its creator, which is the divine law for man.

g. Evil - Evil is the positive rejection by man of the Lordship of God. It is man's attempt to make himself autonomous. Its manifestation is the attempt to subjugate all things to the human reason.

h. Image of God - Used in the moral sense, the image of God has been destroyed in man. But in the purely formal sense, it has not been destroyed. Reason, which is the basis of the image, is not lost. What has been lost is



the right use of reason.

i. Theology - Dogma should not be allowed to become fixed as it has become in conservative theology. Within certain limits it should be allowed to fluctuate. If it is allowed to crystallize, dogma rather than God becomes the object of faith. Dogma is only useful as a sign which points to the person of Christ and changes should be made whenever necessary to serve this function.

j. Faith - Faith is personal encounter with Christ. It leaps over history to confront Christ as Lord. It is faith which sets reason aright. It preserves the true character of reason. The sinfulness of the individual is completely realized in this act, and he commits himself to complete trust in the power of God.

k. Reason - Reason, by its very nature, is limited to this world. Reason convinces men of guilt. It perceives the law of God in nature. Its very function reminds one of God. Though reason can bring man to the point of despair, it is only by faith and the act of personal encounter than man ever knows God.

### 3. E.J. Carnell

a. Philosophy - By its very nature, philosophy should and can account for all the facts. This refers both to the things of this world, and to God.

b. God - God is Sovereign Person. As this, He is under no necessity whatsoever. As completely Free, He



can do whatever He pleases. He cannot be held accountable for His acts by man.

c. History - History has no rational connections. Rather, it is a teleological development. History is carried out minutely according to the decrees of God. It is rational development only by the fact that God can be realized rationally, as a Sovereign Person and as such He can decree as He wishes.

d. Revelation - Revelation is the originally inspired autographs of the Books of the Bible. There is also a secondary revelation in nature which makes all men responsible, but the supreme revelation of God occurred in the person of Jesus Christ.

e. Biblical Criticism - There are problems in the Bible. However, these problems are on trifling points which are of little importance to the radical truths of revelation. Lower criticism is to be commended in its efforts to find the correct texts, since it has helped to solve many of the difficulties raised by higher criticism. The basic fault of higher criticism is that it approaches the Bible with an antagonistic philosophy, which inevitably decimates its real character.

f. The World - This is the best possible of all worlds. This is the world which God Himself ordained. The question of whether or not finiteness does of itself signify that it is sinful is left ambiguous due to conflict in the use of irreconcilable terminology.



g. Evil - Evil and sin have been decreed by God.

As Absolute Sovereign, nothing could occur in history, unless God had decreed it. There is no surd or antinomy to God in history. He sustains and orders it all.

h. The Image of God - The Image of God in man, as far as formal structure is concerned, is retained. It enables men to comprehend the good, the true, and the beautiful as he sees it in sensory experience.

i. Theology - A right theology cannot be avoided. Man's rational nature demands that he systematize. However, theology cannot be considered an end in itself, but simply as the means by which people are brought to a relationship with God.

j. Faith - Faith is personal commitment. It is the act of becoming the truth. It is the highest act of reason. It is its logical resultant. Reason has commanded us to have faith.

k. Reason - Reason is the ability of the mind to make predications concerning reality. Whether these correspond to reality or not is the test of reason. Reason itself is not sufficient to give one a complete philosophy due to the fact that man has neither sufficient time nor experience to formulate completely unaided such a philosophy. Special revelation, appealing to the reason, completes man's philosophy. It is this philosophy which sustains faith, for man cannot commit himself to that which he does not know.



## C. CONCLUSIONS

Barth averred that reason has no relationship to faith. The Word of God which speaks to man, carries a message, but how it is apprehended is left in doubt. The Word of God comes home to the individual and is understood by the thought of faith. But yet this thought of faith does not conceive the Word of God as it really is. That this thought of faith is also a thought of reason can be presumed. But the message is a message which comes when his own reason has expended itself. It is the voice of God grasped by faith when man is in despair.

Brunner asserted that there is a positive as well as a negative relationship between faith and reason. It is positive because man must be rationally convinced of the necessity to learn by faith. He has not understood himself in the right light. He has not understood the world in its true meaning. He is wrong. In this hour of desperateness, the Word of God comes to him by faith. Though this message must pass through the rational comprehension, yet the act of faith, the complete trust in God, must follow or the revelation is in vain. Then, and then only, is man able to see the world around him as it really is. He truly then knows the Lordship of God.

Carnell stated that reason is the basis of faith. As one commits himself he does so as a rational act. He commits himself because he knows God rationally. It is not a leap



into the unknown to have faith in God. One must know a great deal about God before he places himself into a position of complete trust.

All three men agree that faith is different than reason. It implies the act of personal commitment and trust. In this assertion, one cannot help but feel a healthy emphasis away from the cold, non-committal attitude of modern liberalism. At least proffered help is recognized. It is no longer man's complete reliance upon himself.

The question which must plague Carnell, and everyone who has read him, is whether the God whom he described is really worthy of commitment and trust. After he has established that God is a Sovereign Person and does what He wills one feels that Carnell has moved toward the very brink of the irrational. But when he informed us that God decrees both the good and the evil, that He is not answerable to any laws, seemingly not even His own nature, the definite impression is that the brink has been passed. Rationally, one is convinced that he really does not know much about such a God.

An interesting point of comparison between Carnell and Brunner is that the former asserted that reason supports faith while the latter asserted that faith supports reason. Basic to these two concepts is the fundamental idea which reason conveys. Brunner has the Kantian concept of reason, Carnell does not. They differed on one very important point.



Carnell asserted that the reality which reason perceives is very real. Reason is merely the perception of truth in reality. Hence the Good, the True, the Beautiful, Time, and Space are really existent. They are not merely categories of the mind which are appended on to that which is real. Thus reason does not change nor limit reality, but enables man to see things as they are in the objective world. Hence, one can see how both Barth and Brunner would hesitate to allow man to comprehend anything of God with his Reason. For reason is a limiting concept to them.

As a point of positive comparison, one can compare the attitude of Carnell toward Science and Brunner toward reason. Faith, according to Carnell can set Science right. It points out the path which makes Science constructive rather than destructive. Science alone cannot know this. The same could be said concerning Brunner's concept of what faith does for reason.

Some Conservatives have objected to the Neo-Orthodox view of revelation because of its subjectivity. Both C. F. H. Henry<sup>1</sup> and Nobel V. Sack<sup>2</sup> are in this category. They would seriously question the superiority of revelation as

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1. C. F. H. Henry, The Protestant Dilemma (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 107.

2. Nobel V. Sack, "Brunner's Concept of Revelation and Reason," (unpublished term paper presented to Northern Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois, n.d.), p. 41.



it is given to man in Neo-Orthodoxy and as revelation has appeared in Modernism. How can one know whether the divine message is revealed or whether man is elevated? Whether God has become man, or man become Gods? Without some sort of objective criteria one cannot know this. Fundamentalists claim to have this criteria within the Bible which is Revelation. This whole question is of quite some embarrassment to the Neo-Orthodox. With their transcendent doctrine of God as the Wholly Other, how can He become Immanent? On the other hand, if God does not become Immanent, why have God at all, for man would never be able to know Him. They attempt, therefore, to avoid the difficulty of Modernism, by segregating faith from reason. Thus God is not comprehended by an elevation of reason as in Modernism, but an elevation of faith. In this way, God is brought under no limitations, but is still sovereign person. And after all, they might point out, all certainty is ultimately subjective. If certainty is not subjective, then it is not certainty at all.

But the detachment made between faith and reason will inevitably lead into far worse difficulties. Neo-Orthodoxy, by severing God from all rational connection with the world, has unloaded the possibility of disavowing God Himself. Why God at all who speaks? Why not some subjective non-rational impulse? Jean-Paul Sartre, a French Existentialist, has made this point forcibly. His existential philosophy is very similar in content to that of either Barth or Brunner. Man



is placed in the world, in the midst of difficulties and problems which have no rational solution. In this perplexity, man is forced to choose, and in choosing, he is choosing what he wishes all men to be. But does not God present to us a message which might help man to know and to choose that which is right? Of this Sartre says it would make little difference.

Anguish is evident even when it conceals itself. This is the anguish that Kierkegaard called the anguish of Abraham. You know the story: an angel has ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son; if it really were an angel who has come and said, "You are Abraham, you will sacrifice your son," everything would be all right. But everyone might first wonder, "Is it really an angel, and am I really Abraham? What proof do I have?" There was a madwoman who had hallucinations; someone used to speak to her on the telephone and give her orders. Her doctor asked her, "Who is it who talks to you?" She answered, "He says it's God." What proof did she really have that it was God? If an angel comes to me, what proof is there that it's an angel? And if I hear voices, what proof is there that they come from heaven and not from hell, or from the subconscious, or a pathological condition? What proves that they are addressed to me? What proof is there that I have been appointed to impose my choice and my conception of man on humanity? I'll never find any proof or sign to convince me of that. If a voice addresses me, it is always for me to decide that this is the angel's voice; if I consider that such an act is a good one, it is I who will choose to say that it is good rather than bad.<sup>3</sup>

This is further clarified in another portion of his work.

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3. Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism, trans. by Bernard Frechtman (New York, Philosophical Library, 1947), pp. 22-24.



From these few reflections it is evident that nothing is more unjust than the objections that have been raised against us. Existentialism is nothing else than an attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position. It isn't trying to plunge man into despair at all. But if one calls every attitude of unbelief despair, like the Christians, then the word is not being used in its original sense. Existentialism isn't so atheistic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn't exist. Rather, it declares that even if God did exist, that would change nothing. There you've got our point of view. Not that we believe that God exists, but we think that the problem of His existence is not the issue. In this sense existentialism is optimistic, a doctrine of action, and it is plain dishonesty for Christians to make not distinction between their own despair and ours and then to call us despairing.<sup>4</sup>

Here is a peculiar paradox. Both Barth and Brunner averred that reason can only lead to antinomies and atheism. Here is the example of where complete, irrational, subjectivism also leads. But Barth would maintain that these irrational subjective suggestions must be a paraphrase of the Bible. But was not Barth's original choice of the Bible also subjective? Where did he get that? And why does Brunner choose Christ? If both men were not rationally led to accept this, as they both deny, then this must have been a subjective choice. Then why are not all choices subjective and leave God out of it all together? In this queer irrational world in which both the existentialist and Neo-Orthodox dwell, God cannot be proved rationally nor any other way to

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4. Ibid., p. 61.



be a very necessary part of their construction.

#### D. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

So many areas have opened for further study it would not be possible to list them all. At best, it will only be possible to classify some of the areas which could be further investigated. Of course, one of the primary areas for investigation would be a comparison in the different areas of theology between the Conservative position of Calvinism and the Neo-Orthodox theology.

Another area which should be investigated, would be the adequacy of Arminian Christian philosophy. Some of the authors who have written in this field should be examined as to the vital issues of the Divine Holiness and Sovereignty. It has already been demonstrated how inadequate the Conservative Calvinistic position is in these fields.

Another field of research suggested in this study, is that of a serious consideration of the chief discrepancies claimed in the texts of the Bible by critics. It should be so forcibly presented that it would determine for our time whether or not it is possible either to resolve these discrepancies, or to leave them open for the consideration of future generations.



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