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Short Title

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD

51864

SOME REPRESENTATIVE CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS
OF THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD
IN HISTORY AND CREATION

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by
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June 1958

12/75
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE STATE	6
A. THE STATE	12
B. THE STATE	18
C. THE STATE	24
D. THE STATE	30
E. THE STATE	36
F. THE STATE	42
G. THE STATE	48
H. THE STATE	54
I. THE STATE	60
J. THE STATE	66
K. THE STATE	72
L. THE STATE	78
M. THE STATE	84
N. THE STATE	90
O. THE STATE	96
P. THE STATE	102
Q. THE STATE	108

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. KARL BARTH	5
Divine Present	13
Christomonism	15
Tokens of Revelation	16
The "Einmalig" Event	18
Old Testament Revelation	20
Place of Revelation	24
<u>Offenbarung der Versoehnung</u>	26
Religion--A Denial of Grace	30
<u>Analogia Entis</u>	31
The Image of God	37
The Bible and Natural Theology	38
III. EMIL BRUNNER	43
IV. PAUL TILLICH	68
V. PAUL ALTHAUS	78
VI. OTHER CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIANS	89
VII. CONCLUSION	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY	108

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Christian Church confesses on the one hand that God is the Incomprehensible One, but also on the other hand, that He can be known and that knowledge of Him is an absolute requisite unto salvation. The early Church Fathers spoke of the invisible God as both the unbegotten, nameless, incomprehensible, unchangeable Being and also as the God who can be known unto salvation since He has revealed Himself in His Word. Although the Scholastics maintained that man does not know God in His essential Being, they did affirm that man can know something of God's nature as He reveals Himself in His divine attributes. The Reformers did not deny that man can learn something from the nature of God as He manifests Himself in history and creation, but they clearly warned that man can acquire true knowledge of God only from special revelation. Under the influence of the theology of immanence, inspired by Hegel and Schleiermacher, the transcendent God was ignored, and special revelation in the sense of a direct communication of God to man was ignored. A trend soon developed in nineteenth-century theology which claimed that God had sufficiently revealed Himself in history and creation to make Himself known.

Several decades have now passed since the young pastor of Safenwil, Karl Barth, inadvertently rang the church bell,

as he said, by the publication of his commentary on Romans, and thus attempted again to bring back theologians to a theology of the Word. Barth directed part of his attack against what he considered a trend toward natural theology in Protestantism. He attempted to demonstrate that God is not to be found in nature, in history, or in human experience of any kind, but only in the special revelation that has reached man in the Bible. Barth began an energetic endeavor to assert and lay bare the exclusive nature of Biblical religious truth as wholly sui generis. He stated the problem of revelation as a matter of life and death for Christianity and theology. He believed that the fundamentally relativist trend of modern thinking, particularly the school of comparative religion, had excluded the idea of taking special revelation seriously. Barth reminded the world that revelation is an act of God, an act of divine grace for a lost world. Afraid of the pitfall into which Aquinas had fallen with his harmonious system of natural and supernatural theology, Barth maintained the discontinuity of "nature" and "grace" or "reason" with "revelation" by rejecting all natural theology.

This entire problem of the manifestation of God in history and creation and the doctrine of natural theology is of importance not only for the theological world but it is also of utmost political and economic significance. A current trend among political theorists denies any concept of natural law. The concept of human rights, which is at the base of

the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, is far removed from the theory of natural rights and natural law upon which the founding fathers depended when they formulated the Declaration of Independence.¹ This basic distinction can also be detected among economists. Those economists who deny a theory of natural law generally advocate some form of state controlled economy, whereas the advocates of natural law favor the free market system.²

This thesis does not pretend to be an exhaustive study of the entire issue of God's manifestations and natural theology. Few Missouri Synod Lutherans have concerned themselves with the problem. Jaroslav Pelikan refers to the "problem of natural theology" in his From Luther to Kierkegaard.³ He believes that Kant has rendered a great service to Lutheran theology by ridding it of Aristotelianism.

One by one, Kant's Critique does away with the elaborate proofs for the existence of God which Lutheran Aristotelianism shared with medieval scholasticism. For this fact, scholasticism has never forgiven Kant, and neither has rationalism. But Lutheran theology can be grateful

¹Edmund Opitz, The Perspective of Natural Law (Philadelphia: Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, 1957), p. 17.

²Edward F. Barret, The Natural Law and the Lawyer's Search For a Philosophy of Law (Philadelphia: Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, 1957), pp. 24-43.

³Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 21. See also Jaroslav Pelikan, "Natural Theology in David Hollaz," Concordia Theological Monthly, XVIII (April, 1947), 649.

to him for freeing it from the onerous responsibility of proving by means of reason that which is known by faith.⁴

Pelikan believes that it is important to note that the prominent theologians of the Age of Orthodoxy derived their natural knowledge of God from Aristotelian philosophy.⁵

Writing in the Concordia Theological Monthly, Robert Hoeferkamp expresses his doubts whether any of the traditional loci classici, Acts 14:15-17, Acts 17:22-31, Romans 1:19-20 and Romans 2:14-16, really teach a natural theology and a natural law in the traditional notions of these terms.⁶

Since the present-day ecumenical movement is wrestling with the problem of international disorder, the Church must examine the Biblical basis for natural law and natural theology. The entire issue of God's manifestation in history and creation also has important missionary implications which must be taken into consideration.⁷

⁴Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 92.

⁵Ibid. p. 68.

⁶Robert Hoeferkamp, "Natural Law and the New Testament," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIII (September, 1952), 664.

⁷Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non Christian World (New York: International Missionary Council, 1939), p. 122.

CHAPTER II

KARL BARTH

Article II of the Confessio Belgica states that man knows God by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, and that God has also revealed himself more clearly and fully by His holy and divine Word. For many years Article II was considered the Scriptural idea concerning God's revelation. Karl Barth, however, observed that numerous other sources besides Holy Scripture were being accepted as means of revelation.¹ He soon became opposed to any such two-sources-theory. He feared that Holy Scripture would inevitably be pushed into the background in favor of a second source. Much to his dismay, Barth discovered the fatal aspect of natural theology within Article II of the Belgic Confession. In spite of their emphasis upon the "sola scriptura," according to Barth, even Augustine and the Reformers failed to terminate decisively the problem of another revelation and knowledge of God.

Sie konnte sich (und das war vielleicht ihr bisher
groesztes Meisterstueck) vor den im uebrigen so scharfen
Augen der Reformatoren in der Weise verborgen halten
oder als harmlos hinstellen, dasz es wohl zu einem
neuen, den Autustinismus noch uebertreffenden Bekenntnis
zu der freien Gnade nach der soteriologischen, inhaltlichen
Seite dieses Begriffes, und positiv, in der Wiederaufrichtung
des Scriptorinzips, wohl auch zu einem neuen Bekenntnis zu

¹Karl Barth, Kirchliche Dogmatik (Zurich: Verlag der
Evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1940), II, 1, p. 141. Hereafter
cited as K. D.

der Einheit der Offenbarung Gottes in Jesus Christus-- leider aber nicht in derselben Klarheit negativ zu einer grundsatzlichen Ausscheidung der Frage nach einer anderen Offenbarung and Erkenntnis Gottes gekommen ist, so dasz Unsicherheiten und auch nicht zu leugnende tatsaechliche Inkonssequenzen in dieser Hinsicht schon bei ihnen selbst moeglich geworden sind.²

According to Barth, the Church has always been seduced into not being completely satisfied with the revelation of Jesus Christ, the only revelation in God's Word.³

Barth claims that modern theologians continually and quite naturally ask how man can know about God at all. Modern theology has been greatly concerned with the grounds of the certainty of knowledge. It begins with the fact of man's self-consciousness as a given something. With that as the one pole, it asks whether there is another pole that is anything more than an illusion. Wobbermin has answered this question, says Barth, by saying that we must postulate the idea of God as the other pole of revelation.⁴ D. L. Ihmels, too, starts out with the idea of the human self as a given certainty. For him, as well as for Wobbermin, the idea of God is really nothing more than the idea of man's certainty about himself. Even Erich Schaeder, that champion of a "theocentric theology," is said to offer nothing but the product

²Ibid., p. 140.

³K. D. I. 2, p. 79.

⁴K. D. I. 1, p. 52.

of the human consciousness.⁵ Barth similarly dismisses Karl Heim's efforts at finding a solution for the problem of man's knowledge, as ending, in the final analysis, in such a way as to make them a laughing-stock for a modern Feuerbach. According to Heim, man knows God because he participates in the consciousness of God. Barth claims that Heim is a consciousness theologian after the pattern of Descartes, and that all consciousness theologians have forgotten that it is impossible by any intellectual construction to come to the knowledge of God.⁶

When we speak of God, Barth says, we speak not only of that of which we know nothing intellectually, but also of that of which we have no experience.⁷ The preacher is unable to speak of God even when God himself commands him to do so. He does not know God, and he will not know God at any future time, yet he must speak of God since he is under a divine command.⁸

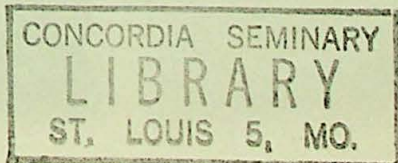
Since man cannot know God through nature, Barth has consistently centered his attack upon natural theology as the great enemy of the Christian faith. Barth was faced with a unique predicament when he was invited to deliver the Gifford lectures, since Gifford had stipulated that the

⁵K. D. I. 1, pl 52.

⁶Ibid., p. 53.

⁷Ibid., p. 59.

⁸Ibid., p. 61.



lectures were to be given on the subject of natural theology and should serve the "promoting, advancing, teaching and diffusing" of the study of natural theology. Barth accepted the invitation, explaining that perhaps he could serve the interest of natural theology by clearly defining its antithesis.⁹

Barth maintains that both Rome and modern Protestantism have an erroneous view of revelation. The central question in Barth's opposition toward Rome and modern Protestantism directly concerns the reality and nature of God's revelation. Although, unfortunately, Luther and Calvin also made use of natural theology, their unique significance lies in the fact that they recognized that the church and our salvation are based exclusively upon the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.¹⁰ Barth considers natural theology to be one of the most dangerous and persistent enemies of church and theology.

God's Revelation in Christ

Barth's rejection of natural theology is motivated by his conception of God's revelation in Christ as the unique and exclusive revelation in the world. Barth claims that, according to the New Testament witness, the "einfache und Wirklichkeit Jesus Christus" is to be defined as the Word of

⁹Karl Barth, Gotteserkenntnis und Gottesdienst nach Reformatorischer Lehre (Zurich: Zollikon Verlag, 1938), p. 43.

¹⁰K. D. I. 1, p. 140.

God becoming man. "Es war also dieser Mensch Jesus von Nazereth Gottes Wort oder Gottes Sohn."¹¹

Der Inhalt des Neuen Testaments ist allein der Name Jesus Christus, der allerdings auch und vor allem die Wahrheit seiner Gottmenschheit in sich schlieszt. Dieser Name ganz allein bezeichnet die objektive Wirklichkeit der Offenbarung. Auch die Wahrheit der Gottmenschheit Christi kann ihrerseits wieder nur diesen Namen bezeichnen und so, also indirekt (indirekt auch da, wo sie direkt ausgesprochen wird!) die Wirklichkeit der Offenbarung. . . . Wir wenden uns nun jenem doppelten Satz zu: Gottes Sohn heiszt Jesus von Nazereth; Jesus von Nazereth ist Gottes Sohn. Wir haben damit in Kuerzesten Worten die doppelte Linie des christologischen Bekenntnisses im Neuen Testament bezeichnet.¹²

According to Barth, the Christian apprehension of revelation is the response of man to the Word of God whose name is Jesus Christ. It is the Word of God who creates the Christian apprehension of revelation. From the Word of God Christian revelation gains its content, its form and its limit.¹³

The Christian apprehension of revelation is that apprehension which is bound up with the name of Jesus Christ. . . . The name Jesus Christ, upon which the Christian apprehension is dependent, affirms that the Christian apprehension has already been found by the revelation.¹⁴

¹¹K. D. I. 2, p. 15.

¹²K. D. I. 2, p. 17. I. 1, p. 422.

¹³Karl Barth, Revelation, edited by John Baille and Hugh Martin (New York: Macmillan, 1937), p. 42.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 43.

Barth claims that before one can know anything at all about revelation one must first know Jesus Christ.¹⁵ Revelation is an historical occurrence. It is a matter of impartation to man and of God's being revealed. Without this historical being revealed of God, revelation would not be revelation.

In his entire discussion of revelation Barth does not intend to negate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity by his emphasis upon Jesus Christ as the only true revelation. The doctrine of the Trinity is, for Barth, a necessary and correct analysis of revelation, and revelation is for him throughout rightly interpreted precisely by this doctrine. There is no other way for him to the doctrine of the Trinity than just the way of an analysis of revelation. Revelation, in order to be rightly interpreted, must be interpreted as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.¹⁶ Only in the light of Barth's Trinitarian emphasis can his stress upon Christ as the only revelation be evaluated.

According to Barth, revelation is something entirely different from anything that has previously been known. "In Jesus Christ, and in Him alone, there enters upon the stage of human life that which is really new, and which is hitherto unknown, because veiled and hidden."¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁶K. D. I. 1, p. 326, 123, 318.

¹⁷Karl Barth, Revelation, p. 45.

The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is "einmalig" in an absolute sense; apart from that revelation there may be signs and witnesses, but there cannot be a repetition of the unique reality of that revelation.

It is, as the New Testament says, *εφ'απαξ*. There are indeed tokens of this reality, there are witnesses and testimonies to it, but it has no analogies and is nowhere repeated. It stands alone and it speaks for itself.¹⁸

When Christianity refers to God's revelation as the Word of God, it means Jesus Christ.¹⁹ Just because God's Word is God's revelation, it must be understood as identical with God Himself. The personalizing of the concept "Word of God" does not mean a denial of its "wordness." Precisely in His Word, says Barth, God is a person. This means, furthermore, that He is Lord of His own Word.²⁰

Revelation in the Christian sense is the Word of God, the Word spoken in divine Majesty, He to whom man belongs, to whom man cannot refuse to listen without calling himself into question, who calls man to decision, summons us to make common cause with Him. Neutrality towards the Word of God is impossible; we cannot say Yes and No at the same time. Obedience to the Word of God is not merely one of several possibilities. We do not confront this Word like Hercules at the crossroads. This is a case where there is only one possibility, the possibility of obedience. . . . Because revelation in the Christian sense is the Word of God, it is impossible to adopt the attitude of a mere onlooker towards it. . . . We cannot think and talk about the revelation of God; we can only reflect on what the Word

¹⁸Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁹Karl Barth, Against the Stream (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), p. 214.

²⁰Peter Monsma, Karl Barth's Idea of Revelation (Somerville: Somerset Press, 1927), p. 115.

itself says to us. We can only speak out of the revelation itself; otherwise we shall be thinking and talking about something else.²¹

Barth repeatedly insists in almost all of his writings that only Jesus is the Word become flesh. According to him, only Jesus Christ can be called revelation in the original, true and strict meaning of the concept.²² Jesus Christ, the Immanuel, is the complete content of revelation.²³ Through this Jesus, the Word of God, man can speak of the God who awakens him to faith in himself through his revelation.²⁴

Eben in seiner Offenbarung, eben in Jesus Christus, hat sich der verborgene Gott faszbar gemacht. Nicht direkt, sondern indirekt. Nicht fuer das Schauen, sondern fuer das Glauben. . . . Das Wort ward Fleisch: das ist das erste, urspruengliche und regierende Zeichen aller Zeichen.²⁵

Only in Jesus, the Word made flesh, and not in the Bible as such does divine revelation take place. The Bible is merely the concrete means by which the Church is reminded of the divine revelation which has occurred. The revelation which produces and attests scripture has taken place. The event, in virtue of which the Bible is heard today as a valid witness and in virtue of which it is therefore God's word, is the "fulfilled time," "which is identical with Jesus Christ."²⁶

²¹Karl Barth, Against the Stream, p. 215.

²²Karl Barth, Revelation, p. 29.

²³K. D. I. 1, p. 110.

²⁴K. D. II. 1, p. 220.

²⁵K. D. II. 1, p. 223.

²⁶K. D. I. 1, p. 121.

Wenn in der christliche Kirche von Offenbarung gesprochen wird, dann ist eben nicht von solchen irdischen oder himmelischen Offenbarungen die Rede, sondern von der Macht, die ueber allen Maechten ist, dann handelt es sich nicht um die Offenbarungen eines goettlichen Oben oder Unten, sondern um die Offenbarung Gottesselber.²⁷

Only in Christ are all things, the earthly and the heavenly, comprehended.²⁸ Everything that deserves to be called knowledge in the Christian sense lives from the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Wenn wir den Namen Jesus Christus aussprechen, dann reden wir nicht von einer Idee. Der Name Jesus Christus ist nicht die durchsichtige Huelle, durch die hindurch wir auf ein Hoeheres blickten-fuer Platonismus ist hier kein Raum. . . . In seinem Lichte sehen wir das Licht unsere eigene Finsternis. Von der Erkenntnis Jesu Christi lebt alles, was im christlichen Sinne Erkenntnis zu heissen verdient.²⁹

Divine Present

Together with Barth's claim that revelation can only be the act of God's incarnation in Jesus Christ, it must be emphasized that for Barth the whole doctrine of revelation must be regarded from the point of view of this divine present.³⁰ In revelation God is present to us.

Der Satz: "Gott offenbart sich" ist, wenn die in der Heiligen Schrift bezeugte Offenbarungen gemeint ist, die

²⁷Karl Barth, Dogmatik im Grundriss (Muenchen: Kaiser Verlag, 1947), p. 96.

²⁸Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, translated by Douglas Horton (London: Pilgrim Press, 1928), p. 94.

²⁹Karl Barth, Dogmatik im Grundriss, pp. 75-75.

³⁰K. D. I. 2, p. 558.

Aussage ueber das Geschehen eines Ereignisses. Damit ist gesagt: er enthaelt auch die Angabe ueber eine der Offenbarung eigene Zeit. Mit Ruecksicht darauf gesagt, ist er gleichbedeuten mit dem Satz: "Gott hat Zeit fuer uns." Die Zeit, die Gott fuer uns hat, ist eben diese Zeit seiner Offenbarung, die Zeit, die in seiner Offenbarung wirklich ist, die Offenbarungszeit. . . Ernstlich nach der Zeit der Offenbarung fragend, werden wir ja sofort wissen, 1. Dasz wir gar keine andere Zeit haben als die Zeit, die Gott fuer uns hat, und 2. dasz Gott keine andere Zeit fuer uns als eben die Zeit seiner Offenbarung.³¹

God's revelation does not take place in the history of Jesus Christ. The incarnation cannot be directly identified with what took place in the life of Jesus of Nazareth in our historical past.

Diese andere Zeit ist aber die neue, die dritte Zeit, die dadurch entsteht und Bestand hat, dasz Gott sich offenbart, dasz er fuer uns frei ist, dasz er bei uns und mitten unter uns ist, ja, dasz er selber, ohne aufzuhoeren zu sein, was er ist, auch das wird, was wir sind. Gottes Offenbarung ist das Ereignis Jesus Christus. Wir wuerden es nicht als Gottes Offenbarung verstehen, wenn wir vorbehaltlos sagen wuerden, dasz es in unsere Zeit stattfand. Verstehen wir es als Gottes Offenbarung, dann werden wir vielmehr sagen muessen: dieses Ereignis hatte seine eigene Zeit: in diesem Ereignis geschah es, dasz, waehrend wir unsere Zeit fuer uns hatten wie nur je, Gott Zeit fuer uns, seine eignene Zeit fuer uns hatte.³²

Barth, however, makes it quite clear that the Son of God is the man Jesus of Nazareth and that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God or the Word.

Dasz Gottes Sohn oder Wort der Mensch Jesus von Nazareth ist, das is die eine--dasz der Mensch Jesus von Nazareth Gottes Sohn oder Wort ist, das ist die andere neu-testamentlich--christolische These. Gibt es eine Synthese

³¹Ibid., p. 50.

³²K. D. I. 2, p. 54.

beiden Thesen? Wir muessen auf diese Frage mit einem runden Nein antworten. Gewisz, es gibt einen Ort, wo diese beiden Thesen nicht zwei, sondern eine einzige sind.³³

Christomonism

Because of Barth's position that only in the incarnation revelation comes to us, his view has frequently been referred to as "Christomonism."³⁴ Barth claims that his only motive has been to hold fast at all cost to the Christological trend throughout, and he asks whether a Christian theologian may do anything else than think of "Christ only."³⁵

In spite of his apparent "christomonism," Barth continually emphasizes:

And therefore the fact to which the second Article bears witness, namely that God became man, must be absolutely determinative for us for the interpretation of the first and third. As there is no special and direct revelation of the Father and Creator as such, so also there is no special and direct revelation of the Spirit. But the revelation of the Son is as such at once the revelation of the Father and of the Spirit.³⁶

In the incarnation, revelation comes to us as revelation of God's grace and reconciliation. According to Barth, man cannot conceive of himself, either as one who receives and discovers even indirect revelation other than the revelation

³³K. D. I. 2, p. 25.

³⁴K. D. I. 1, pp. 230, 233.

³⁵K. D. III. 3, p. v.

³⁶Karl Barth, Credo, translated by J. Strathearn McNab (London: Hodder Stoughton, 1936), pp. 40-41.

which is in Jesus Christ.³⁷ It is only through this reconciliation which conquers and destroys radical enmity that a man learns to know God. Apart from this revelation, apart from this self-revealing activity of God, man only walks in darkness and cannot know God. This revelation is but one, but it has not taken place in vain; it has taken place once and for all. It concerns the whole world, it concerns all men. In that God became man the world had been given a new look.

Tokens of Revelation

The revelation has imprinted itself upon the nature and the history of this world in quite different forms, and this it does ever anew. These forms are not revelation itself. They are no multiplications of the Incarnation! They belong entirely to created things, as do all other forms. As tokens of revelation they can be misunderstood and overlooked.³⁸

These tokens of revelation are merely testimonies and witnesses to Jesus Christ, not by virtue of any power within them or proceeding from them, but by virtue of the power of Jesus Christ, the instrument in whose hands they are. The power of Jesus Christ is not operative save through these secondary and therefore conditioned means of revelation.³⁹ The fixed forms in which revelation reveals itself in nature and history are not revelation. God proves that he is Lord in this

³⁷Karl Barth, Revelation, p. 50.

³⁸Ibid., p. 64.

³⁹Ibid.

revelation, in that this revelation is plainly an event. However, it is not a historical event perceptible to the neutral observer, but an event of contingent uniqueness, "a fact beyond which there is no recourse."⁴⁰ The words and deeds of Jesus, the virgin birth and the empty tomb, the prophetic and apostolic testimony and the Holy Scriptures belong to these signs of the revelation.

To the tokens of revelation belong in an especial way the existence of the Prophets and of the Apostles, or, to put it another way, the witness of the Old Testament and the witness of the New. Here too we find both difference and correspondence. The event of revelation has a definite time which precedes it and a definite time which follows it. There is an expectation and there is a recollection of revelation. The subject of both is the same: namely, Jesus Christ--the time fulfilled in the midst of the times. The Prophets and the Apostles are therefore alike also in this respect, that they are men directly called to witness to the fullness of the times.⁴¹

Barth claims that Holy Scripture is the revelation in so far as Jesus Christ speaks to us through the witness of His prophets and apostles. Countless people would have to admit that there are large portions of Holy Scripture in which they have not yet heard the voice of Jesus Christ. Because of Holy Scripture, Proclamation and Sacrament exist in the Church as further tokens of revelation. Neither preaching nor sacrament can be dispensed with, but they are effective only through the power of the revelation which they attest

⁴⁰Otto Weber, Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics, translated by Arthur Cochrane (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p. 34.

⁴¹Karl Barth, Revelation, pp. 66-7.

and through that alone.⁴² Jesus alone is the revelation.

The "Einmalig" Event

Throughout his writings Barth intends to emphasize the absolute uniqueness and unrepeatableness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

Erkenntnis von Offenbarung kann unterbrochen werden. Sie kann sogar aufhören. Sie kann vertauscht werden mit falscher Erkenntnis, nichtiger Offenbarung. Sie hat aber, wo sie stattfindet, den Charakter der Einmaligkeit. Wie der Mensch nur einen Vater haben, wie er nur einem anderen Menschen zugleich in die Augen schauen, nur eines Menschen Wort zugleich hören kann, wie er nur einmal geboren ist und nur einmal sterben wird, so kann er auch nur eine Offenbarung glauben und erkennen. Man kann eine Mehrzahl von Religionen nebeneinander stellen und vergleichen, aber nicht eine Mehrzahl von Offenbarungen. Wer Offenbarung sagt, sagt: eine einzige Offenbarung ein fuer allemal geschehen, unwiderruflich und unwiderholbar.⁴³

The incarnation of the Word of God is an absolute and once-and-for-all reality. This reality has never happened in history before and will never happen again. "Dieser einfache Wirklichkeit ist aber weiter: eine schlechterdings einmalige Wirklichkeit."⁴⁴ It is a once and for all event just as God is once and for all. There will be no repetitions of this event.

Die Wirklichkeit der Offenbarung ist nicht eine Bestimmung aller Geschichte oder doch eines Teils, eines Ausschnitts

⁴²Ibid., p. 69.

⁴³Karl Barth, "Offenbarung, Kirche, Theologie," Theologische Existenzheute, Heft 9, p. 19.

⁴⁴K. D. I. 2, p. 13.

der ganzen Geschichte. Sondern sie ist diese ganz bestimmte Geschichte, vorher nicht und auch nachher nicht wieder geschehen, ein fuer allemal geschehen, aber eben ein fuer allemal nicht etwa einmal in allen oder in vielen Malen geschehen.⁴⁵

If this event was not once and for all, man would remain forever blind and God would be forever hidden.⁴⁶ God cannot be free for us except in the reality of this once and for all event, Jesus Christ. Even though the incarnation concerns especially the Son, God, even the whole God, Father, Son and Spirit, has become flesh.⁴⁷ On the other hand Jesus Christ is the only man who can be said to be flesh.⁴⁸

By emphasizing this "einmalig" event of the Incarnation Barth would avoid the analogia entis idea of Rome and the "natural theology" of Brunner. We are not to think of God as revealed in the cosmos before Christ or of an original man who was able to read this revelation aright.

Dieser Bescheid lautet aber: Unter den Wirklichkeiten dieses Kosmos gibt es keine, in der Gott fuer den Menschen frei waere. In diesem Kosmos ist Gott vielmehr verborgen und der Mensch blind. Nochmals: Es ist Gottes Offenbarungen, die ihm diesen Bescheid gibt.⁴⁹

Whether and to what extent our humanity may as such by the wisdom and goodness of the Creator be a fit medium for the

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 31.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 33.

revelation of God is a matter that is simply hidden from us.⁵⁰ For this reason man is to have nothing to do with a general anthropology. The time of God's revelation to Adam is simply hidden time. In it there is no freedom of God for man. God does not reveal himself through any special period of of historical continuity. Such a revelation, Barth fears, would be subject to the manipulations of the consciousness theologians, and would be repeatable. If God is to be free for man, He must come to him in redemption time.⁵¹

Old Testament Revelation

According to Barth, the Old Testament is the Witness of the pure expectation of the Revelation.⁵² "Diese Vorzeit ist die Zeit des Alten Testaments oder die Zeit des Zeugnisses der Erwartung der Offenbarung."⁵³ The Old Testament is not itself revelation, but is pointed toward the revelation. In the Old Testament Jesus Christ is revealed as the expected one. When in countless passages the New Testament speaks about Jesus of Nazareth, who goes through the cities and towns of Galilee and wanders to Jerusalem, who is there accused and condemned and crucified is the Jehovah of the Old

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 49.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 53-6.

⁵²Ibid., p. 77.

⁵³Ibid.

Testament: He is the Creator and God Himself.⁵⁴

The time of witness to the expectation of revelation is the time of the Old Testament, and the time of the New Testament is correspondingly the time of the "Zeugnis der Erinnerung der Offenbarung."⁵⁵ In this formulation one is struck by the fact that, unlike the view which has been by far the most common, the time of the New Testament itself is not characterized as the time of fulfillment or as fulfilled time. Barth emphasizes the opposite, namely, that Jesus Christ as the expected one is actually manifested in the Old Testament as well. In this connection he mentions Augustine, Calvin, Luther and even Lutheran Orthodoxy as support for his position.⁵⁶

Wir koennen also zur Begrueudung des Satzes, dass im Alten Testament Offenbarung, naemlich echte Erwartung der Offenbarung stattfindet, letztlich und grundsuetzlich auf keine andere Instanz verweisen als auf die Offenbarung selbst, d.h. aber auf Jesus Christus selber. Sein Kreuzestod beweist, dass jener Satz wahr ist, und er beweist es durch die Kraft seiner Auferstehung. Ist der Satz wahr, dann ist es darum weil Jesus Christus als der Erwartete tatsaechlich auch im Alten Testament offenbar ist.⁵⁷

In this "Hinweis" of the Old Testament to the revelation, the true nature of the Old Testament is expressed.

In his interpretation of Genesis 1, Barth claims that man can know creation only in terms of revelation in Jesus

⁵⁴Karl Barth, Dogmatik im Grundriss, pp. 96-7.

⁵⁵K. D. I. 2, p. 112.

⁵⁶Weber, op. cit., p. 44.

⁵⁷K. D. I. 2, p. 79.

Christ. The point at issue here is not just a noetic relationship. The noetic interconnection between Jesus Christ and creation has its ontological foundation in the fact that the purpose and meaning of creation is the formation of a platform for the history of the covenant which has its beginning, middle, and end in Christ.⁵⁸ Barth attempts to remain consistently Christocentric in his exegesis of the first few chapters of Genesis. The christological principle requires us, argues Barth, to replace the orthodox notion of an independent human nature operating in ordinary history with the idea of man's participation in Christ in real history, in Geschichte rather than Historie.

Barth claims that when the Bible speaks of creation it does not refer to history as such. "Geschichte, die wir nicht zu sehen und zu begreifen vermögen, ist aber jedenfalls keine historische Geschichte."⁵⁹ Creation is a "geschichtliche" reality and belongs to the succession of time-filling events.⁶⁰ It is not, however, "historische Geschichte." That is, it is outside the reach of all historical observation and report. The relationship that obtains between object and subject in ordinary history does not obtain in the Genesis account. Therefore we have to speak of unhistorical history. "Eben darum ist sie keine Historie und kann es von ihr auch keine

⁵⁸K. D. III. 1, p. 23.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 84.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 64.

Historie geben. Eben darum kann sie nur unhistorische Geschichte sein, und kann es von ihr nur unhistorische Geschichteschreibung geben."⁶² Barth terms Genesis 1 a saga but not a myth. By saga he means a poetically designed picture of a concrete once-for-all pre-historical Geschichtswirklichkeit subject to temporal-spatial limitations.⁶³ Myth is a mere historical presentation of non-historical speculation.⁶⁴ Saga, however, enables us to penetrate into the radical time of primal history. Regarding the creation account as pure saga enables us to see it in its true relation to the revelation, the Word of God. Barth affirms that creation takes place in time, in true genuine history. However, our ordinary calendar time is not true time. It has virtually become non-existent through grace. Through grace man becomes a participant in true, creation time.⁶⁵

Barth's attitude toward the relationship between the Old and New Testaments is also affected by his concept of time. As was previously noted, Barth claims that the Old Testament deals with the promise and the New with the fulfillment. But the difference is not to be taken as dealing with calendar years. The fulness of time does not refer to the passage of

⁶²Ibid., p. 84.

⁶³Ibid., p. 88.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 91.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 82.

centuries. All history is, strictly speaking, no more than a promise. The apostles were actually no closer to the fulfillment of revelation than the prophets.⁶⁶ The witnesses of the resurrection still deal with the promises only.⁶⁷ True witness always and everywhere points to a view beyond history. A true faith will not build its faith upon the quicksands of ordinary history.⁶⁸

Place of Revelation

Only in the "reiner Gegenwart Gottes" has revelation taken place, according to Barth. This divine revelation is the reconciling revelation of Jesus Christ. Only in the pure existence of Jesus Christ can revelation occur.⁶⁹ Barth is consistently opposed to the idea of the normality of the religious a priori as posed by Troeltsch. Barth's fear that anthropology might become an entrance for natural theology exercises a large influence upon his conception of God's revelation. Barth continually qualifies religion as unbelief. He poses the question:

Warum also ist gerade das, was hier Gottes Offenbarung genannt wird, das Geschehen in der Existenz Jesu Christi, in hervorgehobener, in einmaliger Weise Offenbarung?-- Die allgemeine Antwort auf diese Frage (nach der "Absolutheit" des Christentums, Troeltsch!) zunaechst zu gehen ist, lautet dahin: Es ist zuzugeben, wir sind umgeben von weithin zwingenden und weithin mit Recht

⁶⁶K. D. I. 1, p. 245.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 247.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 237.

⁶⁹K. D. I. 2, p. 127.

anspruchsvollen anderen "Offenbarungen." Wir werden aber vom christlichen Glauben aus zu diesen Offenbarungen sagen muessen: es fehlt ihnen eine letzte, schlechthin bindende Autoritaet.⁷⁰

Man can go through this world of revelations; he can be illumined here and convinced there and overpowered somewhere else. However, revelations do not have the power of the first and last thing which would hinder man from enjoying and being intoxicated by such revelations, and then going further, like a man who beholds his face in a mirror and passes on and forgets what he has seen. All these revelations are devoid of any final binding force.⁷¹

Nicht darum, weil sie nicht gewaltig, nicht darum, weil sie nicht sinnvoll und ergreifend waeren, aber weil es sich in ihnen allen--so werden wir vom christlichen Glauben aus bekennen muessen--doch nur um Offenbarung der Groesse, der Guete, der Schoenheit der von Gott geschaffenen Erde handelt. Die Erde is voller wunder und Herrlichkeit.⁷²

According to Barth, the earth could not be God's creature if it were not full of revelations. Philosophers, poets and musicians are all aware of these revelations, but these revelations of the earth and the earthly spirit lack the authority which binds man conclusively. Man may pass through this earth without being ultimately bound. But there could also be heavenly revelations of that invisible and inconceivable reality of creation, with which we are

⁷⁰Karl Barth, Dogmatik im Grundriss, p. 97.

⁷¹Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, translated by G. T. Thomson (New York: Philosophical Library), p. 83.

⁷²Karl Barth, Dogmatik im Grundriss, p. 97.

surrounded. There are indeed occasions of wonder in the world. But these heavenly revelations are in reality creaturely revelations. They can solve no ultimate problems.

Es kann uns begegnen wie der Bote eines grossen Koenigs, den wir als grossen und maechtigen Mann bestaunen moegen, dem gegenueber wir aber doch wissen: es ist nicht der Koenig selber, es ist nur seine Bote. So sind wir allen Gewalten des Himmels und der Erde und allen ihren Offenbarungen gegenueber dran. Wir wissen es gibt noch ein Hoeheres.⁷³

Regardless how powerful these revelations may be, and even though they attain the size of an atom bomb, they do not compel us and cannot finally impose upon us. "Wenn der Erdkreis zerbricht, so werden den Unverzagten nur die Truemmer treffen." Man has experienced many frightful things during the war, but man is not broken by the lords who are not the Lord. Intrepidly he passes through the ruins and asserts himself against the earthly powers.⁷⁴

Offenbarung der Versoehnung

God comes to Man in his Son through grace and reconciliation. Barth claims that it is a denial of grace to assert that God is known outside of His revelation in the Incarnate Word. The Reconciler is God the Lord in man's fallen world. The Work of the Word is God's presence in which he makes himself known. Since it is a miraculous occurrence in the midst of

⁷³Ibid., p. 98.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 96.

darkness, it can only be designated as revelation. Reconciliation is merely another word for the same thing. Barth asserts that "revelation" and "reconciliation" are synonymous terms, but he emphasizes that according to the New Testament "redemption" does not coincide with "revelation" and "reconciliation." "Redemption" seen from the standpoint of revelation or reconciliation, is rather God's action which is still outstanding, future, and to be consummated.⁷⁶

Barth continually insists that revelation is to be spoken of as final complete grace in the world.⁷⁷ Through this grace and reconciliation God encounters us in such a way that we can understand him.⁷⁸ It is man's rejection of free grace which causes him to accept natural theology and to minimize the meaning of the Incarnation.⁷⁹ In his discussion of natural theology Barth asks why it is that, in spite of all the evidence against natural theology, it still continues to persist.⁸⁰ He concludes that natural theology persists simply because of man's natural enmity toward free grace. Natural theology is the unavoidable

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 430.

⁷⁷K. D. I. 2, p. 41.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 43.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 157.

⁸⁰K. D. II. 1, p. 141.

theological expression for the fact of man's rejection of free and complete grace. It bears witness to man being closed to grace. It attests man's religious self-sufficiency and enmity to grace. And after all, Barth asserts, there is nothing remarkable about that.

Merkwuerdig, wunderlich und erklærungsbeduerftig ist also nicht das Phaenomen der natuerlichen Theologie als solcher, sondern das Phaenomen, das darin besteht, dass die natuerliche Theologie im Raum der christlichen Kirche (wie uebrigs auch im Raum anderer Religionen) nun doch wenigstens scheinbar eine andere Theologie, eine Theologie der Offenbarung, neben sich dulden kann.⁸¹

According to Barth, man's natural enmity to grace causes him to absorb and domesticate revelation itself. "Der als Absorbierung und Domestizierung der Offenbarung beschriebene Triumph der natuerlichen Theologie im Raum der Kirche ist sehr schlicht der Prozess der Verbuergerlichung des Evangeliums."⁸²

Barth claims that natural theology stands for the possibility of knowing God in such a way that the knowledge of his grace and mercy is not yet included. Natural theology assumes the possibility of a certain Vorherwissen which is not yet the knowledge of the merciful Father of Jesus Christ. Man's sin is his self-assertion against God, his turning away from the divine grace, his exaltation of the self into the place of God. Man's truth is distorted because he idolatrously erects his finite perspective into a universal

⁸¹ ibid., p. 152.

⁸² ibid., p. 157.

and insists that God and man ought to see life through his eyes. But in reality it is impossible for man to think anything that is pleasing to Him. Our creaturehood and our sin mean that when we reason about God, our thought is vitiated by pride and by subtle pretension that by its reasoning would control God and use Him for our human purposes. To attach religious value to even our loftiest thinking about God is a kind of idolatry. In his discussion of the relationship between free grace and natural theology Barth becomes particularly vehement in his opposition to natural theology.

When a man is occupied with genuine theology, he will always regard the so-called natural theology as an abyss. If he does not want to fall into it he will not go near it. In horror and indignation he will turn his back on it as the great temptation and fountain of errors. He does not meddle with it. . . . In the complete repudiation of natural theology, one does not first stare at a snake, in order to continue to stare, until he is hypnotized and is really bitten by it. When he first sees it he strikes it with his walking stick and strikes it dead.⁸³

Barth continually emphasizes that the faith by which we receive the word is not our own doing. We dare not be proud of our faith. Human pride is so persistent, so subtle, that it must be left no ground on which to stand. We can think only of God's grace when we say that God is knowable.

⁸³Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, Natural Theology (London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1946), p. 13.

Wir gedenken an Gottes Gnade, wenn wir sagen: Gott ist erkennbar. Wir gedenken an Gottes Gnade, wenn wir unser ganzes Fragen nach Gottes Erkennbarkeit nur als ein Zurueckkommen auf diese schon gefallene Entscheidung bezeichnen und verstehen. Denn erst geschieht durch Gottes Gnade--und ganz allein durch Gottes Gnade--dass Gott uns erkennbar ist. . . . Gottes Offenbarung steht nicht in unserer Macht und also nicht zu unserer Verfuegung. Gottes Offenbarung geschieht unter uns and fuer uns, im Bereich unserer Erfahrung und unseres Denkens; aber nun muss es Ernst damit gelten, dass sie von Gott her geschieht.⁸⁴

Religion--A Denial of Grace

Barth defines religion as an affair of the godless man and as unbelief because in it man is attempting to find God for himself instead of seeking God in His revelation of the Incarnate Word.⁸⁵ In religion an image of God which man has devised for himself takes the place of divine reality.⁸⁶ In religion man no longer continues in the spirit of Samuel who asked the Lord to speak to him, but in religion man demands that the Lord remain silent, since man will now do the speaking. In religion man denies free grace and again attempts to justify himself, but this is precisely what God does not tolerate in revelation.⁸⁷ In religion man takes the initiative, and the gracious decision is made for us as a divine approach.

⁸⁴K. D. I, p. 74.

⁸⁵K. D. I. 2, p. 327.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 329.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 338.

In seinem Wohlgefallen ist Gott Gott unter uns und fuer uns: in dem ganz allein von ihm ausgehenden und voll zogenen Uebergriff, in welchem er sich zu dem Unsrigen macht, In seinem Wohlgefallen ist er uns offen in der Offenheit, in der er sich selbst offen ist. Sein Wohlgefallen ist die Wahrheit, durch die wir die Wahrheit erkennen.⁸⁸

The only way to know God is to be known of God. In religion man cannot know God. Only by returning to the central position of the Reformation will man ever know God. "Wir haben keinen Weg, uns der Erkennbarkeit Gottes und also der Gewisheit unserer Gotteserkenntnis zu versichern, der an der Gnade und Barmherzigkeit des goettlichen Wohlgefallens vorbeifuehren wuerde."⁸⁹

Barth is consistently opposed to the idea of the normality of the religious a priori as posed by Troeltsch. He concludes that the subjective pole of the divine-human relationship is a condition of lostness. Barth does not want to think of the value of religion from the viewpoint of man and especially not as the expression of the life and activity of man on his way toward God. "Religion ist eine Angelegenheit, man muss geradezu sagen: die Angelegenheit des gottlosen Menschen."⁹⁰

Nach der prinzipiellen Bedeutung des religiösen Vorganges neben den andern Lebensvorgaengen haben wir gefragt, nach dem Sinn der Religion, und als Erstes gefunden, dass in der Religion die Sünde zur Sklavensaufstand des

⁸⁸K. D. II. 1, pp. 80-1.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 81-2.

⁹⁰K. D. I. 2, p. 327.

Menschen gegen Gott zum anschaulichen Ausbruch kommt, und bedenken den Sinn der Freiheit Gottes und unserer Freiheit--wie sie jenseits dieser Gegebenheit und Anschaulichkeit stattfindet.⁹¹

According to Barth, religion is nothing but the attempt to know God by way of man's own abilities. There is no continuous line between religion and revelation.⁹² But in the context of true faith, religion is no longer a human disposition, but a disavowal of all human capability; it is thus true religion in the event of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.⁹³ Barth asserts that if man would believe, he would listen rather than speak; he would let something be given him instead of insisting on taking something. "Weil die religion dieses Greifen ist, darum ist die Religion Widerspruch gegen die Offenbarung, der konzentrierte Ausdruck des menschlichen Unglaubens."⁹⁴

Analogia Entis

Barth comes to terms with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the analogia entis. According to this doctrine, there exists something in common between God and man.⁹⁵ By means of analogy it is thought possible to arrive at the knowledge

⁹¹Karl Barth, Der Roemerbrief (Muenchen: Kaiser Verlag, 1924), p. 228.

⁹²K. D. I. 2, p. 329.

⁹³K. D. I. 2, p. 362.

⁹⁴K. D. I. 2, p. 330.

⁹⁵K. D. II. 1, p. 86.

of the existence of God, without yet knowing anything of the grace and mercy of God. According to Barth, the analogia entis injures the unity of God because it abstracts the being aspect in God from the fullness of God's activity and thus comes to an independent theology of the first article. Such an attempt to reach a certain and true knowledge of God without acknowledging God's grace, Barth refers to as an assault upon the Christian concept of God.

Diskussionlos darum, weil sie ja, wie unsere Auseinandersetzung mit der römisch-katholischen Lehre gezeigt hat, nur möglich werden kann auf Grund eines Attentats auf christlichen Gottesbegriff und weil es doch eigentlich ausgeschlossen sein sollte, dass die christliche Gotteslehre und mit ihr die Dogmatik und also die Frage nach der reinen Lehre mit diesem Attentat beginnt.⁹⁶

While attacking the analogia entis, Barth emphasizes that the church should never attempt to prove the existence and knowability of God on general philosophical grounds. He admits that in his earlier Dogmatics he had been unable to cut himself loose altogether from philosophical construction. For that reason, he says, men were able to read into his system a philosophical system. That a Roman Catholic like Erich Przywara could find in his theology a system of correlationism, that Gogarten could think of his theology as even concerned with anthropology, and that others could relate his thinking to the Existenz philosophers of that day, called his attention to a possible lack of clarity on his own part.

⁹⁶K. D. II. 1, p. 93.

Since then Barth has set off his position more sharply than ever against the natural theology and analogia entis of the Roman Church, in a study of Anselm's method of procedure.⁹⁷ Contrary to popular opinion, Barth contends, Anselm did not seek to establish the existence of God by an apriori argument. First Anselm believes, and then he seeks to understand. Throughout his work Anselm is concerned only with a necessity of faith. Anselm seeks for proof because he wants to understand, and he wants to understand because he believes.

Glauben heiszt naemlich bei Anselm nicht nur ein Hinstreben des menschlichen Willens zu Gott hin, sondern ein Hineinstreben des menschlichen Willens in Gott und also auch ein wenn auch geschoepflich begrenztes Teilnehmen an der Aseitaet, der Selbst--und Alleinherrlichkeit und also an der Beduerfnislosigkeit Gottes.⁹⁸

Theology then must not attempt to prove the existence of God but simply take God's existence for granted.⁹⁹ Theologians should not concern themselves with any effort to present theology as a science. The postulates of ordinary science should not interest the true theologian. Even the minimum

⁹⁷Karl Barth, Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselms Beweis der Existenz Gottes im Zusammenhang seines theologischen Programms. (Zurich: Verlag der evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1930).

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 6.

⁹⁹K. D. I. 1, p. 225.

requirement of science, freedom from contradiction, must be ignored. Evangelical theology presents a God who deals and acts in freedom.¹⁰⁰

By insisting on an absolute contrast between being and consciousness, Barth intends to reach a God who is not under the control of the human consciousness. From the point of view of thought, Barth argues, God's existence must be considered entirely impossible.¹⁰¹

As transcendent, God is man's creator. He freely gives Being to, or withholds it from, a creature who is wholly dependent upon the will of God. As immanent, God maintains the creature He has made wholly within Himself. God is nearer to the creature than the creature is to itself. God can therefore wholly hide Himself and wholly reveal Himself in His creature.

Gott ist frei, seine Distanz als Gott ihr gegenueber zu wahren und ebenso frei, mit ihr ins Buendnis zu treten, ja noch mehr: die Kreatur selbst im strengsten vollkommensten Sinn in die Einheit mit seinem eigenen goettlichen Sein, in die Einheit mit sich selbst zu erheben. Gott ist frei, ueber die Welt zu herrschen in vollkommenster Majestaet, aber ebenso frei, in der Welt zu dienen als der geringste und schlechteste aller Knechte, frei auch dazu, der in der Welt und von der Welt Verstossene und Verworfenene zu sein. . . . Gott ist frei, der Kreatur ganz innerlich und zugleich als Er selbst aeusserlich zu sein: totus intra et totus extra, und wohlverstanden!¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰K. D. I. 1, p. 7.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰²K. D. II. 1, p. 354.

Throughout his writings, Barth has consistently maintained that any knowledge of the being of God apart from grace is absolutely impossible. The unity of God would be destroyed, and Barth claims that this is precisely what The Roman Church accomplished when it spoke of the knowledge of God as Creator. Grace becomes nature for Roman Catholicism. God's activity disappears in and merges with the activity of men who have experienced grace, and the personal act of God changes immediately into a constantly present relationship. An analogia entis, that is, the occurrence of a God-likeness of the creature also in the fallen world, is affirmed, and therewith the possibility is opened of using the profane "es gibt" also with reference to God and divine things and the crisis-character of revelation and faith is denied.¹⁰³

Barth believes that the Christian idea of God is split up by the analogia entis. He sees in this concept the essence of natural theology. The result of the analogia entis is that man does not come into contact with the true God of revelation but with an Aristotelian concept of abstract being. According to Barth, the analogia entis is the cardinal doctrine of the Roman Church and the invention of the Antichrist.

I can see no third possibility between play with the analogia entis, legitimate only on Roman Catholic ground, between the greatness and the misery of a so-called natural knowledge of God in the sense of the Vaticanum, and a Protestant theology self-nourished

¹⁰³K. D. I. 1, p. 39.

at its own source, standing upon its own feet, and finally liberated from such secular misery. . . . I regard the analogia entis as the invention of anti-christ, and think that because of it one can not become Catholic. Whereupon I at the same time allow myself to regard all other possible reasons for not becoming Catholic, as shortsighted and lacking in seriousness.¹⁰⁴

The Image of God

Intimately associated with Barth's opposition towards the analogia entis is his concept of the imago Dei. Barth affirms that man had once been created ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei, but he holds that this image and likeness of God has been so totally defaced by the Fall as to leave not a trace behind. Nothing but a wholly new act of creation will suffice. Man still remains human, but his humanity has been so totally corrupted by sin that he is no longer able to hear God's voice until, through faith in Christ, the image and similitude of God are created in him again.¹⁰⁵ Barth opposed Brunner for making a distinction between the formal and material imago Dei in man. Brunner claimed that in the formal sense man is both a subject of experience and responsible, even though a sinner. In the formal sense, according to Brunner, the image of God is intact, while in the material sense the image of God has

¹⁰⁴Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, translated by G. T. Thomson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. x.

¹⁰⁵Karl Barth, "Nein, Antwort on Emil Brunner," Theologische Existenz Heute, Heft 14, p. 25.

been deformed by sin and nothing has escaped the defilement of sin. It is possible, Brunner believes, for God to speak to man even though man is a sinner.¹⁰⁶

Barth agrees with Brunner that man is and remains a subject of experience. But he senses danger when this fact is extended to include man's capacity for revelation. Barth believes that such a concept of the imago Dei would eventually lead to a denial of grace.

The Bible and Natural Theology

Barth admits that there is a "line" running through Holy Scripture which forces one to ask whether the Bible does not speak of natural theology.

Wir haben uns zu fragen: Spricht das Alles darum fuer die Berechtigung und Notwendigkeit einer natuerlichen Theologie, weil es fuer eine von der Bibel selbst behauptete Erkennbarkeit Gottes unabhaengig von seiner Offenbarung spricht? Das waere offenbar dann der Fall, wenn sich das, was die Bibel auf dieser Linie sagt, von dem, was die ueber Gottes Offenbarung selber sagt, in der Weise trennen liesze, dass das auf dieser Linie Gesagte den Charakter einer selbststaendigen Ausagenreihe bekaeme.¹⁰⁷

Besides the main line of revelation, the Incarnate Word, Barth speaks of a subsidiary line, but claims that this subsidiary line has no independent status. He asserts that there is no doubt as to what is the main line of revelation in the Bible.

¹⁰⁶Emil Brunner, Natur und Gnade (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1935), p. 18.

¹⁰⁷K. D. II. 1, pp. 108, 110.

Also: dass die entscheidende Linie, die Hauptlinie der biblischen Botschaft, auf die Erkennbarkeit Gottes in seiner Offenbarung und nicht auf eine fuer den Menschen im Kosmos als solchen bestehende Erkennbarkeit Gottes zurueck geht, darueber braucht hier nicht gestritten zu werden.¹⁰⁸

In the light of this main line Barth claims that it is impossible for man to know God from any other subsidiary line. It is impossible to know God outside of his divine grace. The Bible cannot mean to indicate that man can know God from this subsidiary line.¹⁰⁹ This subsidiary line is not an independent revelation next to Christ; it is not a prior revelation of God in the cosmos, but it concerns a light which has its source in the revelation from Christ and shines upon the world.

Barth agrees that Psalm 19 states that the Heavens declare the glory of God, but continues by claiming that whatever the Bible says concerning the glory of God in His works, is itself read into the text of the cosmos.

An sich und als solcher waere der Text des Kosmos ja stumm, wie es im Psalm 19, 4 ausdruecklich heisst: "Ohne Sprache, ohne Worte, mit unhoerbare Stimme" sagt es ein Tag dem anderen und tut es eine Nacht des anderen kund. Und dasselbe duerfte dann mutatis mutandis auch von den literarischen Vorlagen zu sagen sein, die hier in Betracht kommen moegen.¹¹⁰

According to Barth, there is no original revelation of God through the work of His hands. God does not reveal Himself in history as such. At this point Barth is particularly

¹⁰⁸K. D. II. 1, p. 112.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 121.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 123.

firm in his opposition of the consciousness theologians. He argues that these theologians seek for the identification of history with revelation. They are prepared to say not only that revelation is history but also that history is revelation. In this they are definitely mistaken.¹¹¹ Barth contends that their debate as to the historicity of this or that is in reality foolish, since the documents of history about which they are struggling pretend to offer nothing more than a witness to primal history. Such an argument about the historicity of certain facts will never be settled. In history as such all things may be interpreted diversely.¹¹²

Barth similarly asserts that Romans 1:17-21 must be read in the light of its context.¹¹³ Paul is not here speaking of the heathen as such in general but again in the light of the revelation in Christ.¹¹⁴ In his Roemerbrief Barth commented on these verses in Romans:

Wir wissen, dasz Gott der ist, den wir nicht wissen, und dasz eben dieses Nicht-Wissen das Problem und der Ursprung unseres Wissens ist. Wir wissen, dasz Gott die Persoenlichkeit ist, die wir nicht sind, und dasz eben dieses unser Nicht-Sein unsere Persoenlichkeit aufhebt und begruendet. Dieser Gottesgedanke, die Einsicht in die absolute Heteronomie, unter der wir stehen, ist autonom: Wir widerstehen nicht etwas

¹¹¹K. D. I. 1, p. 232.

¹¹²K. D. I. 1, p. 237.

¹¹³K. D. II. 1, p. 445.

¹¹⁴Max Lackmann, Von Geheimnis Der Schoepfung (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1952), pp. 180-2.

fremden, sondern unserem Eigensten, nicht etwas Fernen,¹¹⁵
sondern dem Naechstliegenden, wenn wir ihm widerstehen.

Barth asserts that it is only in the light of Golgatha that the heathen are without excuse, and that there is no doubt that Paul was referring even in these passages to the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Es kann kein Zweifel sein, dass Paulus damit die Offenbarung der Gnade Gottes in Jesus Christus gemeint hat. Eben diese Offenbarung der Gerechtigkeit Gottes hat nun aber fuer ihn zunaechst eine Schattenseite, auf der sie die Offenbarung deroran des Zornes Gottes ist.¹¹⁶

In his interpretation of Paul's thought in Romans 1, Barth claims that God is essentially the Unknown and that the created order should have made man aware of that fact. Only the fact that God is Unknown can be discovered from the things that are made. The created universe should have induced in man the only attitude which truly befits him, namely, that in which he recognizes his creatureliness over against God, who is the Wholly Other. When Paul asserts that man has failed to know God through the created order, what he means is that man has failed to acknowledge his creatureliness, not that he has missed what we may call a positive revelation of God through the natural world.

When Paul says (Rom. 1. 19) that what can be known of God is manifest to them, for God manifested it unto them, the whole context as well as the immediately preceding statement (Rom. 1. 18) shows that Paul sees

¹¹⁵Karl Barth, Der Roemerbrief, p. 21.

¹¹⁶K. D. II. 1, p. 131.

the truth about God "held down" among men, made ineffective, unfruitful. What comes of it in their hands is idolatry. And with Paul, as with all the prophets and apostles, idolatry is not a preparatory form of service of the true God, but its perversion in the very opposite, to which therefore they, with their witness to God, do not attack but oppose their witness. The single point of contact--one that, it seems to me, is employed very ironically--is reckoned by Paul the altar of the unknown God (Acts xvii. 23.) The "unknown God" of the Athenians, the God of the agnostics was, to Paul's view, an idol like all the rest. Only God's revelation, not our reason despairing of itself, can carry us over from God's incomprehensibility.¹¹⁷

Barth's entire interpretation of Romans 1 is conditioned by his fear that men will accept another source of knowledge of God outside of the revelation in Christ. He repeatedly states that such a second source would be in conflict with the redemptive character of God's revelation. Throughout his search for a second source of the knowledge of God, man demonstrates his natural enmity toward grace.

Barth's opposition to the second article of the Belgic Confession is more than a matter of semantics. For Barth indirect or general revelation and natural theology are inseparably united. The basic idea of Barth's violent attack lies in the fact that he considers them to be on the same plane.

¹¹⁷Karl Barth, Credo, pp. 11-2.

¹Karl Barth, Die Christliche Lehre von Gott (Zürich: Nechtel Verlag, 1949), p. 237.

²Ibid.

CHAPTER III

EMIL BRUNNER

The doctrine of revelation plays an important role in Brunner's theology. The revelation of God is truly His self-communication. Jesus Christ is the personal presence of God. He who reveals to us the true God is indeed fully God, but even this revelation does not exhaust the whole mystery of God. According to Brunner, the revelation does not remove the mystery of God but actually deepens the mystery of God.¹ The revelation issues from the mystery of God: it reveals to us the heart of God. All that can be said about God, all that the Son can disclose to us of the Nature of God, still leaves a residue of mystery--something which can never be said; something unfathomably mysterious.

Auch der offenbarte Gott bleibt ein verborgener Gott und will als der unergründlich-verborgene verehrt sein. "Gott wohnt in einem Licht, da niemand zukommt"-- das gilt nicht nur vor, sondern auch seit, durch und trotz der Christusoffenbarung. Pater est fons totius Trinitatis. Das Geheimnis Gottes steht am Anfang und am Ende der Offenbarung.²

Brunner claims that the irrational element is dominant in revelation. In dealing with the reaction that God sustains

¹Emil Brunner, Die Christliche Lehre von Gott (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1946), p. 239.

²Ibid.

to the entrance of sin into the world, Brunner says that communication must conform to the breach of sin. "Diese Kundgebung muss geschehen sie muss historisch sein; dem irrationalen Einbruch der Sünde muss ein ebenso irrationaler Kundgebungsakt Gottes entsprechen oder aber es gibt keine Antwort."³ Brunner claims that God can reveal Himself only as one who is in contradiction to the present world and as one who breaks through its immanent order or law.⁴ Because revelation is not an immanent possibility, it comes as a miracle and paradox, contrary to nature and reason. The content of revelation is the incomprehensible fact of the forgiveness of guilt. Revelation means always and everywhere a knowledge that is unexpected, something that has not been gained by our own efforts but, in one way or another, is always a gift, an "Aufschluss," which we could not have expected.⁵

Die biblische Offenbarung aber meint das unbedingt Unerwartete, ja das schlechthin nicht zu Erwartende. Sie meint nicht nur das, was man nicht erwarten konnte, sondern das, was man nicht einmal erwarten dürfte, weil es das Gegenteil dessen ist, was rechtmässiger- oder vernunftigerweise zu erwarten war: das Gott den liebt und dem seine Liebe schenkt, der ihm die Treue gebrochen und den Gehorsam aufgekuendet hatte. Das schlechthin Unerwartete und niemals zu Erwartende ist die vergebende Gnade.⁶

³Ibid., p. 295.

⁴Emil Brunner, Theology of Crises (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 33.

⁵Emil Brunner, Offenbarung und Vernunft (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1941), p. 30.

⁶Ibid., pp. 31-2.

In the New Testament sense, revelation is a "logische Ungeheuerlichkeit."⁷ Throughout his writings Brunner asserts that the irrational element is dominant in revelation.

Nevertheless, Brunner admits that knowledge of God is possible only in so far as there is a self-disclosure, a self-manifestation of God, that is, in so far as there is a "revelation." There is a doctrine of God, in the legitimate sense of the words, only in so far as God Himself imparts it. Christian doctrine points away from itself to its actual subject, i.e. to that which God Himself manifests and teaches about Himself.⁸ "Das dabei nicht nur Ursprung und Inhalt dieser goettlichen Lehre, sondern auch die Art und Weise des 'Lehrens,' der Kundgebung oder Selbstmitteilung eine besondere sein muss, ist evident."⁹

The thought of revelation for Brunner may be stated simply by personal revelation. Basic to Brunner's concept of the personal is the notion of the communication of the incommunicable. Revelation always means that something hidden is made known. The Biblical revelation is the absolute manifestation of something that had been concealed. It is a way of acquiring knowledge that is absolutely and essentially--and not only relatively--opposite the usual method

⁷ Emil Brunner, Der Mittler (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1941), p.30.

⁸ Emil Brunner, Die Christliche Lehre von Gott (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1946), p. 17, translated by Olive Wyon, The Christian Doctrine of God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), p. 14.

⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

of acquiring knowledge, by means of observation, research and thought.

Offenbarung meint die uebernatuerlich, wunderbar gegebene Erkenntnis dessen, was der Mensch schlechthin nicht wissen kann. Offenbarung stammt also aus einer Region, die als solche dem Menschen nicht zugaenglich ist. Das unbedingt Geheimnisvolle ist nicht nur teilweise, bis zu einem gewissen Grad, sondern unbedingt ganz und gar dem natuerlichen Erkennen des Menschen entzogen.¹⁰

The unconditioned mystery does not belong to this world; it is supramundane. To say that it is supramundane and that it can be known only through revelation really mean the same thing. Because it is supramundane, it can be known only through revelation. The mere fact that we cannot perceive it of ourselves and that we can receive knowledge of it only through revelation, indicates that it is something altogether above and beyond this world.

In the Bible we are not confronted by an impersonal supernatural Absolute, but by one who transcends this earthly life; God, the Creator and Lord, is the absolute Mystery. In the Bible, God and revelation are so intimately connected that there is no other revelation than that which comes to us from God, and there is "kein anderes Wissen von Gott als das durch Offenbarung."¹¹

Der eigentliche Inhalt der Offenbarung in der Bibel ist nicht etwas, sondern Gott selbst. Offenbarung ist Gottes Selbstkundgebung. Die eigentliche Offenbarung, das heisst

¹⁰ Emil Brunner, Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 24.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 25.

die Offenbarung, um die es im ganzen der Bibel geht, ist Gottes Selbstkundgebung. Uneigentlich ist diejenige Offenbarung, wo auf geheimnisvolle, "okkulte" Weise "irgend etwas" kundgegeben wird, zum Beispiel, wo verlorene Eselinnen zu finden seinen, also etwas, das der Natur der Sache nach auch auf natuerlichem Wege im Erfahrung gebracht werden koennte. Von solcher uneigentlicher "Offenbarung" ist sozusagen nur am Rande der Bibel die Rede; in ihrer Mitte geht es immer um die Offenbarung Gottes selbst, seines Wesens und Willens."¹²

God in His revelation is none other than the mysterious God who is from everlasting to everlasting. Even in His revelation God does not cease to be clothed in mystery. God's revelation never exhausts the mysterious fulness of His nature. The love of God which is revealed to us in His Incarnate Son is the nature of God; but this very love is unfathomable.¹³ The gods of Philosophy and mythology are divinities which can be thought of as in abstraction. However- the God of the Bible is the very God who rules and who wills to reveal Himself. The Christian God not only reveals Himself according to Brunner, but He is the God of revelation, whose very nature it is to reveal Himself.

In spite of Brunner's assertion that even in His revelation God does not cease to be clothed in mystery and that the irrational element is dominant in revelation, he still believes that revelation is a communication of truth. Revelation communicates the truth which is personal truth. A personal faith and a personal God are not possible when our

¹²Ibid., p. 26.

¹³Ibid., p. 48.

knowledge of God is the result of an interpretation of the world and the ego. A knowledge of a personal God can be gained only when God reveals Himself personally.

Das Hoehchst, das wir kennen, ist nicht das Ding, das Es, die Sache, sondern die Person. Die Person kennen wir als das in Anrede sich uns kundgebende, das sich selbstrebend Offenbarende. Darum ist fuer Gott, der sich uns selbstrebend kundgibt, der Personbegriff der einzig sachgemaess.¹⁴

The origin of the Christian knowledge of God is different from that of any other religion. The Christian's use of the word "revelation" has a totally different meaning from that which it has in all other religions, in metaphysics or in ethics. By "revelation" the Christian means the Word of God as a human person, i.e., such knowledge of the divine will as cannot be found through submersion in oneself or in the secret of the world, but comes through an act of communication, an act of self-impertation from outside of our own range, in which God gives Himself to us.¹⁵

Revelation is not only personal in its conveyance of the message, but it is also given to person. Revelation is address and "truth as encounter." Here it is important to recognize the dimensional distinctions which Brunner makes in regard to the truth. There is an "it" truth and there is a "Thou" truth. There is truth that can be expressed in

¹⁴ Emil Brunner, Die Christliche Lehre von Gott, p. 144.

¹⁵ Emil Brunner, The Word and the World (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), p. 21.

the third person; that is truth of this world; and there is the truth about God that can be expressed only in the second person. The Bible as a human record falls into the dimension of "Es Wahrheit." But the revelation of God is to be found in the dimension of "Du Wahrheit." Orthodoxy errs since it maintains that revelation is the communication of doctrine and because it refuses to distinguish between the Word of God and doctrine.¹⁶ Brunner is quite firm in his insistence that no doctrinal formulation can be equated with scriptural truth. The correctness of theological doctrine is determined by its direction to the Son of God. In opposition to the Roman Catholic view, the Reformation view of revelation is not a doctrine which is the object of faith, but Jesus Christ Himself. "Die Lehre ist nur dienendes Mittel, nur Fassung, und darum niemals unfehlbar."¹⁷ Doctrine can never be the real matter of revelation, for every doctrine always participates in the error of theorizing. Even though doctrine always requires correction, Christians need not despair, for God can also reveal His Word through false doctrines.¹⁸

Brunner claims that it is unfortunate that Greek

¹⁶Emil Brunner, The Divine Human Encounter (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), p. 172.

¹⁷Emil Brunner, Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 152.

¹⁸Emil Brunner, The Divine Human Encounter, p. 117.

intellectualism obscured the witness to Jesus Christ to that of a theological doctrine. The Church regarded preaching from the point of view of doctrine, instead of vice versa. Hence the proclamation of the Gospel--as was also the case with revelation--was regarded as the communication of doctrine.

Sie [die Kirche] verstand also nicht den Personalismus der Offenbarung, verstand darum nicht, dass der Uebergang von der Du-form zur Es-form, von der Anrede zur Lehre, der Uebergang von einer Dimension in eine andere sei, [✓] naemlich der Uebergang von der "Wahrheit als Begegnung" [✓] in die "Wahrheit als Idee." Sie macht aus der Offenbarung des Sohnes einer "ewigen Wahrheit ueber den Sohn." Sie nahm es nicht ernst, dass er selbst die Wahrheit ist.¹⁹

Revelation comes to its fullest expression in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is the principle of all revelation and of all knowledge of revelation. Between us and the Old Testament stands a new form of revelation, the fulfillment of all that was only promised in the Old Testament, and the actual content of the divine revelation proclaimed by the Apostles and the Church--Jesus Christ Himself. This revelation is not a "Word" but a person, a human life recognizable within history, a human destiny so similar to, and yet so diametrically opposed to, every other person. The revelation is:

Jesus von Nazareth, der Rabbi, der wundertaeter, der Zoellner und Suender Freund, der gekreuzigte und auferstandene und zur rechten Gottes erhobene Kyrios. Was immer er ist--so viel ist unwidersprechlich: Er ist kein Wort, keine Rede, kein Inbegriff von Saetzen wie die prophetische Rede. Und gerade das ist ja nun das jubelnd Bezeugte: das er gerade darum, weil er etwas ganz anders ist als eine Rede, naemlich Gottes

¹⁹ Emil Brunner, Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 147.

handelnde Person in Selbstvergegenwaertigung, die Vollendung der Offenbarung Gottes sei. Was die Propheten "nur" sagen konnten, worauf sie mit ihrem Wort nur hinweisen konnten, als erst Kommenwerdendes, Zukuenftig-Vollkommenes, das ist jetzt geschehen: Immanuel, Gott-mit-uns. Gott selbst ist jetzt da, nicht mehr nur ein Wort von ihm.²⁰

It is this that characterizes the new age as contrasted with the past as a whole, even as contrasted with the Revelation in the Old Testament. He Himself is now here; He Himself is speaking, but for that very reason He is not merely the one who speaks; He is the one who acts.

Only in a human person can God be perfectly revealed, for only man is made after the image of God. Christ is that Word which God has to say to us; but what he says is not something, but Himself. The Word is not an idea, but a person.

Er [Der Mittler] selbst ist die Offenbarung, wie er selbst das Wort ist; er ist das, was uns Gott zu sagen hat. Denn was Gott uns in ihm sage, ist nicht "etwas," sondern er selbst, der persoenliche Gott, sein Eigenname. Dieser Logos is keine Idee, sondern Person, kein Allgemeines, sondern "dieser." Das ist das Aergernis, dasz eine Persoenlichkeit, ein einzelnes Geschichtsfaktum die absolute Wahrheit sein soll, die Offenbarung.²¹

In Christ the hiddenness of revelation comes to its clearest expression, because there God becomes man. The entire theme of the Bible would be a mere theophany if the revelation of God were not also the complete entrance into the human reality.

²⁰ Emil Brunner, Die Christliche Lehre von Gott, p. 27.

²¹ Emil Brunner, Der Mittler, p. 238.

Die Herablassung Gottes, das Thema der ganzen Bibel, waere eine blosze Theophanie, ein goettliches Mirakel zum Anshauen, also gerade das Gegenteil einer existentiellen, absolut entscheidungsvollen Begegnung, wenn die Enthuellung Gottes nicht zugleich die voellige Verhuellung, das vollkommene Eingehen in die menschliche irdische Wirklichkeit waere.²²

According to Brunner, this revelation has no extension in history. Revelation for him is not a quantum, a large pearl in the string of historical events. A direct identity between revelation and the life of Jesus would be supernaturalism in the bad sense of the term.

Das Ewige kann nicht wie eine besonders grosse Perle in die Kette der geschichtlichen Ereignisse eingefuegt werden. Das Gewicht dieser Perle mueszte die Kette zerreißen. Das Ewige als Ereignis, die Offenbarung, hat als solche keine geschichtliche Ausdehnung. Das Ewige in der Geschichte die Offenbarung als das absolut Einmalige ist nicht als geschichtlich Ausgedehntes wahrnehmbar. Es ist nicht die in der Geschichte ausgebreitete Tatsache: Leben Jesu und geschichtliche Persoenlichkeit Jesu, sondern das unanschauliche, hinter allem Geschichtlich-Humanen verborgene Geheimnis der Person Jesu, nicht der Christus nach dem Fleisch, sondern der Christus nach dem Geist, das fleischgewordene Wort.²³

In our discussion so far both Barth and Brunner are in basic agreement. Both emphasize that Christ is the revelation of God, and both maintain that revelation is reconciliation.

Although Brunner still considered Barth his associate in their attempt to build a theology of the Word, Brunner began a counter offensive against Barth in 1930. Brunner firmly believes that, besides God's revelation in Christ,

²²Ibid., p. 295.

²³Ibid., pp. 271-2.

God can and does manifest Himself in nature and history. For Brunner it is clear that according to the Old and New Testaments the creation of the world is at once revelation.

Wo Gott etwas tut, da drueckt er dem, was er tut, den Stempel seines Wesens auf. Darum ist die Schoepfung der Welt zugleich Offenbarung, Selbstmitteilung Gottes. Dieser Satz ist nicht heidnisch, sondern christlicher Fundamentalsatz. Nirgens aber hat die Bibel der Anschauung Anlass gegeben, dass durch die Suende, des Menschen diese Erkennbarkeit Gottes in seinem Werk zerstoert sei, wenn sie auch gestoert ist. Was gesagt wird ist vielmehr dies, dass die Suende, unglaublicherweise, den Menschen blind mache fuer das, was doch da sichtbar uns vor Augen gestellt ist. Eben darum sind ja die Menschen unentschuldbar, weil sie denn Gott, der sich ihnen so deutlich manifestiert, nicht erkennen wollen.²⁴

Brunner asks whether the Bible does itself not say that God "of old time" spoke "unto the Fathers by divers portions and in divers manners." He claims that these "divers manners" must not be denied in the interest of unity; nor should they be depreciated and regarded as mere "signs" of the revelation. "So Karl Barth in "Revelation," ed. Baillie and Martin. S 62 ff."²⁵ "Es hat Gott nun einmal gefallen, sich anders zu offenbaren durch sein Schoefungswerk, anders durch die Vorlaeufer und den Vollender, anders bisher, als er sich am Ende aller Tagen zu offenbaren verheissen hat."²⁶ If this variety of revelation is either ignored or explained away in the interest of theological monism, the main point

²⁴ Emil Brunner, Natur und Gnade, (Tuebingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1934), p. 12.

²⁵ Emil Brunner, Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 59 n. 1a.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 56-60.

has been missed. None of these various forms of revelation resembles the others; none can be mistaken for another; none makes the rest superfluous; each has its own place and its own special significance; and only in their combination in the knowledge of faith which both look back to the beginning and forward to the end can we understand what the Bible means by revelation and faith.²⁷

Wir lehren eine allgemeine oder Schoepfungsoffenbarung darum, weil die Heilige Schrift sie unmissverstaendlich lehrt, und wir haben im Sinne, sie auch gemaess der Heiligen Schrift zu lehren. In dem wir das tun, bleiben wir in der allgemein kirchlichen und theologischen Tradition. Die Zeugnisse der Vaeter der Alten Kirche, sowohl ueber das Sasz, als auch ueber das Was und ueber die grosse Bedeutung dieser Offenbarung sind sehr zahlreich und--von kleineren Unterschieden abgesehen--einheitlich.²⁸

Brunner also observes that all the Reformers were in agreement with the Church Fathers and also taught a general revelation in creation. He notes that Calvin found it necessary to develop carefully the doctrine of the revelation in creation even in the Geneva Catechism, where Calvin's concern was to summarize only the most fundamental elements in the Christian faith. He quotes Calvin as claiming that the world itself is a kind of mirror ("speculum quoddam") in which man can behold God. Brunner similarly asserts that

²⁷Ibid., p. 60, translated by Olive Wyon, Revelation and Reason (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), p. 59.

²⁸Ibid.

Luther in his Roemerbriefkommentar frequently mentions God's revelation in creation. Brunner admits that the revelation of God in the Creation--and in the law--does not guarantee that man, for his part, will make right use of this knowledge.

Die Frage der Schoefungsoffenbarung und der natuerlichen Theologie treten also deutlich auseinander. Was die letztere betrifft, so reduziert sie sich bei Luther und Calvin auf eine Lehre von Heidentum, das heisst auf eine Lehre von der staendigen Verkehrung der in der Schoepfungsoffenbarung gegebenen Erkenntnisa. Aber dieses Goetzentum ist Luther wie Calvin der Beweis fuer die Tatsaechlichkeit der Schoepfungsoffenbarung.²⁹

Brunner quotes Luther as stating: "Nam quo pacto possent simulacrum vel aliam creaturam Deum appellare vel similem credere, si nihil quid esset Deus et quid ad eum pertineret facere nossent."³⁰ Brunner claims that the theologia naturalis of the Reformers consists in the view that apart from Christ man inevitably conceives the pagan idea of God and that this notion arises from the Scriptural doctrine of the revelation in Creation.

Brunner is firmly convinced that Barth denies Paul's conclusions in Romans 1 and 2 and adds that Paul's doctrine here is no isolated Biblical theme.

Dasz Barth sich mit den Hauptstellen Roem. 1 und 2 nirgends auseinandergesetzt hat--denn dasz die diesbeueglichen Stellen in seinem Roemerbrief als

²⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 61, Martin Luther, Vorlesung ueber den Roemerbrief, ed. Ficker II, 18 ff.

ernsthafte Auseinandersetzung nicht in Betracht kommen, wuerde er wohl selbst zugeben, ist wohl darin begruendet, dasz Barth hier einfach Paulus die Gefolgschaft verweigert, im uebrigen aber diese Stellen als ein hapax legomenon betrachtet. In Wirklichkeit sind sie nichts anderes als die deutlichste Erinnerung daran, dasz Paulus das Alte Testament immer voraussetzt und mit ihm dessen hundertfaeltige Bezeugung von Gottes Schoepferlichkeit in seinem Werk.³¹

The question is not whether there are two revelations. The only question is that of the relations between the revelation in Jesus Christ and the revelation in creation. The common Christian reply is that for sinful humans the revelation from creation does not suffice to bring us to a saving knowledge of God.³² However, since sin implies a contradiction, it presupposes an original revelation.³³

In itself the revelation in creation was certainly sufficient to bring everyone to a knowledge of the majesty and wisdom of the Creator. However, sin has changed all this so that man's heart is now darkened and turns God's revelation into a caricature. Only in the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ can we again understand God's revelation in Creation and thus discover that God has already revealed Himself in Creation.

Brunner claims that the fact that Holy Scriptures teach the revelation of God in His works of creation needs no proof. The theme of the "nature psalms" is summed up

³¹ Emil Brunner, Natur und Gnade, p. 12.

³² Ibid., p. 13.

³³ Emil Brunner, Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 28.

particularly clearly for him in Psalm 19: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handywork." He continues to observe that the Apostle who declared that he was determined "not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," speaks of the revelation in creation in far greater detail, and in more intellectual terms.

Seinen Hauptzeugnissen, Roem. 1, 18ff. und Roem. 2, 12f. stehen andere, von ihm und anderen, zur Seite, etwa Roem. 1, 28-32, Joh. 1, 4-9, Apg. 14, 17; 17, 26-27. Alle diese Stellen sind von den Theologen der Kirche zu allen Zeiten als Quelle, Norm und Beweis ihrer Lehre von der allgemeinen oder Schoepfungsoffenbarung verwendet worden, von den Reformatoren nicht weniger als von allen anderen.³⁴

In the face of such decisive evidence Brunner asks the question why it is that there seems to be a current denial of God's revelation in Creation and History in the name of the Bible and the Reformers. He believes that it is primarily the influence of Kantian philosophy and Ritschlian Positivism which brought this doctrine into disrepute. But above all, he continues, it is the fear of "natural theology," that is, of the knowledge of God based on purely rational grounds, independent of the Christian revelation of salvation. Brunner agrees with the enemies of natural theology when they claim that there is no connection between natural theology and the Biblical knowledge of God.

Es ist ihnen weiterhin darin zuzustimmen, dass die Anerkennung einer biblischen "Nebenlinie," die neben

³⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

das sola gratia und neben das "in Christus allein das Heil" die Eröffnung eines andern Zugangs zur wahren, heilvollen Gotteserkenntnis stellt, mit der leidenschaftlichen, todernten Betonung des sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus, nicht vereinbar ist. Kurz gesagt, biblische und natuerliche Theologie reimt sich nie und nimmer zusammen. Sie stehen in einem exklusiven Verhaeltnis zueinander.³⁵

According to Brunner the revelation in the Creation is different from that of the Old Testament, and both differ from the revelation in the New Testament. But each has its necessary place and its own significance in the Biblical witness to revelation as a whole. "Die Lehre von der allgemeinen Offenbarung ist also die Begrueudung der Behauptung der Verantwortlichkeit des Menschen vor Gott und zugleich der Einsatzpunct der missionarischen Bussforderung."³⁶

Brunner is careful to indicate that general revelation, or a revelation in creation, does not imply an actual, experimental knowledge of God so that man may, in spite of and in his sin, know God. "Der Suendige Mensch ist ein solches Gefaesse, dass der Bodensatz der Suende denn vor Gott gegebenen Wein der Erkenntnis sofort in den Essig des Goetzenwahns verwandelt. Von Gott aus kommt es zur Erkenntnis, aber vom Menschen aus kommt es zum Wahn."³⁷ The Reformers did not permit themselves to be led into a denial of general revelation because they knew that such a denial would destroy

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 65-6.

³⁷Ibid., p. 66.

the actual basis of man's responsibility for his sin. The only reason why man can be a sinner is because God reveals Himself to him. Only through general revelation can man be addressed as sinner; only through it can he be responsible for his sin. "Sie ist darum die nicht wegzudenkende Voraussetzung der Christusbotschaft und als solche integrierender Bestandteil der Botschaft von der rettenden Gnade."³⁸ According to Brunner, the doctrine of general revelation is implicit in the doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ but the Bible denies the possibility of a theologia naturalis as a basis for a contemporary theologia revelata.

Brunner does not believe that the doctrine of the analogia entis is peculiar to the Roman Catholic Church.³⁹ It has been a part of the common Christian inheritance of belief from the earliest days of the Church; for it simply expresses the fact that it has pleased God so to create the world that in and through it His "everlasting power and divinity" may be made known. Although the Reformers do not use the word, Brunner asserts that they have a doctrine of the analogia entis, just as much as the theologians of the Roman Catholic Church. The doctrine of the analogia entis is not in opposition to the doctrine of the analogia fidei.

³⁸Ibid., p. 67.

³⁹Emil Brunner, Natur und Gnade, p. 41.

Mit der Lehre von der analogia fidei, die es nicht mit der objektiven Offenbarungsveranstaltung Gottes, sondern mit dem subjektiven Offenbarungsempfang des Menschen zu tun hat, steht die Lehre von der analogia entis weder in einem Konkurrenz, noch in einem Gegensatzverhältnis. . . . Gerade wie die Heilige Schrift, so wie sie nun einmal ist, objektiv göttliches Offenbarungsmittel ist--mögen nun die Menschen sie als Gottes Wort verstehen oder nicht--, so ist auch die Schöpfung göttliches Offenbarungsmittel, mögen die Menschen sie als solches sehen oder nicht.⁴⁰

Man has been so created by God that, by means of his reason, he can perceive God in His works. Through this fact the revelation in Creation becomes "general revelation." The works of God in the Creation are placed before the eyes of all, and reason in 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. "Auch das ist nicht eine spezifisch katholische, sondern das ist gemeinchristliche, auch reformatorische Lehre, wie es denn klare biblische Lehre ist."⁴¹

There are two things to be said about man's natural knowledge of God: It would not be what it is were it not for the revelation in the Creation; it would not be what it is apart from sin. There is no idolatry apart from a knowledge of God; there is no religion outside the Bible that does not distort man's knowledge of God. The fundamental

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴¹ Ibid.

significance of the revelation in Creation, according to Brunner, is that through it man as man is person, a responsible being, a being related to God, "standing before" Him; and also that by this revelation man is responsible for his sin, and is therefore "inexcusable."⁴² God cannot be accused if man does not know Him.

Wie in einem Koenigsschloss alles koeniglich hergeht, wie im Hause eines grossen Kuenstler zeugt, auch wenn er selbst sich nicht sehen laesst: so ist die Welt des grossen Koenigs, des grossen Kuenstlers Haus. Er selbst laesst sich nicht sehen; denn was man sehen kann, ist nicht Gott, sondern Welt. Aber diese Welt ist seine Schoepfung und redet darum, ob sie will oder nicht, ob sie es weiss oder nicht, von ihm, der sie gemacht hat. Und trotzdem wissen es die Menschen nicht oder doch nicht recht.⁴³

The problem of natural theology Brunner sees as fundamental for all theology, and he repeatedly emphasizes that the question of the revelation in Creation and the question of man's natural knowledge must be kept separate. While the one side was mainly anxious to deny the validity of a "theologia naturalis," the other side was chiefly concerned to affirm the reality of the revelation in Creation. Brunner believes that it is unfortunate that some theologians erroneously believed that their denial of a "theologia naturalis" obliged them also to deny the reality of the revelation in Creation. This was due to their mistaken idea that the

⁴²Ibid., p. 77.

⁴³Emil Brunner, Unser Glaube (Zurich: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1935), pp. 24-5.

acknowledgment of a revelation in Creation must necessarily lead to the recognition of a "theologia naturalis." Brunner admits that he himself had helped to foster this idea when in the first edition of Natur und Gnade he had referred to the Christian doctrine of the revelation in Creation as a "Christian theologia naturalis."⁴⁴

Die Bejahung einer Schoefungsoffenbarung hat an sich mit der Behauptung einer natuerlichen Theologie nichts zu tun. Nie haette von einer Theologie, die dem biblischen Offenbarungszeugnis gehorsam sein will, die Realitaet einer Schoepfungsoffenbarung in Abrede gestellt werden sollen. Alle Versuche, die biblische Bezeugung einer solchen zu bestreiten, muessen zu Willkuer und Vergewaltigung des Bibelworts fuehren. Aber auch ohne ausdrueckliches biblisches Zeugung muesste ja der christliche Schoepfergedanke zur Anerkennung einer Schoepfungsoffenbarung noetigen; denn was waere das fuer ein Schoepfer, der nicht seinem Geschoepf den Stempel seines Geistes aufdruckte.⁴⁵

Brunner claims that one's position on natural theology determines the character of his ethics, and it is significant just as well for his dogmatics. "Die theologia naturalis ist aber nicht bloez fuer die Ethik bedeutsam, sondern auch fuer die Dogmatik."⁴⁶ This entire matter is also of vital practical importance for the work of the church. Wherever the word of God is preached, a correspondence of meaning between the words of the preacher and the hearer is presupposed. That there is such a correspondence lies

⁴⁴Emil Brunner, Die Christliche Lehre von Gott, p. 137.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 137-8.

⁴⁶Emil Brunner, Natur und Gnade, p. 39.

objectively in man's creation in God's image and subjectively in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. The church must be made aware of the fact that man in general speaks of God.

Dasz es ueberhaupt eine solche Entsprechung gibt, d. h. dasz man ueberhaupt von Gott reden, sein Wort verkuendigen kann, liegt, objektiv, darin, dasz Gott uns zu seinem Bilde geschaffen hat, subjektiv aber darin, dasz uns das in Jesus Christus offenbart ist.⁴⁷

Finally natural theology is normative for the encounter of the believer with the unbeliever. According to Brunner there is a definite "anknuepfungspunkt" between the believer and the unbeliever. That a false point of contact has been chosen does not mean that there is none at all. In distinction from Brunner, Barth would, as it were, pump nature dry, in order to give all preeminence to grace. This is seen in Barth's view of the point of contact. Brunner admits that a false point of contact presupposes a Roman Catholic natural theology and one that proclaims a natural knowledge in a closed rational system.⁴⁸ As a legitimate possibility natural theology does not exist.⁴⁹ Apart from the revelation of God in creation there could be no natural knowledge of God. But the assertion of this revelation upon which a natural theology must rest does not mean there is also a legitimate natural theology.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 41.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 43.

⁴⁹ Emil Brunner, Die Christliche Lehre von Gott, p. 138.

By accepting a two-fold revelation Brunner does not intend to tone down the antithesis between Rome and the Reformation. Although Barth accuses Brunner of "Thomism," what Brunner means by "natural theology" is quite different from the natural theology of Rome which can be called an unbroken natural theology, since, according to Brunner, it is a rational system within itself. However, Brunner emphasizes, the acceptance of such a natural theology does not mean that we must set aside all natural theology, as Barth does.

Die falsche natuerliche Theologie hat den Protestantismus des letzten Jahrhunderts--oder sollen wir sagen der letzten drei Jahrhunderte?--schwer geschaedigt, und eine falsche Naturtheologie bedroht auch gegenwaertig die Kirche bis auf den Tod. Dasz es hier mit ganzer Leidenschaft, Kraft und Besonnenheit zu kaempfen gilt, hat uns keiner so deutlich wie Karl Barth gelehrt. Aber die Kirche darf nicht von einem Extrem in andere geworfen werden. Die Kirche vertraegt auf die Dauer die Ablehnung der theologia naturalis ebensowenig als ihren falschen Gebrauch. Es ist die Aufgabe unserer theologischen Generation, sich zur rechten theologia naturalis zurueckzufinden.⁵⁰

Brunner believes that Barth errs because he does not make a clear distinction between the principium cognoscendi and the principium essendi. He claims that Barth keeps on thinking that the recognition of a revelation in the Creation must imply the recognition of a natural knowledge of God. Barth turns the true statement, "Only through the historical revelation of the Old and New Covenant is sinful man able to recognize the original revelation of Creation, which is

⁵⁰ Emil Brunner, Natur und Gnade, p. 44.

concealed from him by his sin," into the erroneous statement, "There is only one revelation: the historical one in Christ." Barth also turns the correct statement, "Only through the historical revelation in Christ can man perceive his sin," into the erroneous statement, "Only in the light of revelation in Christ--namely in the rejection of the same--does man become a sinner."⁵¹

Die Schrift aber sagt: Der Mensch ist unentschuldigbar Suender darum, weil er die ursprüngliche Wahrheit, die Schoepfungsoffenbarung, die ihm Gott zu erkennen gibt, in Ungerechtigkeit darniederhaelt, und weil er, in seinem Wahn, das ihm von Schoepfer Geoffenbarte in Goetzenbilder verwandelt. Diese Suende kann er aus sich selbst ebensowenig erkennen, wie er, infolge der Suende, die Schoepfungsoffenbarung wahrhaft erkennen kann.⁵²

Only through historical revelation can one come to perceive both the revelation in Creation and his sin, which, for this reason, is without excuse.

Darum ist die ursprüngliche Wahrheit in der Tat nicht aus ihm "heraus katechesieren;" aber trotzdem ist es die ursprüngliche und nicht erst die zukuenftige Wahrheit. Die geschichtlich Offenbarung ist der Realgrund der menschlichen Verantwortlichkeit.⁵³

Not only does Barth's refusal to distinguish between the noetic and ontic principles force him to conclude that the doctrine of general revelation must necessarily lead to a natural theology but the same confusion between the

⁵¹ Emil Brunner, Offenbarung und Vernunft, p. 80.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 81.

ratio cognoscendi and essendi lies at the root of the Barthian hostility to the analogia entis. According to Brunner, the analogies of the Creation do not legitimately lead sinful man to true theological knowledge, but--for him as a sinner--they are a way or error.⁵⁴

The central problem with which Brunner deals is that of objective knowability and subjective knowledge. Related to this problem is Brunner's attempt to distinguish between the formal and material aspects of the image of God. Barth severely criticizes him for this.

Von der Gottebenbildtheit des Menschen ist sachlich in zweierlei Sinn zu sprechen, in einem formalen und einem materialen. Der formalen Sinn dieses Begriffes ist: das Immanum, d.h. dasjenige, was den Menschen, ob er nun Sünder sei oder nicht, vor der gesamten übrigen Kreatur auszeichnet. . . . Er hoert auch als Sünder nicht auf, einer zu sein, mit dem man reden kann, mit dem auch Gott reden kann.⁵⁵

Sin has not destroyed the formal image of God, and it now constitutes the point of contact for redeeming grace. In opposition to Barth, Brunner claims that his formal image of God refers to man with his natural knowledge of God. According to him, conscience and God-consciousness belong to the formal image of God. Brunner speaks of the knowledge of God which belongs to the human nature as such. According to him, the consciousness of a divine obligation is ineradicable and it outlasts the whole destructive

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Emil Brunner, Natur und Gnade, p. 10.

development of human thought. In spite of this conclusion, which Barth has attacked, it must be admitted that Brunner has demonstrated that general revelation and a rational natural theology are not to be identified.

CHAPTER IV

PAUL TILLICH

Paul Tillich claims that revelation is a special, an extraordinary manifestation which removes the veil from something which is hidden in a special and extraordinary way. It is the manifestation of something within the context of experience.

Something more is known of the mystery after it has become manifest in revelation. First, its reality has become a matter of experience. Second, our relation to it has become a matter of experience. Both of these are cognitive elements. But revelation does not dissolve the mystery into knowledge. Nor does it add anything directly to the totality of our ordinary knowledge, namely, to our knowledge about the subject-object structure of reality.¹

Tillich teaches that revelation does not add anything to man's active knowledge and that a knowledge about nature and history is not a matter of revelation but of observations, intuitions and conclusions. There is no general revelation (Offenbarung ueberhaupt), but revelation for Tillich is invariably revelation for someone in a concrete situation of concern. "Revelation is always a subjective and objective event in strict interdependence."²

Throughout his numerous works, Tillich often asserts

¹ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 109.

² Ibid., p. 111.

that God manifests himself in history and nature. He sees revelation manifest in the art and culture of man and also coming through the medium of things.³ In works of art man sees the depth of reason, that dimension of reason which was lost by the fall and which gives man a revelation of God. Things can become the medium of revelation. Even words have a semantic power of their own which makes them therefore also possible mediums of power and revelation, particularly when used in the sacrament.⁴

However, Tillich is convinced that there is no such thing as natural revelation. There is revelation through nature but this is also special revelation. Natural knowledge about one's self and the world cannot lead to a revelation of the ground of all that exist. Only person and not thing is worthy to represent man's ultimate concern.⁵ Nothing has become the bearer of revelation by its outstanding qualities, but these qualities determine the direction in which a thing or event expresses man's ultimate concern and his relation to the mystery of being.

There is no difference between a stone and a person in their potentiality of becoming bearers of revelation by entering a revelatory constellation. But there is a great difference between them with respect to the

³Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948) p. 89.

⁴Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 1191

⁵Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 119.

significance and truth of the revelations mediated through them. The stone represents a rather limited number of qualities which are able to point to the ground of being and meaning. The person represents the central qualities, and by implication all qualities, which can point to the mystery of existence.⁶

Tillich teaches that there are as many mediums of revelation as there are natural objects.

Ocean and stars, plants and animals, human bodies and souls are mediums of revelation. Equally numerous are natural events which can enter a constellation of revelatory character: the movements of the sky, the change of night and day, growth and decay, birth and death, natural catastrophes, psychosomatic experiences, such as maturing, illness, sex, danger. In all these cases it is not the thing or the event as such which has revelatory character; they reveal that which uses them as a medium and bearer of revelation.⁷

According to Tillich, revelation through natural mediums is not natural revelation. If natural revelation is distinguished from revelation through nature, it is a contradiction in terms; for if it is natural knowledge, it is not revelation, and if it is revelation, it makes nature ecstatic and miraculous. If man merely possesses a natural knowledge about himself and the world, he will never be led to the ground of being. Natural theology and natural revelation are misnomers for the negative side of the revelation of the mystery. Although nature can be a medium of revelation in an ecstatic experience, it can not be an argumentative basis for conclusions about

⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 118-9.

the mystery of being. "Even if it could be this, it should not be called natural theology and, even less, natural revelation."⁸ Nature can at most become a witness or an image of a transcendent power, but it can never become the bearer of it.⁹ The unsatisfactory character of most interpretations of nature drives Tillich to a view which he calls "new realism"¹⁰ The power and meaning of nature must be sought within and through its objective physical structures. If nature is interpreted in a realistic and at the same time in an historical way, natural objects can become bearers of transcendent power and meaning, and they can become sacramental elements.¹¹

Nature is not the enemy of salvation; it does not have to be controlled in scientific, technical, and moral terms or be deprived of any inherent power, in order to serve the "Kingdom of God," as Calvinistic thinking is inclined to believe; rather, nature is a bearer and an object of salvation. This is the basis of the Protestant rediscovery of the sacramental sphere.¹²

Tillich claims that historical events, groups, or individuals as such are not mediums of revelation. However, he continues, it is the revelation constellation into which they enter under special conditions that make them revelatory.

⁸Ibid., p. 120.

⁹Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era, p. 100.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 101.

¹¹Ibid., p. 102.

¹²Ibid., p. 103.

"Historical revelation is not revelation in history but through history."¹³ Every revelation occurs within history, but history itself is revelatory only if a special event or series of events is experienced ecstatically as miracle.

"Political events then are interpreted as divine gifts, judgments, promises, and therefore as a matter of ultimate concern, and a manifestation of the mystery of being."¹⁴

Tillich teaches that personalities connected with revelatory events can become mediums of revelation themselves. Revelation can occur through every personality which is transparent for the ground of being. Historical revelation, Tillich believes, is usually accompanied and supported by revelation through nature, since nature is the basis on which history moves and without which history would have no reality. Revelation comes to man in history through objects or persons which become the medium of revelation, or through the depths of reason in man. This depth of reason is essentially manifest but existentially hidden. The depth of reason can be seen appearing through works of art and culture.¹⁵

In order to understand Tillich's concept of revelation; his attitude toward the "word" must be considered. He asserts that the "word" is so important for almost every theological

¹³Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 120.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 50.

doctrine that a "theological semantics" is urgently needed. He claims that the symbols "Word of God" and "Logos" cannot be understood in their various meanings without an insight into the general nature of the word. If an attempt is made to reduce the whole of theology to an enlarged doctrine of the "Word of God" as Barth does, Tillich asserts that either the "word" must then be identified with revelation or revelation must be restricted to the spoken word and the "Word of God" be taken literally instead of symbolically.

"Word" can only be made the all-embracing symbol of the divine self-manifestation if the divine "Word" can be seen and tasted as well as heard. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of the Logos includes the paradox that the Word has become an object of vision and touch.¹⁶

Tillich is careful to indicate that revelation through words must not be confused with "revealed words." As a medium of revelation the word points beyond its ordinary sense both in denotation and in expression. "In the situation of revelation, language has an expressive power which points through the ordinary expressive possibilities of language to the unexpressible and its relation to us."¹⁷ Even when ordinary language deals with matters of ultimate concern, it is not a medium of revelation. However, as a medium of revelation language has the "sound" and "voice" of the divine mystery in and through the voice of human

¹⁶Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 123.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 124.

expression.

According to Tillich, it is possible to develop the doctrine of revelation as a doctrine of the "Word of God" only if the "Word" is interpreted as the logos element in the ground of being. He believes that revelation is intellectualized when the "Word of God" is understood as a spoken word or as a "theology of the Word."

If Jesus as the Christ is called the Logos, Logos points to a revelatory reality, not to revelatory words. Taken seriously, the doctrine of the Logos prevents the elaboration of a theology of the spoken and written word, which is the Protestant pitfall.¹⁸

For Tillich the "Word of God" has six different meanings. It is first of all the principle of the divine self-manifestation in the ground of being itself. Secondly, the "Word" is the medium of creation, the dynamic spiritual word which mediates between the silent mystery of the abyss of being and the fulness of concrete, individualized, self-related beings. Thirdly, the "Word" is also the manifestation of the divine life in the history of revelation.

The "Word" is also the manifestation of the divine life in the final revelation; it is the name for Jesus as the Christ. The "Word" is not the sum of the words spoken by Jesus. Tillich can not understand how theologians who accept the doctrine of the Incarnation can identify the Word with speech. He claims that it is extremely dangerous to identify

¹⁸Ibid., p. 157.

the Bible as the Word of God because of certain unavoidable consequences.

Such consequences as the dictation theory of inspiration, dishonesty in dealing with the biblical text, a "monophysitic" dogma of infallibility of a book, etc., follow from such an identification. The Bible is the Word of God in two senses. It is the document of the final revelation; and it participates in the final revelation of which it is the document. Probably nothing has contributed more to the misinterpretation of the biblical doctrine of the Word than the identification of the Word with the Bible.¹⁹

The Bible, for Tillich, is a witness to revelation. He claims that there is a hic et nunc experience of revelation rather than an original revelation in the Bible.²⁰

Tillich concludes that the message of the church as proclaimed in her preaching and teaching is called the word of God.

Finally, the mediator of revelation may not be a preacher or religious teacher at all but simply someone whom we meet and whose words become the Word for us in a special constellation.

The many different meanings of the term "Word" are all united in one meaning, namely, "God manifest"--manifest in himself, in creation, in the history of revelation, in the final revelation, in the Bible, in the words of the church and her members. "God manifest"--the mystery of the divine abyss expressing itself through the divine Logos--this is the meaning of the symbol, the "Word of God."²¹

Although Tillich uses such terms as original revelation, preparatory revelation, final revelation, universal revelation,

¹⁹Ibid., p. 158.

²⁰Ibid., p. 81.

²¹Ibid., p. 159.

receiving and dependent revelation, he regards all revelations as existential in character and nature and therefore as special revelation. Nature, history, and words, are only mediums of revelation and not revelation itself. One can speak of a revelatory event, Tillich asserts, only on the basis of an existential relation to it.²² The history of revelation is history interpreted in the light of the final revelation.

While humanistic theology tends to identify the history of revelation with the history of religion and culture, thus removing the concept of final revelation, neo-orthodox theology and an allied liberal (e.g., Ritschlian) theology try to eliminate the history of revelation by identifying the revelation with final revelation. The latter group says that there is only one revelation, namely, that in Jesus the Christ; to which the former group answers that there are revelations everywhere and that none of them is ultimate. Both contentions must be rejected. In the actual revelatory situation, a revelation which is not taken to be final is a detached reflection and not an involved experience. On the other hand, if the revelation whose historical preparation is denied as final, the necessity of its historical reception makes the unique revelatory event a strange body which has no relation whatsoever to human existence and history.²³

For Tillich the final revelation occurs in the event of Jesus, the human, becoming Jesus who is the Christ; it is not the life of Jesus nor the life of Christ, but it is the event of his becoming a person. However, even this final revelation in Christ must be an existential experience before it can be revelation. Revelation is manifested in

²² Ibid., p. 138.

²³ Ibid.

the art and culture of man, but by emphasizing Christ as the final revelation, Tillich attempts to demonstrate that there was a place or event where existential being and essential being were united.

According to Paul Althaus, the Christian Church claims to speak about God for the obvious reason that God has revealed himself. The Church professes to speak about God because God himself is speaking and has spoken in such a fashion that we can comprehend his message. "Alle christliche Theologie gründet also in der festgestellten Wirklichkeit der Selbstbezeugung oder Selbsteroffenbarung Gottes, seiner Begegnung mit den Menschen zur Gemeinschaft mit ihm, seiner 'Offenbarung'."

Althaus asserts that the fact of revelation is an indication that something else is made known to man than what he can experience in this world.

Offenbarung meint weder eine Wirkung als solche noch eine Tatsache als solche, sondern die in und an ihr sich treffende Wahrheit Gottes selbst. Die eigentliche Gewalt der Offenbarung ist auch nicht die Gewalt von Naturereignissen oder von Geschichtstagen, sondern die in und an ihnen sich ergreifende Geist-Gewalt der Wahrheit, die Gott ist. Gottes Begegnung ist zuletzt nicht ein Geschehen an mir, sondern ein geisthaftes Handeln mit mir; nicht ein Vorgehen hinter meinen Rücken, sondern eine Wirklichkeit unge in Auge mit mir, die mich als Geist sucht und betrifft."

¹Paul Althaus, Wie Christliche Wahrheit (Quetschlohn G. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1949), I, 25.

CHAPTER V

PAUL ALTHAUS

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¹Paul Althaus, Die Christliche Wahrheit (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1949), I, 25.25.

²Ibid., p. 31.

Revelation is never completely an objective occurrence outside of man. Revelation is objective and subjective at the same time. "Offenbarung heiszt nicht: ich erfahre dies und das; heiszt auch nicht primaer: ich erkenne die Wahrheit; sondern ich weisz mich erkannt."³ Revelation means that I am the one who has been called, promised, judged and loved. It is not the revelation of something but it is the testimony of a person.

Also nicht Offenbarung von etwas, sondern die Selbstbezeugung einer Person, in ihrem mich Angehen, mich Kennen, mich Meinen, Rufen, Richten. Freilich enthueilt die Offenbarung uns auch Gedanken, aber es sind die personhaften Gedanken meines Herrn.⁴

Althaus claims that God always meets man today and in man's present reality. He is always the God of today.⁵ Man only knows as much about God as God decides to reveal about Himself. In a certain sense man can only speak of revelation in as far as God remains the subject.

Im Aktivum kann man von der Offenbarung reden nur, sofern Gott ihr Subjekt ist. Im Blicke auf uns kann das Geschehen der Offenbarung allein durch Passiva ausgedrueckt werden, die unsere Aktiva erst begruenden: ich werde ergriffen, getroffen, gebunden, angeredet, erkannt-und erkenne mich als eben den, von dem dieses alles gilt. Alles Ergreifen ruht in dem Ergriffensein.⁶

Man's reason and the reality of the world compels him to

³Ibid., p. 32.

⁴Ibid., pp. 32-3.

⁵Ibid., p. 37.

⁶Ibid., p. 40.

contemplate God. "Insofern gibt es eine 'Natuerliche Gotteserkenntnis.'" However, the revelation of God is above and beyond all reason.

Although Althaus recognizes that Christ is revelation yet he claims that Christ is not the first and only self-communication of God to man. The Gospel has its origin already in the history of God with Israel. Althaus continues: "Die Verkuendigung redet nicht nur den Juden, sondern auch den Heiden auf ein Geschehen an, das zwischen Gott und ihm sich schon ereignet hat und fortgehend geschieht."⁷ Until recently it had always been taken for granted that theology deals with a "zweifachen Offenbarung." It is indeed unfortunate that many now believe that revelation occurs only and first in Jesus Christ. Romans 1:18 ff and Romans 2:14 ff are definite proof that God's revelation is not limited to Jesus Christ.⁸

Neben die natuerliche Offenbarung in der Schoepfung stellt Paulus in Kap. 2, 14ff. das Gewissen, neben die religioese Erkenntnismoeelichkeit die sittliche. Auch der Heide erkennt ein "Gesetz," das dem Mosegesetze inhaltlich weithin entspricht; auch er suendigt mit schlechtem Gewissen, wider bessere Erkenntnis (1,32). 1, 24ff.⁹

Althaus objects to Karl Heim's exegesis of Romans 1 and 2 and opposes Heim's claim that in the beginning man's

⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

⁸ Ibid., p. 46.

⁹ Paul Althaus, Der Brief an die Roemer (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 1946), p. 17.

approach to God was closed. Barth and Stauffer similarly misinterpret Romans 1 and 2.¹⁰ For Althaus there simply is no doubt that the law of God is written in the hearts of all men, even those who are without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. God has revealed Himself to the heathen through His works of creation.

Im Einklang mit diesen Sätzen des Neuen Testaments sprechen wir von einer zwiefachen Offenbarung Gottes. Wir unterscheiden von der Heils-Offenbarung Gottes, in Jesus Christus seine urspruengliche Selbstbezeugung oder Ur-Offenbarung oder Grund-Offenbarung.¹¹

Unfortunately the heathen suppress the present truth of God in unrighteousness. The blindness of the heathen is the cause of their ignorance. The guilt of unbelief can already be located in foundational revelation. Just as we must have both a special and a general revelation so we must also have a "zweischichtige Lehre" about the Spirit of God.

Althaus continues by claiming that ever since biblical times, theology has always taught that God has revealed Himself in a two-fold manner. The Roman Church, following Thomas Aquinas, does not generally speak formally of a double revelation but restricts revelation to the supernatural. For Roman Catholics only, the supernatural is revelation in the proper sense of the term, while the works of God are

¹⁰Paul Althaus, Die Christliche Wahrheit, I, 47.

¹¹Ibid., p. 50.

are revelation only in the improper sense.¹² The Roman Church prefers to speak about a natural knowledge of God. Contrary to much of current thought, it was not the Roman Church but the old Protestants who originally emphasized a two-fold revelation of God. Although Althaus recognizes certain differences between the Orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians, he concludes his discussion of these seventeenth century theologians: "Die Grundzuege der Lehre von der allgemeinen Offenbarung oder natuerlichen Erkenntnis Gottes sind bei den Dogmatikern ueberall wesentlich die gleichen."¹³

Althaus states that the current trend among theologians is to disparage the Orthodox theologians of the seventeenth century for their reliance upon Aristotelian metaphysics. Although he agrees that their scholasticism was not Lutheran and that it finally led to rationalism, he still asks: "Aber liegt der theologische Suendenfall wirklich in der Behauptung der doppelten Offenbarung?" He answers with a firm "Keineswegens."¹⁴

In his historical review of general revelation, Althaus observes that during the nineteenth century, primarily under the influence of Kantian criticism, revelation was restricted

¹²Ibid., p. 61.

¹³Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁴Ibid. p. 65.

to Christ. The natural sciences and positivism also caused theologians to restrict revelation to Christ. During this era it was popular to believe that, "Die Natur und die Geschichte sind entgottet, der Blick in sie hat jedenfalls keine Bedeutung mehr fuer die Begrueundung der Gewiszheit Gottes."¹⁵ Such thought led J. Gottshick to declare: "Ohne Jesus waere ich Atheist." Wilhelm Herrmann similarly asserted that only in Jesus was there a revelation of God. Ernst Troeltsch and the entire history of religions school violently protested this restriction of revelation and emphasized the similarity between Christianity and other religions. However, these theologians went too far in the opposite extreme and eventually denied the absolute nature of Christianity, claiming that it was only a special form of a general revelation which was at the foundation of all religions. "Diesen Weg konnte die Theologie, wollte sie dem Evangelium treu bleiben, nicht weiter gehen."¹⁶

Althaus believes that the work of Adolph Schlatter and W. Luetgert has been extremely helpful for this entire controversy. Both have attacked the Christomonistic restriction of revelation. Concerning Paul Tillich, Althaus writes:

Zugleich von Troeltsch und von Schlatter-Luetgert bestimmt unterscheidet Paul Tillich (Rechtfertigung und Zweifel, 1924) zwischen "Grundoffenbarung" und

¹⁵Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁶Ibid.

"Heilsoffenbarung" und lehnt die rein christologische Offenbarungslehre ab. "Der Protestantismus musz wieder lernen, von Christus so zu reden, dass dahinter der gewaltige Klang der Grundoffenbarung in allen Religionen und Kulturen der Menschheit hoerbar wird. Das macht Christus nicht geringer, aber befreit ihn aus einer Isolierung, in der er im Neuen Testamenten und in der alten Kirche noch nicht stand. Durch den Begriff des Logos war er verbunden mit der gesamten Natur und Geschichte." (S.31)¹⁷

According to Althaus it is extremely unfortunate that the flooding wave of Christomonistic revelation has again reappeared in the works of Karl Heim and Karl Barth. Heim attempts to demonstrate that Christ is the only Redeemer, not only of man's deepest sorrows but also of skepticism. Heim believes that only the transcendental revelation can offer man any solid foundation. His Christomonism is also expressed in his student, Hans Engelland.¹⁸ Althaus observes that Heim criticizes both Luther and Calvin for speaking of a general revelation outside of Christ. Heim claims that Luther accepted general revelation because he had not consistently analysed his doctrine of original sin. According to Heim, had Luther taken seriously man's total depravity he would not have ascribed to man the ability of recognizing any revelation outside of Christ.

Althaus believes that Barth has failed in his attempt to be more consistent to the principles of the Reformation than Luther himself. He agrees with Barth that it is

¹⁷

Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 68.

synergistic to claim that man comes to a knowledge of God through his own powers. Althaus does not accept the Roman Catholic view of natural theology but he does claim that Barth confuses general revelation and rational natural theology. Barth's attack upon the analogia entis does not settle the issue for him. Barth's doctrine that the Law must first be known from the Gospel does not find support in Luther or Paul.¹⁹

Althaus quotes numerous theologians to support his position over against Barth. Emil Brunner writes: "Die schwierige Frage ist also nicht: ob es zweierlei Offenbarung gebe. Diese Frage ist vielmehr ein fuer allemal von der Schrift aus bejahend zu beantworten. Sondern die Frage ist, wie sich die beiden Offenbarung, die aus der Schoepfung und die aus Jesus Christus zueinander verhalten."²⁰ Edmund Schlink states:

Die Offenbarung Gottes in seinen Werken ist fuer die lehrende Kirche so voellig umschlossen von Wort, dasz die kein Interesse haben kann, dieselbe neben der Offenbarung im Wort als besonderen locus der Dogmatik abzuhandeln.²¹

Throughout his Christian Dogmatics Althaus states that general revelation must be freed from being confused with natural theology. God not only reveals Himself in nature and in creation but also in the lives of men.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 71.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Die Selbstbezeugung Gottes geschieht entscheidend nicht durch theoretische Noetigung, sondern in unmittelbaren Innwerden, in lebendiger Erfahrung an der Wirklichkeit unseres Lebens auf die wir im folgenden hinweisen; im "unmittelbaren Selbstbewusstsein," wie Schleiermacher sagte, vorthoretisch, in lebendigem Ergriffensein.²²

Althaus agrees with Calvin who stated in the Introduction to his Institutes: "Se nem aspicerere potest, quin ad Dei in quo vivit et movetur intuitum sensus suos protinus convertat." The shadow of God lies unrecognized upon the lives of all men. Seriously to question God is to deny oneself. If man desires to discuss his being he must first discuss God. Michael Schmaus, the Roman Catholic theologian, writes: "Der Mensch kann in seiner letzten Tiefe nicht denken, ohne Gott, auf den hin sein Wesen geschaffen ist, nach dem hin er also seinshaft geneigt ist, irgendwie mitzudenken."²³ According to Althaus, man becomes conscious of God simply because he is man. Man does not arrive at God by way of causality but through an immediate experience.

In opposition to Rome's false natural theology, Althaus attempts to arrive at a true natural theology which is not rationalistic. He claims that theology must begin with Anthropology.²⁴ Brunner's doctrine of the Imago Dei is far

²² Ibid., p. 75.

²³ Ibid., p. 76.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

more scriptural than Barth's view that man no longer retains any part of the image of God.²⁵ Althaus admits that man has lost the image of God in a certain sense but then continues:

Aber indem wir das als unsere Schuld bekennen, sagen wir aus, dass die Ebenbildlichkeit im ersten Sinne, der Bestimmung und Verfassung fuer Gott, auch in der Suende erhalten bleibt. Wir hoeren auch als Suender nicht auf, Menschen fuer Gott zu sein. Dass ist nicht eine Abschwaechung der Suendigkeit, sondern ihre Voraussetzung--die Bedingungen dessen, dass ueberhaupt vom Suende und Schuld die Rede sein kann.²⁶

Since man retains a measure of the image of God, God reveals Himself in "dem Sein, dem Haben, und dem Sollen" or our lives.

Althaus claims that man also gains certainty concerning God from the passing of history. "Niemand kann die Tatsache wegschaffen, dass am Durchleben der Geschichte immer wieder Gewisheit Gottes entstanden ist und entsteht."²⁷ This measure of certainty can be arrived at without faith in Jesus Christ.

Geschichtlich angesehen nach biblisch, nach christlich, ist die Gotteserfahrung an der Geschichte wesentlich-grundsatzlich "vorchristlich," d.h. moeglich und wirklich vor der Begegnung mit Gott in Jesus Christus.²⁸

Man experiences God in history when he experiences God's call to carry out a special task. Althaus claims that there is

²⁵Ibid., p. 100.

²⁶Paul Althaus, Die Christliche Wahrheit, II, 99.

²⁷Ibid., I, 85.

²⁸Ibid., p. 86.

also a general non-Christian faith besides Christian faith and that it is the task of theology to consider every faith as possessing the Lord of history.

Die Theologie hat nicht das Recht, den vorchristlichen Glauben, d.h. den Glauben, der noch nicht Glaube an das Evangelium ist, der aber eine geschichtliche Berufung als solche ergreift, grundsatzlich als heidnischen Trug zu verdaechtigen und zu bekaempfen. Sie musz es entschlossen abwehren, wenn man ihn mit dem Glauben an Jesus Christus vereinerleien oder gar an seine Stelle setzen will.²⁹

Althaus readily admits that man cannot know Christ from history and nature; but nevertheless, the Lord is manifested, according to him, in history and nature. The knowledge of God does not originate with the Gospel.³⁰ Such passages as Psalm 19 readily settle the matter. For Althaus there is no doubt that the heavens declare the glory of God and that the earth is a demonstration of the Lord's work. A natural knowledge of God is no mere possibility but an important reality.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 87-8.

³⁰Ibid., p. 90.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIANS

Numerous theologians have expressed themselves in regard to the conflict between Barth and Brunner. It appears as if the majority basically agree with Brunner. The position of a few of these theologians will be briefly outlined in this chapter.

Otto Dillschneider reacts against Barth's Christomonism by asserting that God has revealed Himself in the historical events of the Old Testament.¹ He teaches that revelation in creation is the form of the really active Christ, as distinguished from the other operations of the Son.² He believes that it is the duty of theology to find a cure for her long avoidance of nature, since God's eternal power and divinity become visible in "the Christus cosmos."³ Dillschneider rejects Barth's criticism of the Belgic confession⁴ and asserts that "Die Offenbarung Gottes in den Werken der Schoepfung widerfaehrt uns wie der stumme Haendedruck eines uns sehr lieben Menschen."⁵

¹Otto Dillschneider, Gegenwart Christi-Grundriss einer Dogmatik der Offenbarung (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1948) p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 219.

³Ibid., p. 225.

⁴Ibid., p. 230.

⁵Ibid., p. 226.

Rudolph Hermann agrees with Althaus' critique of Barth's Christomonism.⁶ However, Hermann does admit that Roman Catholic theologians do not seriously take total depravity into consideration and consequently depend too much upon natural theology.⁷

Julian Casserly writes that ever since Kant, many have reached the conclusion that no ultimate truth can be arrived at by reason. Such theologians, according to Casserly, claim that Christians can not rely upon philosophy and consequently reject all forms of natural theology.⁸ Casserly asserts that natural theology has the advantage of providing the Christian thinker with a point of contact or convergence with non-Christian thought.⁹

Those of us who are interested in the possibility of keeping alive an intelligible discussion between the Church and the world--and surely all Christians must be vitally interested in such a possibility--cannot ignore or take a negative attitude toward the questions raised by natural theology.¹⁰

Casserly attempts to bridge the gap between the "Roman Catholic view and the Protestant denial of natural theology." He claims that, in spite of all current efforts to distinguish

⁶Rudolph Hermann, Fragen um den Begriff der Natuerlichen Theologie (Guetersloh: J. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1950), p. 17.

⁷Ibid., p. 44.

⁸Julian Casserly, Graceful Reason, the Contributions of Reason to Theology (London: Longmans, Green, 1955), p. xvii.

⁹Ibid., p. xix.

¹⁰Ibid., p. xx.

between general revelation and natural theology, they are actually the same thing.¹¹ "Neither natural theology nor general revelation are possible apart from each other."¹² Casserly does not believe that Barth's substitution of the analogia fidei for the analogia entis really meets and explains such analogies as the parables.¹³ He admits that natural theology cannot convert men but he claims that it can remove many of the impediments which must be removed before an honest man can come to Christ.¹⁴

John Mackinnon declares that history manifesta a "power not ourselves" working to improve man's lot or condition. Revelation for him is not intellectual but practical in character. Martin Luther, according to Mackinnon, opened the way for this truer protestant view of revelation but unfortunately later again identified doctrine and revelation.¹⁵ He believes that the aim of God's manifestation in nature and history is to persuade the world into a state of reconciliation with God.¹⁶ He criticizes Barth by stating:

¹¹ Ibid., p. 12.

¹² Ibid., p. 13.

¹³ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁵ John Y. Mackinnon, The Protestant Doctrine of Revelation (Toronto: The Rynerson Press, 1946), p. 49.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

Barth's dread of immanence degenerating into pantheism lands him in an atheistic view of nature, a worse philosophical state than that which he sought to avoid.¹⁷

After summarizing Barth's view of revelation, Mackinnon sharply criticizes Barth's emphasis upon uncertainty.¹⁸

No one denies that God manifests himself in the Incarnation and the Resurrection but surely Barth is astray in denying revelation-worth to everything but these two. In nature, man, history and experience it is God who makes himself known.¹⁹

Mackinnon claims that Barth attaches revelation significance only to the Christ of faith and not to the Jesus of history.

Only in this Christ of faith, and not in the historical figure with whom alone, as he thinks, historians and liberal theologians deal, is God known. For Barth the resurrection is the revelation of the other world--the other world breaking into this world, eternity breaking into the time order. The vertical miracle striking the horizontal plane of history. On such a representation little or no revelation value is attached to the historical figure Jesus. Indeed, Karl Barth tends to denish the historical as being nothing but a conspicuous failure.²⁰

Mackinnon concludes by asserting that for Barth the Jesus of the records was an absurd and ridiculous wandering preacher.²¹

In his discussion of the controversy between Barth and Brunner, W. D. Davies agrees with Brunner when Brunner states:

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 106-8.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 111-2.

²¹ Ibid., p. 112.

"The denial of this revelation through creation in the latest theology empties the Biblical idea of creation of meaning--the Creation is a manifestation of the wisdom and Godhead of God."²² Davies believes that Barth's denial of natural theology ignores the doctrine of Christ as the wisdom of God. "When Christ is the agent of creation surely that creation must witness to him; there is continuity not discontinuity between God's work as creator and as Redeemer."²³ Davies claims that Barth's interpretation of Romans 1 and 2 does not do justice to the Rabbinic core of Paul's thought.²⁴

After presenting the problem of natural theology in the light of non-Christian religions, Hendrik Kraemer asserts that nature, history and reason are sources of revelation.²⁵ He admits that the Roman Catholic conception of natural theology is an error and claims that Barth has much to offer but concludes that Brunner is essentially correct.²⁶

General Revelation can henceforth only mean that God shines revealingly through the works of His creation (nature), through the thirst and quest for truth and beauty. . . because God is continually occupying Himself and wrestling with man, in all ages and with all peoples. This general revelation can only be

²²W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (London: S. P. C. K., 1948), p. 175.

²³Ibid., p. 176.

²⁴Ibid., p. 328.

²⁵Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (New York: Harpers, 1938), pp. 90-100.

²⁶Ibid., p. 121.

effectually discovered in the light of the "special revelation."²⁷

Kramer teaches that God's everlasting power and Godhead is clearly visible through his works.²⁸

John Baille takes issue with Barth for claiming that "no knowledge of God exists in the world save in the hearts of regenerate Christian believers."²⁹ Baille maintains that Barth obliterates the important theological distinction between the creative and gracious activity of God.³⁰ However, Baille also criticizes Brunner for distinguishing between the formal and material image of God. Baille believes that it is impossible to maintain that formally the image of God is not infringed upon while materially it is utterly lost. He claims that the traditional distinction between the light of nature and the light of revelation has to be abandoned. Alleged atheists may deny God with the top of their minds, but they believe in Him in the bottom of their hearts. Baille asserts that men should never exclude adherents of other religions from the saving grace of God.³¹

²⁷Ibid., p. 125.

²⁸Ibid., p. 126.

²⁹John Baille, Our Knowledge of God (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 17.

³⁰Ibid., p. 25.

³¹Ibid., p. 89.

For how can we hold that the pagan or the Jew who has had a solemn experience of conversion within his own religious tradition is as little in a state of grace, and as completely in a state of nature as he was before?³²

Baille observes that Calvin, in his discussion of natural theology, departed from some of Luther's principles and departed into something more like the old Scholasticism.³³

"The Kantian rejection of natural theology is thus not unconnected with Luther's earlier suppression of it."³⁴

Baille asserts that the Hebrew mind knew nothing of natural theology before its contact with Greek thought.³⁵

Peter Monsma observes that Barth no longer uses the term "Urgeschichte" but that the general import of the earlier term is retained and amplified in his later works. He asserts that Barth's concept of revelation as "geschichtliches Ereignis" does not mean that it can be historically established by a neutral observer.³⁶ Monsma claims that Barth has been greatly influenced by Kant's rejection of natural theology.

Barth's theology, in that it repudiates all natural theology, agrees with and goes beyond Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, which rejects natural theology as theoretical demonstration. Furthermore, his attempt to

³² Ibid., p. 90.

³³ John Baille, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 9.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

³⁶ Peter Monsma, Karl Barth's Idea of Revelation (Somerville: Somerset Press, 1939), p. 148.

derive the content of revelation from its form agrees with Kant's formalistic approach and may have been suggested by it.³⁷

Monama attempts to demonstrate the logical weakness and failure of Barth's position. He does not believe that Brunner has succeeded in his attempt.³⁸

Cornelius Van Til is undoubtedly the severest critic of Barth and Brunner. He minimizes the differences and struggle between Barth and Brunner. He finds the philosophical foundations of Barth's and Brunner's theology rooted in Kant's irrationalism and Kierkegaard's dialectic of time and eternity. Since there are no objects in our direct experience which correspond to supernatural events, Van Til claims that according to Barth they contain no object validity. "If we substitute the word 'reality' for Barth's word 'God' we shall not be far amiss in catching his meaning."³⁹ Van Til claims that Barth rejects the idea of temporal creation because Barth has rejected the notion of the absolute God.⁴⁰ He believes that Barth has done away with the orthodox idea of God's direct revelation in history by his concept of

³⁷Ibid., p. 167.

³⁸Ibid., p. 179.

³⁹Cornelius Van Til, The New Modernism (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1946), p. 231.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 373.

primal history.⁴¹ Van Til concludes that no heresy which the church has ever confronted is so ultimately destructive as the gospel of Karl Barth.⁴²

G. C. Berkouwer claims that Barth hesitates to affirm any manifestation of God in history, since Barth intends to restore complete saving grace to every area of theological thought. Berkouwer severely criticizes Van Til for attempting to place all of Barth's thought into certain philosophical categories. Although Berkouwer can not agree with Barth's rejection of manifestations in history, he sees some danger in Brunner's repudiation of Christomonism. The manner of Brunner's opposition, according to Berkouwer, made it unable to overcome the threatening danger of universalism.

Again we see the "pendulum movement" in theology! As Barth strongly opposed a universal revelation, so others opposed his Christomonism. The solution to the confusion of these reactions will be possible only when one tries to avoid the "tension" between the first and the second articles, and does not confuse revelation with the knowledge of revelation. We must again make use of the pure light of Scripture which points a clear way to understand the relation between the universality and the particularity of God's revelation.⁴³

⁴¹Cornelius Van Til, "Has Karl Barth Become Orthodox," Westminster Theological Journal, VIII (May, 1954), p. 181. See John T. Mueller, "Christianity and Crises Theology," Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (August, 1948), p. 618. "Karl Barth," XV (June, 1954), 261-84.

⁴²G. C. Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), p. 385.

⁴³G. C. Berkouwer, General Revelation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), p. 57.

G. W. Bromiley maintains that because men misuse natural revelation is no cause for denying it.⁴⁴ "Natural Revelation is not a work, an activity, a striving of man at all. It is a gift. One might go further and say that it is a natural gift which has its place in the perfect creation of God. Nor was Natural Revelation gifted merely to form a basis for the later Revelation of Grace."⁴⁵ Bromiley claims that the revelations of nature and grace are essentially the same. "It is still God who speaks: the character of the revelation has not changed."⁴⁶ T. H. Parker agrees with Bromiley and maintains that Calvin taught a self-manifestation of the Creator in the universe, in history and experience.⁴⁷

Although Max Lackmann criticizes both the natural theology of Rome and later Protestantism, he clearly demonstrates that Barth's attack has gone too far.

Wir haben uns mit dieser Deutung der "Offenbarung des Zornes Gottes von Himmel herab" von der Deutung des Exegeten Karl Barth unterscheiden muessen, wie sie in der "Kirchliche Dogmatik" (I, 2 und II, 1) von ihm vorgelegt ist. . . . Wir haben uns im Rahmen dieser Untersuchung nicht mit dem Dogmatiker Barth zu beschaeftigen. Wir haben nur festzustellen: Paulus sprach mit dem " _____ " weder von der Kreuzigung

⁴⁴G. W. Bromiley, "Natural Revelation," Evangelical Quarterly, XIII (July, 1941), 162.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 161.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 164.

⁴⁷T. H. L. Parker, "Calvin's Concept of Revelation," Scottish Journal of Theology, II (March, 1949), 36. See also Gordon Clark, Christian View of Men and Things (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 37-96.

Christi noch von seiner Rede als Apostel. Er nannte nicht, was am Kreuz und was in seinen Wort, sondern in religioesen, sittlichen gesellschaftlichen Schicksal der Heiden geschah: das Sichtbarung Wirksamwerden des Zornes Gottes vom Himmel her.⁴⁸

In spite of the general opposition towards Barth's denial of the manifestation of God in history, several theologians are rather sympathetic towards Barth's views. Frederick Huebner declares that "eine Theologie ist entweder christliche oder natuerliche Theologie." "Natuerliche Theologie ist immer eine Fehlentwicklung der christliche Theologie."⁴⁹ Huebner emphasizes the centrality of the Incarnation and revelation in Christ and maintains that men should learn to look for God only in Christ.⁵⁰ Hans Steubing similarly teaches that "Der Protestantismus darf nicht von Naturrecht reden."⁵¹ Steubing admits that Paul emphasizes the natural knowledge of God in Romans but adds that even Paul realized that the universe was filled with riddles and darkness.⁵² He believes that a false anthropology lies at the base of natural theology.⁵³

⁴⁸ Max Lackmann, Vom Geheimnis Der Schoefung (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1952), pp. 180-1, 254, 243.

⁴⁹ Frederick Huebner, Natuerliche Theologie und Theokratische Swaermerei bei Melanchthon (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1936), p.5.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

⁵¹ Hans Steubing, Naturrecht und Natuerliche Theologie im Protestantismus (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1932), p. 83.

⁵² Ibid., p. 105.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 141.

James Cotton teaches that Karl Barth's opposition toward natural theology reminds men that Reformed theology is the clear antithesis to that form of teaching which declares that man himself possesses the capacity and the powers to inform himself about God, the world and man.⁵⁴ Although Cotton often agrees with Barth,⁵⁵ he asserts that "the Bible is unaware of Barth's claim that the natural man can not hear the word of God."⁵⁶

⁵⁴James Cotton, Christian Knowledge of God (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 6.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 80.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 132. See also Albert Murray, Natural Religion and Christian Theology (London: James Nisbet, 1956), pp. 72, 141.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The writer does not propose to offer a solution to the controversy between Barth and his opponents and their interpretation of such passages as Psalm 19:1-2, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." The Lutheran Confessions contain no specific article on natural theology or the manifestation of God in history and creation, although some have concluded that there is sufficient evidence in the Lutheran Confessions to maintain that they contain a natural theology.¹ The Formula of Concord claims: "Even the heathen to a certain extent had a knowledge of God from the natural law, although they neither knew Him aright nor glorified Him aright, Rom. 1:20 f. In its discussion of Free Will the Formula states:

Although man's reason or natural intellect indeed has still a dim spark of the knowledge that there is a God, as also of the doctrine of the Law, Rom. 1:19 ff., yet it is so blind, and perverted that when even the most ingenious and learned men upon earth read or hear the Gospel and the promise of eternal salvation, they cannot from their own powers perceive, apprehend,

¹ Elvin Janetzki, Natural Theology in Lutheran Theology (Unpublished B. D. thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1957), p.13

² Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, V, 22.

³ Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, II, 9.

understand, or believe and regard it as true.³

F. E. Mayer apparently believes that the Confessions teach a type of natural theology and that men can recognize that there is a divine law.⁴

Edmund Schlink comments that the Lutheran Symbols are remarkably uninterested in questions concerning the manifestation of God in history and the entire issue of natural theology. Schlink asks whether it is now necessary to develop a special doctrine of the revelation of God in His works in addition to the doctrine of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Schlink believes that Lutheran theology should avoid entering the controversy and should maintain the reserve of the Confessions on this point. He rejects a separate doctrine of any general revelation of God, and claims that it is sufficient for Lutherans to concentrate on the revelation in Jesus Christ.⁵

Most theologians admit that Luther believed that God manifested Himself in history and creation and that He affirmed a natural knowledge of God.⁶ According to Watson,

³Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, II, 9.

⁴Frederick E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 148.

⁵Edmund Schlink, Theologie der Lutherische Bekenntnisschriften (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser, 1948), p. 67.

⁶Hugh Thomson Kerr, A Compend of Luther's Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), p. 23.

Luther wrote:

God wishes the law to be taught and He reveals it divinely, nay He inscribes it on his minds, as Paul proves in Romans 2. And from just this natural knowledge all the books of the sounder philosophers have been born, as of Aesop, Aristotle, Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Cato.⁷

Although Luther maintained that man's knowledge was inadequate because of sin, he affirmed that God manifests Himself in nature and that there is in man a natural knowledge of God and the divine law apart from the revealed knowledge of God.⁸ Francis Pieper claims that the older Lutheran theologians vigorously condemned those who denied or misinterpreted the natural knowledge of God. He quotes John Gerhard as listing those who erred in defectu and in excessu with regard to the natural knowledge of God.

So zaehlt Gerhard, Loci, L. De Natura Dei, § 63, die errantes in defectu and § 81 die errantes in excessu auf. Unter den errantes in defectu, die er natuerlichen Gottesbekenntnis zu wenig zuschreiben, nennt er die Sozinianer, quorum origo erroris videtur ex eo pendere, quod negant primum hominem ad immortalitatem esse conditum et iustitiam quandam originalem habuisse, huius divinae imaginis reliquiae sunt notitiae naturales.⁹

Pieper teaches that God has manifested Himself in a two-fold manner. According to him, God has manifested Himself in creation, or in the realm of nature, and in His Word. Pieper distinguishes between a natural and a Christian

⁷ Philip Watson, Let God Be God (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), p. 73.

⁸ Ibid., p. 82.

⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, "Natural Theology in David Hollaz," Concordia Theological Monthly, XVIII (April, 1947), pp. 253-263.

knowledge of God. He asserts that man knows by nature not only that there is a personal, eternal and almighty God but also that this God is just and holy, who demands and rewards the good and condemns and punishes the evil. He quotes Romans 1:20 as proof that the divine works of creation bear the unmistakable stamp of being God-made. "Hier ist ausgesagt: Wiewohl Gott unsichtbar ist, so kann er dennoch von den Menschen gesehen werden."¹⁰ Pieper maintains that the natural knowledge of God is both "innate" and "acquired." According to him a man can exercise and increase his "innate" knowledge by contemplating the universe, and thus his "innate" knowledge becomes an "acquired" knowledge of God.¹¹ Neither Luther nor the Lutheran Confessions ever spoke of this "acquired" natural theology. In their reaction to such an "acquired" natural theology, it appears as if there are even some Lutheran theologians who sympathized with Barth's views on the manifestation of God and consequently, have caused the pendulum to swing away from all natural theology. In opposition toward this movement Helmut Echter nach writes:

In my judgment, the clarification of this question (i.e., of the *theologia naturalis*) is of decisive importance for preserving the specifically Lutheran concept of faith. The content of the Christian faith is not the existence of God, but the grace of God! Only when the existence of God is acknowledged before faith, when God is recognized as the Giver of the Law and feared as the Judge, does trust (*fiducia*) in His grace become possible. Consequently the traditional proofs of the existence of God, in particular the

¹⁰Francis Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924, p. 450.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 445. See also Theodore Graebner, "Some Parallels to Romans 1:18ff," *Theological Quarterly*, X, (January, 1906), 9-22, 80-92.

moral proof, so often adduced by Luther are not without value. They form an integral part in the knowledge of God under the Law, which renders the message of the Gospel audible.¹²

Echternach asserts that the current denial of natural theology in Lutheran theology means that the Law is no longer being taken seriously, and that, therefore, faith is no longer understood as the blessed assurance of salvation. According to him the Gospel has become Law.

Hence in the background of the thesis widely accepted by the adherents of Dialectical Theology, viz., that the existence and the essence (Dasein und ^Wesein) of God dare not be separated, there stands revealed the typically Calvinistic confusion of Law and Gospel--according to Luther the most diabolical of all temptations. . . . If the Christian message is no longer conceived as the (divine) reply to the desperate need caused by sin and the Law, it will appear first as a legal dogma and eventually as a thesis of an undemonstrable and impossible metaphysic.¹³

Echternach maintains that if this should happen the Church would then be in a position of offering to the world a message of salvation for which there exists no desire whatever.¹⁴

Although few Missouri Synod theologians have entered the controversy between Barth and his opponents, H. Hamann of Australia has vigorously defended the natural knowledge

¹² Ibid., p. 447.

¹³ Helmut Echternach, "Theology and Ontology," Evangelische-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, (October, 1953), p. 154, quoted in H. Hamann, "The Natural Knowledge of God," (Theologia Naturalis) The Australasian Theological Review, XXIV (March - June, 1953),

34.

¹⁴ Ibid.

of God and the manifestation of God in history and creation. He believes that the trend away from natural theology has been influenced by Kantian philosophy in its opposition to Aristotelianism. He asserts that Kantianism is a greater danger to Christian theology and faith than Aristotelianism.¹⁵ Hamann claims that such passages as Acts 14:15-17; Acts 17:24-28; and Romans 2:15-15 settle the entire problem of natural theology.

These passages are not only well known to every theologian but are found in many a Lutheran catechism. . . . So clear and so convincing is the witness of the Divine Word in these loci classici that one can only marvel at the temerity of some theologians who, in their dread of Natural Theology and Natural Law, have sought to invalidate or weaken the truths contained in them.¹⁶

Hamann believes that it is possible for man to draw the conclusion that there is a God, a Creator and a Ruler, from the manifestation of God in nature and in man himself. However dim and vague this knowledge is, it is at any rate clear enough to render man "without excuse" if he neglects and perverts that knowledge. "The Christian receives and accepts

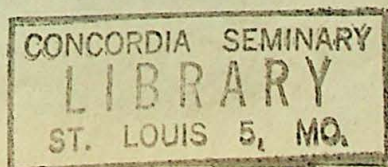
¹⁵Henry Hamann, "Kant, Heine, and Theology on the Proofs for the Existence of God," Australasian Theological Review, XXIII (September, 1952), 52. "Luthers Liebe zur Natur," Der Lutheraner, 60 (June 7, 1904), p. 186. "Soll in Unseren Elementarishulen Auch Naturgeschichte Gelehrt Werden und wie?" Schulblaetter, VI (June, 1871), 208-9.

¹⁶Henry Hamann, "Kant, Heine, and Theology on the Proofs for the Existence of God," Australasian Theological Review, XXIII (September, 1952), 57.

these pronouncements of Holy Writ in humble faith, as he bows to all its teachings. God's Word suffices him.

Scriptura locuta, res finita.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ibid.



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