6-1-1951

Luther and Brunner on Creation

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LUTHER AND BRUNNER ON CREATION

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

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June 1951

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INTRODUCTION

The present thesis grew out of several desires. One was to study a phase of Luther's theology. Another was to become more acquainted with a representative modern theologian. A study of theocentric theology in Luther and Brunner was suggested to meet these desires. This very broad subject was limited to one specific doctrine in Luther's and Brunner's theology, the doctrine of Creation. Since both Luther and Brunner were reacting against an essentially anthropocentric view of Creation, it seemed advisable to approach the subject historically as well as systematically. Therefore, chapters on the Middle Ages and the modern period were included as foils for the more detailed study of Luther and Brunner. And since both men wish to base their views of Creation on the Scriptures, a Biblical chapter also was added. The result is this historico-dogmatic study of Luther's and Brunner's doctrine of Creation as that relates to theocentric theology - a thesis of such broad scope that the charge of superficiality could easily be leveled against it.

To make this more than a superficial study, the writer has limited himself to two unifying principles - Creation and theocentric theology in Luther and Brunner. Each chapter was written with these principles in mind. This thesis, however, is to be no detailed or even synthetic history of the doctrine of Creation from the days of the Apostles to

1951. Luther and Brunner are the two men who are to have the spotlight focused upon them. The question is what is their doctrine of Creation? What do they teach and write and think and believe about Creation? Hence the primary purpose of this thesis is to synthesize Luther's and Brunner's views on Creation and compare them with each other. But this basic purpose also revolves around theocentric theology. Is Luther's and Brunner's doctrine of Creation theocentric? In what way? As in the case of any major Christian doctrine, here, too, all of Luther's or Brunner's theology could be subsumed under the Creation locus. This has not been the goal of the writer. Naturally, he has not tried to prevent other emphases in the theology of Luther and Brunner from coming to the surface, but he has consciously tried to keep Creation in the foreground. For this reason, he has used only those materials of both writers that have specifically dealt with Creation. In the case of Luther, this has meant only a fraction of the pertinent materials. Under Creation itself only those areas have been treated in which crucial problems exist. The following, which appear also in the minor chapters, are these areas: God as the Creator, the creation of man and the world, man and the world as creatures, and the relationships between God the Creator and man the creature.

A word about the subordinate chapters must be said. The Biblical chapter necessarily had to be limited to one

section of Scripture. To do justice to the Scriptural views of Creation would involve a thorough study of the Old and New Testaments that would extend far beyond the scope of this thesis. The choice of the Gospels was not entirely arbitrary. In spite of the fact that the Epistles would have enabled a more systematic treatment, and the Psalms would have provided richer content, the writer was convinced that in the words of Jesus and the Evangelists there would be an adequate treatment of Creation for the purposes of this paper. Neither the chapter on the Middle Ages nor that on the modern period is more than a summary picture of the attitude these long centuries took toward a theocentric view of Creation. The writer is well aware that neither period is a homogeneous whole where generalities ought to suffice. Neither is this the view he intends to give. In the Medieval chapter he has centered his attention to some extent on the theology of Thomas Aquinas. If the modern chapter lacks the same unity, it may well be that this is so because no great man of both faith and reason like Thomas appeared in post-Reformation and modern days.

In the summary chapter the writer attempts to compare Luther's and Brunner's doctrine of Creation from the theocentric point of view. The writer was well aware before he wrote that both men claim to have a basically theocentric theology. But the "how" of such theocentricity in a specific area like that of Creation remained the problem. No

doubt the theology of each man is in a measure determined by the times in which he lives and the antitheses which he fights. For this reason it might appear that any comparison would be unfair to both. But both Luther and Brunner wish to be Biblical theologians, and it is against this Scriptural norm that the writer judges each. It is against this same norm that the present writer wishes this thesis to be judged.

It might seem that the basic question--What kind of theology is a theocentric theology?--should be explained in this introduction. Beyond what is commonly understood by this term "theocentric"--having God at its center--the writer prefers to leave "theocentric" undefined at the start. It is true that such procedure might leave the question as unanswered at the end as it is at the beginning. But the primary purpose of this thesis is not to define as closely as possible "theocentric theology." It is rather to synthesize from a historical and dogmatic point of view Luther's and Brunner's doctrine of Creation. Only secondarily is the purpose to relate these views to the question of theocentric theology. But it is the writer's conviction (and hope) that as this is done, the criteria for a truly theocentric theology will also emerge. Whether they do must be left to the judgment of others.

CHAPTER I

THE GOSPELS ON CREATION

It is evident even to the casual reader of the Gospels that he is treading upon holy ground. The central figure of these books is the Carpenter of Nazareth who claimed to be the Son of God. This was more than a claim since it was believed by faithful disciples and firmly attested by God Himself. For this reason God Himself can be said to be in the center of the Gospels. It is, however, not just any god who is here. The Jahweh Elohim, the Creator God of the Old Testament, is the God of the Gospels. The God whom Jesus proclaimed, whom He called "My Father," in whom the disciples believed and to whom they were directed to pray is the same one living Lord whom the prophets worshipped. The Shema of pious Israelites is none other than the "first commandment,"[1] and the one Lord here is none other than the same God who had created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. God is the Lord. That message is the proclamation of the Gospels as well as the Old Testament. Jesus' message of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ and the βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν emphasizes among other things also God's Lordship,

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[1]Mark 12:29. Here Jesus quotes the famous Deuteronomy 6:4. Unless otherwise noted, the quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

and His parables have frequent references to a king or master or householder.[2] That the one God was Lord was the belief of Jesus' Jewish countrymen.[3] But some had forgotten that the Creator God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not the "God of the dead, but of the living."[4] The Creator God is the one living Lord.

The God of the Gospels is the Holy, Almighty Lord of all. In her "Magnificat" the Virgin Mary links these two thoughts. "For He that is mighty has done to me great things and holy is His name."[5] Rudolf Otto[6] has pointed out with convincing force the "numinous" overtones in the Hebrew קדוש and the Greek ἅγιος . Several passages in the Gospels combine the numinous and ethical implications of "the Holy." Perhaps the best is John 9:31 where the

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[2]Cf. particularly St. Matthew's Gospel. Just what the Kingdom concept involves is still disputed, but that God is the Lord is basic in Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom. It is interesting to note that in Matthew 13:41 the Kingdom is ascribed to the Son of Man.

[3]In John 9:24 the Jews wanted the man born blind to "give God the praise."

[4]Luke 20:38 and Matthew 22:29-32.

[5]Luke 1:49.

[6]Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, translated by John W. Harvey (Second edition; London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 6 and passim throughout the book. In Otto's terminology "numinous" stands for the extra in the meaning of "holy" above and beyond the meaning of ethical goodness.

man born blind affirms the belief that "God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, God listens to Him." According to St. John, God is wholly other. "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks; He who comes from heaven is above all."[7] This holy God is the almighty Creator who could raise people from stones.[8] With Him all things are possible.[9] Nevertheless, God's holiness and omnipotence do not set Him far off in the distance. He is the holy and almighty Lord of nature and men. It is He who clothes the grass of the field, who takes care of His children,[10] who sends rain on the just and on the unjust,[11] who is Lord even of the holy Sabbath.[12]

Jesus Christ, however, remains the center of the Gospels, and it is His power over creation that the four Evangelists especially describe. Jesus as Lord has power over wind and wave,[13] over unclean spirits,[14] over various

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[7]John 3:31.

[8]Matthew 3:9.

[9]Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27.

[10]Matthew 6:30.

[11]Matthew 5:45.

[12]Mark 2:28.

[13]Matthew 8:26.

[14]Mark 1:27. The references to Jesus' power over unclean spirits are very common in Mark.

diseases,[15] over death itself.[16] He gave this same power to His disciples, and the evil spirits were subject to them also.[17] Even the evil spirits themselves expressed the conviction that Jesus could destroy them.[18] It is true that Jesus taught that He did nothing of His own accord except what the Father had given Him.[19] But this Son who has such power over all creation places Himself on a level with the Father. "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will."[20] The Gospels indeed assert the Creator God of the Old Testament, but they bring to men Jesus Christ, the Son of Man who is the Son of God, Jesus who was born and yet who is the "I Am," Jesus the Servant who is the Lord.

This Son of God reveals God Himself. "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known."[21] The first part of that statement was completely intelligible to the Jews, for the soil of

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[15]Mark 1:34.

[16]Mark 5:42; Luke 7:15; John 11:44.

[17]Mark 6:7; 16:18.

[18]Mark 1:24

[19]To give just one instance from the fourth Gospel--John 8:28f.

[20]John 5:21.

[21]John 1:18.

Judaism was sharply anti-mystical.[22] The words of John the Baptist also must have been clear to the people. "No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven."[23] God alone, whose form man has not seen, is the source of revelation about Himself.[24] The good news is just this--that this God who spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets has now revealed Himself in and through His only Son. Or as John puts it--the Son has made God the Father known.[25]

Yet the God whom the Son reveals in His love and mercy for sinners is still the Creator Lord. The question concerning anthropomorphisms can be raised here. Just as in the Old Testament, the Gospels too use anthropomorphic expressions of God. Jesus calls the earth God's footstool.[26] He speaks of God dwelling in a temple, sitting on a throne,[27] and proclaims that He casts out devils "by the finger of God."[28] Then too Jesus calls God "Father," teaches His disciples to address God by that name, and by His redemption

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[22]Cf. Adolf Koeberle, The Quest for Holiness, translated from the third German edition by John C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1936), p. 51.

[23]John 3:27.

[24]Matthew 13:11.

[25]John 1:18.

[26]Matthew 5:35 where Jesus quotes Isaiah 66:1.

[27]Matthew 23:21f.

[28]Luke 11:20. The parallel in Matthew 12:28 has ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ.

makes God's Fatherhood a reality for men through faith. Still the God about whom all this is said is and remains "Your Father who is in heaven."[29] God remains God, and man remains man.

One of the outstanding elements in the Gospels that preserves the distinction between Creator and creature is the inclusion of the Old Testament emphasis on the mystery of God's ways. God is the sovereign who chooses what belongs to Him,[30] who utilizes evil to glorify Himself,[31] who speaks in parables "because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."[32] Otto is right when He says that the paradox is that "....He who is 'in heaven' is yet 'our Father.' That that 'heavenly' Being of marvel and mystery and awe is Himself the eternal, benignant, gracious will...."[33] But this is a paradox in Jesus Christ, the Son who reveals the Father's love in Himself and yet reveals the Father who is still the Creator Lord.

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[29]Matthew 6:1. This expression is very common in Matthew.

[30]Matthew 20:13-15.

[31]The story of the man born blind in John 9:1ff.

[32]Matthew 13:13. Here the Lord quotes Isaiah 6:9f. It is from this same prophet (Isaiah 28:21) that Luther derived his term opus alienum.

[33]Otto, op. cit., p. 84.

The specific references to Creation in the Gospels are not many. In fact, outside of the sedes in John 1:3 all the references to the creation of man and the world come from Jesus' own lips. There are three passages, one from each of the Synoptic Gospels, in which the Lord definitely says that God made (ποιέω) man.[34] In Matthew 19:4 and Mark 10:6 Jesus quotes Genesis 1:27: "Male and female created He them." And in Luke 11:40 Jesus asked the Pharisees: "Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?" That Jesus teaches the historical creation of a first man and first woman is implied in the ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως of Mark 10:6. Another interesting passage is Luke 11:50f. where the Lord links the ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου to the story of Cain's murder of Abel, thereby putting the historical family of Adam at the beginning of the world.[35]

Concerning a creatio ex nihilo the Gospels say nothing specific. Certainly John 1:1-3 has a bearing here. Only God and the Word are said to be ἐν ἀρχῇ and "all things

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[34]Thayer holds that ποιέω used in these three passages refers to the creating act of God. This is the word the Septuagint uses to translate the בָּרָא of Genesis 1:7, 16, 25, and the בָּרָא of Genesis 1:21, 27. Cf. Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Company, c.1889), sub voce.

[35]Other expressions of Jesus like ἀπ' ἀρχῆς in Matthew 19:8, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κόσμου in Matthew 24:21, πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου in John 17:24, and ἀπὸ καταβολῆς in Matthew 13:35 also take for granted the historic creation at the beginning.

were made through Him." If Barth's definition of the creatio ex nihilo stands--that God's creation

> ....von Gott und sonst nirgends herkommt, dass es durch Gott und nicht sonst ist. Es ist also nicht selbst Gott oder eine Emanation Gottes. Es ist aber auch nicht aus sich selbst und so selbstaendig Gott gegenueber, was es ist. Es ist das durch ihn Aufgerufene....[36]

then certainly the Gospels teach such a creation. In the faith of the Evangelists it was a foregone conclusion that God had created man and the world "in the beginning."

Several other points must now also be mentioned. The world, that is, all of creation including man, was made through the Word. "Without Him was not anything made that was made."[37] That eternal Word who was with God in the beginning, who was the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, was the agent in Creation. All things, both man and all other created beings or things, were made through Him. That is to say, they came into existence, they began to be, they received their beginning through Him. St. John stresses this fact particularly with regard to men. Whatever else John 1:9 may mean, it means at least that the Word gives

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[36]Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik (Zuerich: Evangelischer Verlag A. G. Zollikon, 1948), III, Part II, 185. Barth sees this concept in two pre-Gospel passages--Job 26:7 and 2 Maccabees 7:28. In the latter the Greek is very striking: οὐκ ἐξ ὄντων ἐποίησεν αὐτὰ ὁ θεός . Ibid, p. 182.

[37]John 1:3.

light to every man.[38] This ties the historical creation at the beginning to a creatio continua. Every man was in a sense present when God created Adam, but every man is now the creature of God.[39]

The Gospels, however, also speak of a "New world" when this age and this world will be restored and regenerated.[40] There will be an end of this present world. "Heaven and earth will pass away." But here in Matthew 24:34 Jesus gives this "end" a soteriological twist. "My words will not pass away." There is then no doctrine of this world per se in the Gospels. Rather there are even hints that the original order of Creation is to be distinguished from the aim of redemption. Physical life will be changed at the resurrection.[41] Yet God's purposes in the Kingdom are linked to His purposes in Creation. The Kingdom where God reigns in grace and love and truth in Christ has been prepared "from the foundation of the world."[42] Nevertheless, also in this King-

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[38]The troublesome ἐρχόμενον here may be construed either with τὸ φῶς or with πάντα ἄνθρωπον.

[39]Certainly Luke 11:40, where Jesus is speaking of the whole being of living men standing before Him, points to the creatio continua - in this sense that every man is still created through the light-giving Word, that God is his Creator, and that he is God's creature.

[40]Matthew 19:28. It is true that this is the only place in which the word παλιγγενεσία occurs, but the idea is present elsewhere in the Gospels.

[41]Luke 20:34f. and Matthew 22:30.

[42]Matthew 25:34.

dom God remains the King. The second birth, as much as the first, is due alone to God. The children of the Kingdom "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[43]

While Jesus is the central figure in the Gospels, and God the Lord is in the foreground, people also have a position of prominence in the four Gospels. But man is the creature of God, and as creature he has an existence which is not centered in himself but in God. Several of Jesus' parables emphasize this. The rich fool had to answer for his life to God.[44] In the parable of the vineyard the tenants were to care for the vineyard, not as masters who could do what they wanted, but as servants who would yield the fruit to their master.[45] The followers of Jesus are no less responsible. They are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, not to glorify themselves but that men may "give glory to your Father who is in heaven."[46] All the many imperatives of the Lord urge this responsibility. Men are to walk in the light and to believe the light.[47]

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[43]John 1:13. This assumes, of course, that the plural of the Greek manuscripts, ἐγεννήθησαν, is preferred to the singular of the Latin versions.

[44]Luke 12:16-21.

[45]Luke 20:9-18.

[46]Matthew 5:14-16.

[47]John 12:35ff.

The problem now becomes that of the relation of man's responsibility over against his Creator and his present existence as a sinner. Is the sinner also responsible to God? The Gospels treat the fact of sin most seriously. Sin is the basic contradiction in the world. "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world knew Him not."[48] But sin is no abstract contradiction of man's false self against his real self. Sin is rebellion against God the Lord. Man the servant does not want his King to rule over him. He wants to be lord, and he thinks he can even if he builds his house upon sand.[49] The world too has become polluted by man's sin. It has become a world which has an evil ruler.[50] Sin extends to all men, also to the ranks of the faithful. No sins in the Gospels stand out so sharply as the betrayal of Judas, the denial of Peter, the arrogance of James and John.

Although the Gospels say much about the rebellion that is the essence of sin, they take equally serious the ethical manifestations of sin. Jesus receives sinners and forgives sins, but He does not treat transgressions of the Law lightly.

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[48] John 1:10.

[49] Brunner frequently refers to the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21:33ff., the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11ff., and the parable of the talents in Matthew 25: 24ff. as examples of man's false autonomy. Cf. Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1946), p. 210.

[50] John 14:30.

He has come not to destroy but to fulfill the Law.[51] Lust is adultery; hatred is murder in God's sight.[52] Mankind cannot escape this pollution of sin, because men continually rebel, and rather than seek the glory that comes from the only God and the Savior He has sent, men receive glory only from one another.[53] Man actually has become the slave of sin.[54]

Even then, however, man the creature is still responsible. There is none of the deterministic irresponsibility of the Koran in the Gospels. The world may be a woeful place but the last woe belongs to the man who is a sinner.[55] When the Jews asked Jesus about their blindness, He said, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."[56] Man who claims spiritual sensibility is responsible, even though he rebels against God his Lord. But the problem of man's responsibility as a sinner becomes more complicated when Satan and evil enter the picture. The Gospels by no means ignore the compelling forces of darkness that seem to be almighty. Satan can bind

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[51]Matthew 5:17.

[52]Matthew 5:22, 28.

[53]John 5:44.

[54]John 8:34.

[55]Matthew 18:7.

[56]John 9:41.

people with illnesses.[57] There are hours when the powers of darkness reign.[58] Satan, the father of lies, the murderer from the beginning,[59] is called the "ruler of the world,"[60] and he does enter Judas' heart.[61] But in spite of all this, the sinner "fast bound in Satan's chains" is responsible. The Son of Man went as it was written of Him, but "woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed."[62] Satan enters the heart, but it is man who acts.[63]

Coupled with this stress on responsibility is the Gospel's insistence that God is Satan's Lord. "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."[64] This "ruler of the world" has no power over the Lord's Christ, nor even over His followers by virtue of Jesus' victory.[65] The holy writers also see evil under God's control. It was God's spirit that led Jesus to the desert to be tempted.[66] But God was in control there just as He was over the evil spirits who could not harm a man

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[57]Luke 12:16.

[58]Luke 22:53.

[59]John 8:44.

[60]John 14:30.

[61]John 13:2.

[62]Matthew 26:24.

[63]John 13:27.

[64]Luke 4:12.

[65]John 14:30; Luke 10:18f.

[66]Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1.

even while they convulsed him.[67] Man is a sinner. He is responsible. God is the Lord. The Gospels do not solve the philosophic problem of evil, but in Christ they give the sinner the power to live triumphantly over it.

If the creation is thoroughly infected by sin, can this world still be called God's creation? The Gospels nowhere indicate any other view than that this world is God's world. And in a sense this is God's good world where man still is in the center of the world. Sin has not removed God's gracious purpose to create this world for man. Man is still of more value than a sheep or sparrows,[68] and man still has powers over creation such as carrying on business that makes use of the mind or agriculture that subdues the earth and lower animals. To the disciples Jesus even gave supernatural powers over creation.[69] Then too Jesus' own attitude toward nature was not that of an ascetic who practically equates evil with the natural or the physical. In fact, Jesus was criticized just because of his free use of foods and drink.[70] Koeberle[71] believes that Jesus' conception of the beauty of nature is told by His parables. The sin that the Lord saw in

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[67]Luke 4:35.

[68]Matthew 12:12; 10:31.

[69]Luke 10:19; Mark 16:18.

[70]Matthew 11:19.

[71]Koeberle, op. cit., p. 33.

the world did not lead Him to question God's workings but man's.

A brief exposition of Jesus' attitude toward nature will establish this. Jesus refers to the world of nature again and again in His parables. He speaks of the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the grass, fish, serpents, trees, sparrows, a sower and his seed, the mustard seed, leaven, the sun, moon, and stars, a hen, and pearls.[72] Jesus did not hesitate to use material resources in His miracles, for example, applying clay and spittle to the eyes of the man born blind.[73] He declared all foods clean, and called the woman's use of ointment on His body "a good thing."[74] In the Lord's Prayer He even instructs His disciples to pray for daily bread.[75] In instituting the Holy Supper He used bread and wine.[76] The Evangelists too refer to the natural world - to John's diet, wild beasts, the time of the day, the grain fields, the sea, the wind, a lowly colt.[77] Above all the account of Jesus' resurrection, common to all four Gospels,

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[72]Matthew 6:26-30; 7:10; 7:17; 10:29; 13:18; 13:31; 13:33; 24:29; 23:37; 13:45.

[73]John 9:6.

[74]Mark 7:15-19.

[75]Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3.

[76]Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19f.

[77]Mark refers to all of these. 1:6; 1:13; 1:32; 2:23; 4:1; 6:48; 11:4.

is the strongest expression of the positive relation of God to the world. The world is God's. He is the world's Lord.

The fact remains nonetheless that sin has entered God's good world and is here. For this reason there is a certain dualism evident in the Gospels, evident also in Jesus' attitude toward man and the world. On several occasions Jesus contrasts the physical with the spiritual. He contrasts mere water with the water of life that He would give,[78] perishable earthly treasures with the eternal treasures in heaven,[79] the whole world with one's own soul.[80] It is no doubt true that this "dualism" derives partly from a sharp distinction between Creator and creature.[81] But in those passages where σάρξ and πνεῦμα are set in sharpest antithesis to each other it is evident that σάρξ has taken on a new meaning.[82] Sin has entered man's being and reigns there. Koeberle is correct when he says:

> .... σάρξ is never a contemptuous reference to what is merely material but always means the lusting will of man that deifies itself in the creation, that is

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[78]John 4:13f.

[79]Luke 12:33.

[80]Matthew 16:26.

[81]Hence the use of the word σάρξ in many instances in the Gospels refers only to this distinction. Yet it is also true that where σάρξ refers to Jesus Himself this cannot be the meaning, for although the Lord was made in the likeness of men, He was not creature but Lord.

[82]Cf. John 6:63 - "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail."

> submerged and absorbed in things earthly and that strives against the 'Spirit of God.'[83]

The body is not corrupt in essence (Jesus never places the seat of sin in the body but in the heart),[84] but sin reigns there and rouses the physical passions to demoniac fury. It is for this reason that Jesus contrasts the earthly and the spiritual.

Nevertheless, the problem is not so easily disposed of. In Jesus' teaching there is not only a contrast between flesh and spirit but also a progression from the material to the spiritual. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."[85] Jesus calls law, justice, mercy, and faith "weightier matters" than the Pharisaic practice of tithing mint and dill.[86] Many of Jesus' references to the world of nature are given a spiritual slant or interpretation.[87] Two things must be noted. Although this progression from earthly to spiritual is present in the Gospels, Jesus in His teaching emphasizes

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[83]Koeberle, op. cit., p. 33.

[84]Matthew 15:19.

[85]Matthew 4:4. The quotation is from Deuteronomy 8:3 where Moses tells Israel that God made them hunger just to impress this truth upon them.

[86]Matthew 23:23.

[87]This is particularly true with regard to the signs of the end of the world. Cf. Matthew 24:32ff.

the whole man--the ψυχή. It is life that counts with Jesus, the life of the whole man, soul and body, or soul, body, and spirit.[88]

The second point to be noted is even more important. Jesus is interested in eternal life. To bring this life to men He had come into the world.[89] This eternal life is that which comes only from God who is Spirit, from the Son who mediates this life through His death, and from the Comforter who conveys this mediated life. Therefore, it is true that "the spirit gives life, the flesh is of no avail."[90] Man's body is of no avail for possessing eternal life, and neither is his spirit (only Jesus' words are spirit). Man's whole life is in the bondage of sin. It is only God who can break this power of darkness and usher in the light of His life. This He does from above, through His Son.[91]

The question, "What do the Gospels say about a theologia naturalis?" could only be asked after centuries had intervened

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[88]It is striking to compare the evidently parallel Matthew 16:26 and Luke 9:25. In the first Jesus speaks of gaining the whole world and losing "his own soul" (τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ) and in the second of losing "himself" (ἑαυτόν). The Revised Standard Version translates Matthew 16:26 "his life." The question whether the New Testament teaches a dichotomy or a trichotomy, in the face of this emphasis on the whole man, is at best answered with difficulty.

[89]John 11:25f.

[90]John 6:63.

[91]John 6:32f.

between the Church and the eyewitnesses, after the Church had begun to think through its message, after the Church had to face up to the convictions of pagan philosophy. Even today, as Karl Barth evidently feels and believes, it seems irreverent to approach the Scriptures which are the revelation of God, the very Word of God, and ask about a natural theology. There are, however, a few hints that the Gospels give us on this problem. John 1:9 of course has to be mentioned if for no other reason than that Brunner quotes this verse profusely. Various exegeses of this passage are possible, but the φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον strongly suggests not only that every man has a basic relationship to God but also that whatever light he possesses, he has through the very Word of God.

That this passage cannot possibly be used to construct a rational theology from the Gospels is evidenced by Jesus' words to the very religious Jews. "You have not known My Father."[92] Yet they had said that He was their God. Jesus often sketches the irony of men who could interpret natural phenomena but who could not see God behind them.[93] The question of the angel in Luke 24:5: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" might well express the attitude of

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[92]John 8:55.

[93]Luke 12:56.

the Gospels toward a natural theology. God has not left Himself without witness in the world, but man cannot reach Him or truly know Him either through nature or through their own religious or rational efforts.

The great emphasis of the Gospels in connection with Creator-creature relationships is the typical Old Testament stress on the distance between God and His creation. The fear of Him who had made the host of the heavens by the breath of His mouth is also in the Gospels. The majesty of God shown in Jesus' miracles astonished also New Testament people.[94] The Evangelists do not play down but rather give full force to this "creaturely awe" through words like φοβέομαι, ἐκπλήττομαι, ἐξίστημι, θαυμάζω.[95] Even the יָרֵא of the Old Testament appears several times in Luke as ὕψιστος.[96] Often there is conjoined the sense of moral unworthiness with the feeling of utter dissimilarity between God and the creature. This too is an echo of the Old Testament.[97]

Jesus Himself accentuated this distance between Creator and creature, between the Holy One and the sinner. Men were

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[94]Cf. Psalm 33:6-8 and Luke 9:43.

[95]Matthew 10:28; Mark 6:2; Luke 8:56; John 7:15 - to mention just one instance from each of the Gospels.

[96]Luke 1:32, 35, 76; 6:35.

[97]Cf. Mark 1:7f; Luke 7:6; and especially Luke 1:51-53 with Old Testament sections like 2 Samuel 22:28; Psalm 107:9; 147:6; Job 12:19; 1 Samuel 2:7; Ezekiel 21:31.

not to swear by heaven or earth or Jerusalem since they were the Lord's.[98] Men dare not trample His honor in the dust. As far as Jesus Himself was concerned, He claimed to be greater than anything even in the religious world--greater than the temple, greater than the Law.[99] And because He knew what was in man, Jesus removed man's last assurance of any status before God by revealing sin in its finest forms. As the suffering Servant He submitted His will to His Father's in the Garden and on the cross, and so became true man, the second Adam. The Gospel truly means the end of all bold, confident, proud aspirations.[100] The ringing οὐ δύνασθε of Matthew 6:24 establishes the either/or forever. Either God or Mammon.

But an even greater emphasis of the Gospels than this is the fact of Jesus' penetration of the Creator-creature barrier. The Son of God became man. He came to save sinners, to give His life a ransom for many.[101] But this Christ, this Savior, had said: "I and My Father are one."[102] For

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[98]Matthew 5:34-36.

[99]Matthew 12:6-8.

[100]Koeberle, op. cit., p. 57.

[101]Matthew 20:28.

[102]John 10:30.

this the Jews wanted to stone Him. A man had made himself God. They understood the Creator-creature barrier, but they did not believe in Him through whom the world had been made, who had come to reveal the Father. "But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God."[103] For the creature who is in Christ, who believes on Him and the Father who had sent Him, there comes almost an identification of Creator and creature. Jesus will abide in the believer,[104] and He will send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who will dwell with the believer and in him.[105] Yes, the believer will do even greater works than his Lord.[106]

Yet although this is a reality, it is also a mystery. It is a communion, not a union. Even in Christ the Christian remains a creature. God remains God. Jesus no longer calls His disciples servants, but friends. But still there is no equation, no mystical identification of the creature and his Creator. "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit."[107] The δοῦλοι become φίλοι only through God's revealing love in

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[103]John 1:12.

[104]John 15:4.

[105]John 14:17.

[106]John 14:12.

[107]John 15:14ff.

Jesus Christ. The Christian nevertheless remains and will remain God's creature.

Do the Gospels have a theocentric view of Creation? The first commandment of the Old Testament remains the first commandment of the New. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."[108] God is the Creator Lord, and man and the world are His creatures. The terrific contrast of Psalm 82, 6f. also remains. "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men and fall like one of the princes."[109] Although God put man into the center of the world, man was not to be and is not the center of the world. It was man the sinner who dethroned God and made himself the center of the world. Into this corrupted creation came the Son of God to preach and live and die the εὐαγγέλιον. He through whom all things were made is the center of the Gospels.

But no less is Jesus' Father the center of the Gospels, the Father who sent Him, whom He reveals, and to whom He

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[108] Mark 12:29ff.

[109] Jesus quotes just a few words from this Psalm in John 10:34. The theme of this Psalm is that it was God's free declaratory act which had clothed these judges and rulers with the god-like dignity they bore. They were actually elohim but did not possess the right of self-government.

wishes to lead men. The Creator Lord is God and He alone. Jesus Christ is Savior and He alone. The Holy Spirit is Counselor and He alone. Faith is the link between the Creator Lord and His fallen creation, but not faith in anything or anyone. Man can live--really live--only by faith in the Son of God. In the Gospels Creation is theocentric. What the Church did with this theocentric doctrine of Creation during the long centuries of growth and development and perversion until the time of Martin Luther will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE MIDDLE AGES ON CREATION

The basic Christian belief that God had created man and the world was not lost in the Middle Ages. But the doctrine of Creation underwent a certain development during the centuries in which Christianity confronted paganism and the philosophies current there, triumphed over paganism, and finally at the height of the Middle Ages dominated western Europe through the Papacy. It was against the theology of the Papacy that Martin Luther fought. That theology also included a well-developed doctrine of God and of Creation. To appreciate Luther's views on Creation, it is necessary first to understand what medieval Christendom did with Creation. What was the medieval doctrine of Creation? Was it theocentric? It will be the purpose of this chapter to sketch, summarize, synthesize, and evaluate the medieval beliefs that had to do with God, Creation, and the creature. In this way it will be possible to see Luther's heritage in this area of theology, as well as to measure this period against the theocentric Scriptural origins from which it emerged.

Although Augustine is generally given the honor of being the first theologian of the Middle Ages, there were before him more than two centuries of post-Apostolic church

history that were decisive for the early development of the doctrine of Creation. The Apologists of the second century had continued to emphasize both the unity of God and His creation of the world out of nothing.[1] Against the dualistic heresies of Gnosticism and Marcionism, the early Church reaffirmed the creation of the world and man by the same God who was both Creator and Redeemer.[2] Yet the heritage of Gnosticism in Alexandrian theology had effected a synthesis between Biblical revelation and philosophical speculation.[3] From the third century on, the Christian view of Creation contained both Christian and pagan philosophic elements. Origen of Alexandria, though perhaps an extreme example, demonstrates this.[4] In Neoplatonic fashion he was led to an abstract conception of God who alone is Being, and for that reason he carefully avoided all anthropomorphic expressions. Here too appears the philosophic speculation about the eternity of the world. Since Origen views the Fall as a supra-mundane fall of spirits, the creation of the world took place for the purposes of punish-

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[1]J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1946), I, 45.

[2]Ibid., pp. 52-8.

[3]Ibid., p. 84.

[4]For a summary of Origen's theology cf. Neve, op. cit., pp. 86-8.

ing and purifying the fallen spirits. Although the Christian view of God as Creator remains in a Christian Neoplatonist like Origen, the created world is no longer God's good creation, though perverted by sin, but a place for material punishment. And although sin remains, it is not the radical evil of the Scriptures but a predetermined quality of the soul.

While it was Origen who particularly influenced the theology of the East, "....it was the influence from the writings of Augustine which determined decisively the special character of Occidental (Roman) theology."[5] To what extent Augustine's early Neoplatonism influenced his theology is still debatable. Although it is true that Augustine laid much stress upon God as the personal Creator and governor of the world,[6] yet there is a radical change in the Christian idea of God. Anders Nygren has pointed to this in his monumental work, Agape and Eros. According to Nygren, Augustine identified the ascending Eros of Neoplatonism with the command to love God, and thus thought of Christian love as seeking one's own bonum in God. By this transcendent eudemonism, which radically alters the Christian idea of God, the theocentric character of the Christian commandment

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[5] Ibid., p. 98.

[6] Ibid., p. 101.

of love is lost.[7] God the wholly other has become not so wholly other because His agape has become the not so wholly other caritas. Nygren points out that although the Middle Ages broke with Augustine on grace and predestination, his conception of Christian love set his seal on medieval Catholic piety.[8] It was this idea of love which materially affected the medieval views on the relation between Creator and sinful creature.

Even more significant in the medieval development of the doctrine of Creation was the dominance of Neoplatonic speculation in certain influential men of the early Middle Ages. Proclus of Athens, the last renowned representative of Neoplatonism, had defended the Platonic doctrine of the eternity of the world and had contested the Christian doctrine of Creation.[9] In Proclus' writings appear the three ladders of ascent from man to God--by purification, by illumination, and by union.[10] About the year 500 a man professing to be Dionysius the Areopagite, a disciple of Paul, but in reality a disciple of Proclus, wrote four books of tremendous

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[7]Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, translated by Philip S. Watson (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), Part II, Vol. II, 282.

[8]Ibid., p. 341.

[9]Proclus died in 487. Cf. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), III, 79.

[10]Nygren, op. cit., pp. 348ff.

importance for medieval theology.[11] The fundamental idea in Pseudo-Dionysius is the idea of the Chain of Love that joins heaven and earth, that leads the divine Eros down to the lower world and that leads the whole desire of the lower world up towards the divine again. The goal of man's life is deification, raising himself to the greatest possible likeness to God and to unity with Him.[12]

The man most influential in bringing the ideas of Dionysius to the West was John Scotus Erigena of the ninth century. The ideas of Pseudo-Dionysius are evident in Erigena's cycle of nature in which divine life flowed out and then back again to the same source.[13] Erigena actually identified God and nature.[14] This Neoplatonic speculation, which was strong in the West until the thirteenth century and which was still evident in later Mysticism, had linked Creator and creature by a chain of love. Nevertheless, in

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[11] Ibid., p. 358. The four books are the following: On the Heavenly Hierarchy, On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, On the Divine Names, and On the Mystical Theology.

[12] Nygren, op. cit., p. 365f., where the author refers to De ecclesiastica hierarchica, cap. i., 3.

[13] Nygren, op. cit., pp. 386ff. The reference is to Erigena's De divisione naturae, lib. I, 75.

[14] Johannes Delitzsch, Die Gotteslehre des Thomas von Aquino (Leipzig: Doerffling und Franke, 1870), p. 116. "Conclusum est, divinam naturam solam vere ac proprie in omnibus esse, et nihil vere ac proprie esse, quod ipsa non sit. Perinde non duo a se ipsis distantia debemus intelligere Deum et creaturam, sed unum et id ipsum. Nam et creatura in Deo est subsistens, et Deus in creatura mirabili modo creatur se ipsum manifestans et fit in omnibus omnia." De divisione naturae, III, 17.

this same Neoplatonic tradition there was a negation of the corporeal, as both monasticism and mysticism demonstrate.

Sometime before the thirteenth century came the revival of another great ancient philosopher, Aristotle, and the high point of medieval scholasticism. Without doubt, the most outstanding of these scholastics was Thomas Aquinas. In his Summa Theologica the angelic doctor achieved a synthesis of nature and grace, of reason and revelation that still holds good today for many educated Roman Catholics.[15] Since his doctrine of Creation will be treated in more detail later, this will suffice here: Thomistic scholasticism reaffirmed the transcendent God (however, in Aristotelian fashion)[16] but also made room for an autonomy of natural reason. God and man were linked in an analogia entis.[17] Although Thomism remained a powerful force down to the

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[15]Cf. Adolf Koeberle, The Quest for Holiness, translated from the third German edition by John C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1936), p. 13.

[16]Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 44, holds that Thomas' transcendent God came from the Neoplatonic-Areopagite tradition. McKeon however believes that in Thomas came the disentangling of the web in which Platonism and Aristotelianism had been enmeshed. Cf. Richard McKeon, "Aristotelianism in Western Christianity," Environmental Factors in Christian History, edited by John Thomas McNeill, Matthew Spinka, and Harold Willoughby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c.1939), pp. 214-20.

[17]Cf. Philip S. Watson, Let God Be God (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1950), p. 57.

Reformation, in the fifteenth century it shared the field with Nominalism. Nominalists like Occam and Biel tried to steer between an absolutely sovereign God and a God who could be reached through the powers of grace.[18]

With the middle of the fifteenth century, the floods of Humanism began to break upon western Europe. Here an almost completely anthropocentric view of Creation prevailed. Randall has this to say:

> Humanism had an intensely practical interest in the forces within human nature, and bothered little with man's beliefs about the larger setting of his life; it was far more anthropocentric than the thirteenth century, whose chief concern was God, or the eighteenth, whose problems lay in nature.[19]

In very brief outline this is the development of the medieval doctrine of Creation according to the historical context. Now a more careful and systematic look at Creation in the Middle Ages is in order.

The living Creator Lord of the Scriptures who searches and knows men whom He has formed in their mothers' wombs, who laid the foundations of the earth and set the families of the stars in order, was soon lost in a philosophic view of God. Even the second century Apologists had treated God

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[18]Friedrich Wilhelm Schmidt, "Der Gottesgedanke in Luthers Roemerbriefvorlesung," Theologische Studien und Kritiken, XCIII (1920-1), 129f.

John Herman Randall, Jr., The Making of the Modern Mind (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., c.1940), p. 129.

as the Inconceivable One who rests in Himself, lying far above all thought and action of man.[20] In Augustine this tendency toward philosophic abstraction became canonized because of the high regard in which the bishop of Hippo was held in the Church. For Augustine God was the summum et incommutabile bonum.[21] This speculative idea came close to a neutral abstraction and thus had no place for the personal voluntary relationship of the God of the Scriptures.[22] In the Neoplatonism of Pseudo-Dionysius this depersonalization of God is carried to such an extreme that God is enthroned in transcendent majesty, in absolute immobility and rest, inaccessible to all conceptions. Here all that can be said about God is that He is the cause of all things, the source of everything beautiful and good and of everything that exists.[23]

In Thomas Aquinas this philosophic view of the Creator was just as pronounced. But here it is Aristotle's conception of God that emerges. For "the Philosopher," as Aquinas

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[20]Karl Holl, Gesammelte Aufasetze zur Kirchengeschichte (Seventh edition; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1948), I, 3.

[21]Nygren, op. cit., pp. 266-74.

[22]Koeberle, op. cit., p. 24.

[23]Nygren, op. cit., p. 360. Nygren refers to De mystica theologica, chapter V and to De divinis nominibus, chapter I, 4. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 45f. gives the similar views of John of Damascus and Scotus Erigena.

calls Aristotle, God is pure thought, eternal, unmovable, impassive, for whom it would be derogatory to think about anything but Himself. God is the Actus Purus, the Pure Mind who is not the efficient, but the final cause of all. God's static perfection moves the world only through the desire that finite beings feel for Him.[24] Zeller writes:

> According to Aristotle, the Deity stands in lonely self-contemplation outside the world; for man He is an object of awe and wonder, to know Him is the highest task of man's intellect; this divinity is the goal towards which all that is finite aspires, whose perfection evokes man's love; but just as he cannot expect to receive love in return, he cannot receive from this divinity any effect at all that differs from that of nature, and his intellect is the sole means by which he enters into contact with Him.[25]

This God is certainly not the Creator Lord of the Bible. To the credit of Thomas Aquinas it must be said that this is not his view of God either. Thomas was a Christian, and he definitely teaches that God is the Creator of man and the world.[26]

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[24]Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, c.1945), p. 168f.

[25]Zeller, Die Philosophie der Griechen, II, I, p. 791. Quoted in Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God. Dogmatics: Volume I, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1950), p. 152.

[26]To give only one example: "I answer that, not only is it not impossible that anything should be created by God, but it is necessary to say that all things were created by God, as appears from what has been said." Summa Theologica, Ques. 45, Art. 2; quoted from Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, edited by Anton C. Pegis (New York: Random House, c.1945), I, 435.

Nevertheless Thomas' Creator still reflects the influence of Aristotle's actus purus, an unmoved mover, the highest Being, in whom perfection and actuality coincide.[27]

The particular emphasis of Nominalism seems to point more in the direction of the Christian doctrine of God than either the speculations of Pseudo-Dionysius or the Aristotelian abstraction of Thomas. For the Occamists put faith above reason and emphasized the revelation of God as the infallible source of all truth.[28] In the writings of Biel, which Luther studied as a young monk, there is a theocentric emphasis. God's sovereign Will is the highest norm for Gabriel Biel. But since the sovereign will of God is total liberty, God can deny a man who loves Him, refuse to condemn a sinner, punish the innocent, and still be right.[29] Even the Sacraments and the work of Christ do not have a necessity in themselves. "Die goettliche Willkuer ist die letzte Instanz fuer alles Geschehen."[30] It is true that the Nominalists taught that this sovereign God had established a way of salvation

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[27]Cf. Delitzsch, op. cit., pp. 41, 48, 57, 74, and 99.

[28]Schmidt, op. cit., p. 142.

[29]Ibid., p. 130f. Schmidt has this quotation from Biel: "Non enim habet aliam regulam cui teneatur se conformare: sed ipso divina voluntas est regula omnium contigentium. Nec enim quia aliquid rectum est aut iustum: ideo deus vult: sed quia deus vult: ideo iustum et rectum." I dub 4 coroll. 1.

[30]Ibid., p. 140.

and that as a rule He accepted the good works done by man. Yet they also taught that good works do not compel God.[31] Instead of pointing men to God in Christ, Nominalism pointed men to the sovereign God who would or would not accept their works. They had made God completely incomprehensible.

But there is more to the medieval picture of God than this. There are instances, especially in the mystics, where God is a warm living Being. In fact mysticism seemed to rise as a revolt against the scholastic depersonalization of God. Bernard, for example, had derided Abelard's attempt to comprehend God altogether by human reason.[32] Still mysticism was held in the Neoplatonic tradition of making God into a nameless abstract Being. It was this tradition that moved some of the mystics to wipe out entirely any distinction between God and the world. However the main emphasis of the Middle Ages was on the transcendent God. This comes to the foreground again and again, in Augustine, in Thomas, in Occam and Biel, even in individuals who elsewhere in their writings seem to teach a Neoplatonic identification of God and the world.[33] Carl Stange[34] holds that this stress on God's

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[31] Ibid., p. 140.

[32] Randall, op. cit., p. 94.

[33] Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 115 sees this same ambivalence in Scotus Erigena.

[34] Carl Stange, "Die Gottesanschauung Luthers," Zeitschrift fuer systematische Theologie, VIII (1931), 72f.

transcendence finally succeeded in cutting God off completely from the world so that God had little to do with the ordinary religious life. This is probably an exaggeration, but it is true that the medieval philosophic view of God tended to rob the Christian doctrine of Creation of its dynamic source--the living Creator Lord.

That God had made man and the world was an essential view of the Middle Ages. At the risk of oversimplification it might be said that Augustine breathed the spirit of medieval Christendom in the following extract from his Confessions:

> I asked the earth, and it answered me, 'I am not He;' and whatsoever are in it confessed the same. I asked the sea and the deeps, and the living creeping things, and they answered, 'We are not thy God, seek above us.' I asked the moving air; and the whole air with its inhabitants answered, 'Anaximenes was deceived, I am not thy God.' I asked the heavens, sun, moon, stars, 'Nor,' say they, 'are we the God whom thou seekest.' And I replied unto all the things which encompass the door of my flesh, 'Ye have told me of my God, that ye are not He; tell me something of Him.' And they cried out with a loud voice, 'He made us.'[35]

Even a man like Thomas Aquinas, influenced by Aristotle though he was, could not step out of this Christian tradition. Since Thomas has a detailed doctrine of Creation, a brief digest of it will give some insight into what men of the high Middle Ages were thinking about Creation. One of the basic errors

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[35] Confessions, Everyman Edition, p. 208f. Quoted in Randall, op. cit., p. 34.

which Thomas rejected was that God was the soul of the world.[36] No, all created beings have their being from God through creation.[37] Since the act of creation is the first and highest act, the act of creation belongs alone to God.[38] Under the concept of the creatio ex nihilo Thomas not only denies that God created the world from preexistent material, but he also affirms that God created the world before there was anything.[39]

Since the Ideas for Thomas are the forms of things, therefore the prototype of the world had to be in the mind of God. Here was a serious problem for the angelic doctor. He had decided for a multiplicity of Ideas, and yet he wanted to hold to God's absolute unity. The objective reality of the Ideas was saved by subsuming them in the Verbum Dei. But this Verbum has a closer affinity to the Logos of philosophic speculations than to the Biblical picture of the dynamic Word through whom all things were created.[40] Further philosophical

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[36]McKeon, op. cit., p. 222.

[37]Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 104f. Cf. supra, footnote 26.

[38]Ibid., p. 106. "Creatio autem est prima actio, eo quod nullam aliam praesupponit et omnes aliae praesupponit eam. Est igitur creatio propria Dei solius actio, qui est agens primum." Contra Gent., III, cap. 21.

[39]Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 105. "Dicendum, quod cum dicitur aliquid ex nihilo fieri, haec praipositio 'ex' non designat causam materialem, sed ordinem tantum...." Summa, I, ques. XLV, art. Ic.

[40]Delitzsch, op. cit., pp. 86-93.

influence is evident in a view of emanation. Although Thomas speaks of creation, he also devotes entire chapters in his Summa to "The Mode of Emanation of Things from the First Principle"[41] and "The Procession of Creatures from God, and the First Cause of All Things."[42] It is this emanation which he calls "Creation."[43] Delitzsch[44] believes that this identification results from Thomas' doctrine of the place of Ideas in the mind of God. The world, then, is the realization of the Idea in creation. Despite all Thomas does to stress God's transcendence, this speculation opens the door to a Neoplatonic continuum between God and the world.

Aristotle had taught an eternity of the world. Thomas and other medieval scholars knew this. Delitzsch[45] holds that Thomas' view of the world moves him to accept an eternal world. In the Summa Thomas cites ten objections which seek to prove that world and time are eternal. But he has to answer that nothing except God can be eternal and that it is not necessary for the world to have been without a beginning. Yet he will not demonstrate the fact that the world had a

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[41] Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., pp. 433-46.

[42] Ibid., pp. 426-32.

[43] Ibid., p. 433.

[44] Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 106f.

[45] Ibid., p. 109f.

beginning. In fact, he says this cannot be demonstrated, but that, like the Trinity, it be held as an article of faith.[46] Delitzsch[47] concludes that Thomas leaned toward a belief in the eternity of the world, which resulted from his static view of God. Though the influence of Aristotle is plainly discernible in Thomas' doctrine of God, the fact that he upheld the beginning of the world as an article of faith shows what a great influence the Christian view of Creation still exerted.

Another element in Thomas is more typical of the Middle Ages. His doctrine of God as the efficient cause as well as the final cause of all existence (this in contrast to Aristotle) makes of the whole cosmic process an expression of God's self love.[48] This love worked for man. Earth, heaven, and all therein were created for man that he might work out his life and destiny. Hence, in contrast to the modern world, the Middle Ages asked "Why?" of the universe rather than "How?" Men saw purposes everywhere and found the ultimate reason for the universe in the will of God.[49] Nevertheless the medieval world was very simple, very machine-like, very geocentric. Anatole France in his Garden of Epicurus paints a striking

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[46] Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., pp. 447-52.

[47] Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 113.

[48] Watson, op. cit., p. 58.

[49] Randall, op. cit., p. 28f.

picture of the ordered, homely universe of the Middle Ages.[50] As the doctrine of Creation worked itself out into a world view, there appeared the same curious combination noted earlier, a transcendent and yet immanent God, a theocentric and yet quite anthropocentric view of Creation. God and His world were far apart and yet very close together--often too far apart and often too close together.

What this involves is brought out more clearly in the medieval view of man and the world. Here there are several factors involved. One strain in medieval thought preserved a high view of Man's own possibilities as a sinful creature. Strange to say, this began with Augustine, who had so sternly emphasized the disastrous results of sin in his controversy with Pelagius. Yet even here his "caritas synthesis" appeared. Since the Fall, man has no *caritas*. It must be given by a special act of grace.[51] Natural man has only an *uti*-love toward God, not a *frui*-love which seeks one's own *bonum* in the *summum bonum*.[52] But as Holl[53] points out, Augustine did not

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[50] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[51] Nygren, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 286-90. *Frui* means to love something for its own sake; *uti*, to love something for the sake of something else. Nygren adds on p. 290: "The idea of 'Fruitio Dei' is an expression of the strongly theocentric tendency which marks Augustine's thought. It has the important task of preventing God from being made into a means for some other end."

[53] Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

use these expressions to exclude self-love but rather wanted to include it. He held that it was nature to love oneself, that man cannot love God without loving himself.[54] According to Nygren[55] this is basically Neoplatonic Eros, but in Augustine it is blended with New Testament Agape to form a "caritas synthesis." By including self-love under caritas Augustine had opened the door for succeeding generations to develop an increasingly higher estimate of the possibilities of the sinner in spiritual matters. In the same way, by relating man's bonum to a summum bonum, they related Creator to creature in a way foreign to Christianity.

The later Middle Ages took up these hints in Augustine. In Thomas Aquinas there is a carefully worked out analogia entis with God as the summum ens. The various "steps" of being beneath Him differ from each other only quantitatively not qualitatively. The grades of being are grades of a corruptio compared with God's Being.[56] Indeed in as far as

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[54]Nygren, op. cit., p. 321. "Sic itaque condita est mens humana, ut....numquam se non diligat." De Trinitate, lib. XIV, cap. xiv, 18.

[55]Nygren, op. cit., pp. 248-52.

[56]Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 108f. "Inveniat, si quis intelligenter consideret, gradatim res diversitate compleri." Contra Gent. lib. III, cap. lxxxxxvii. "Causa distinctionis rerum propter perfectionem universi, ita et inaequalitatis; non enim perfectum esset universum, si tantum unus gradus bonitatis inveniretur in rebus." Summa, I, ques. XLVII, art. II.

men are sinners they have no existence at all. But in as far as any being has form or actuality, it is good.[57] In similar fashion Thomas posits the possibility of knowing God immediately since man's intellect is similar to God's. Of course, he denies that this will happen in this life, since no created being is equal to the unlimited Being of God.[58] Nevertheless the possibility does remain, and it remains because Thomas has linked man's being to God's in his analogia entis.[59] The Creator is not primarily other than the Creator, neither is there radical evil infecting every man. While Nominalism does separate Creator and creature much more than Thomism, in Nominalism man still is able to do what he can (facere quod in se est) to love God above all things. Man has a choice and a free will under God's general influence. Even in this last attempt of the Middle Ages to stress God's monergism and free will, man still has a certain natural ability in matters pertaining to his salvation.[60] Sin had not completely quenched the spark of the divine life in man.

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[57]Watson, op. cit., p. 58.

[58]Delitzsch, op. cit., pp. 32-7.

[59]Brunner comments: "The Aristotelian anthropology has been part of the supporting structure of European history." Man in Revolt, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1947), p. 26.

[60]Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 132-4.

During the same centuries in which these high views of man were being developed, there was also a Neoplatonic dualism in which creaturely status was defiled through an identification of sin with the material. Koeberle[61] is of the opinion that there is a dualistic, spiritualistic conception of the relation of soul and body that runs through all human thought. Basic to all such dualism is the teaching regarding the soul that denies the cosmos. The spiritual comes from God and is good; the natural is low, earthly, devilish.

> The consequences that result from such an equation where the material equals sin and the spiritual equals the divine are tremendous: the attitude of man toward his own body becomes one of complete negation.[62]

This is the dualism that entered Christianity via orientalized Platonic sources, and from this belief sprang the otherworldliness of the Middle Ages, which saw the creation as a vale of tears and temptation and which made the withdrawal and contemplation of the ascetic ideal preferable to action.[63] Randall[64] points out the curious fact that although the thinkers of the Middle Ages knew more Aristotle than Plato, they were nonetheless better Platonists than Aristotelians. The main

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[61] Koeberle, op. cit., p. 28f.

[62] Ibid., p. 29.

[63] Randall, op. cit., p. 48f.

[64] Ibid., p. 46.

thesis of Johannes Delitzsch' book Die Gotteslehre des Thomas von Aquino is that Thomas is very much influenced by Neoplatonism. Thomas' reasoning that the material is the lowest and God the highest Being[65] not only puts a high value on man by ascribing the same category to both man and God, but it also puts a low estimate on man by making him a creature who has a less perfect quantity of being. In all Neoplatonism and the medieval theology and thought that was colored by Neoplatonism sin became the material. By doing this the Biblical regard for man was destroyed.[66] The good creation of God became essentially evil.

The same Neoplatonism which destroyed man's standing as a noble creature of God also weakened sin. The stern Biblical judgment of sin as an infinite misery and guilt separating the sinner from his God was weakened to conform to the sin

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[65]An example of such reasoning is the following: "Deus est id, quod est nobilissimum in entibus. Impossibile est autem, aliquod corpus esse nobilissimum in entibus, quia corpus aut est vivum aut non vivum. Corpus autem vivum manifestum est quod est nobilius corpore non vivo; corpus autem vivum non vivit in quantum corpus, quia sic omne corpus viveret. Oportet igitur quod vivat per aliquid aliud, sicut corpus nostrum vivit per animam. Illud autem per quod vivit corpus, est nobilius quam corpus. Impossibile est igitur Deum esse corpus." Summa, I, ques. III, art. I, quoted in Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 49.

[66]Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), p. 16.

sickness of Neoplatonism.[67] Augustine, who Koeberle[68] believes never really overcame his Neoplatonic past, was convinced that even sin showed man's search for God and that all men without exception love God to a degree.[69] Those who stood in the Neoplatonic tradition like Pseudo-Dionysius could even talk of the sinner's rising to God on some ladder of ascent. The same Neoplatonism that had destroyed man's dignity as a man lent the same man as a sinner too high a dignity.

At the end of the Middle Ages, however, there was also a tendency that went to the opposite extreme. Nominalism had almost made God the author of sin. In Biel, for example, God was the absolutely free will who can do as He pleases. Sin is sin because He calls it so. Although the cause of sin is not God in the strict sense, yet the damnation of souls is contingently determined by God's foreknowledge. To the question why God would make those whose damnation He foresaw, Biel would answer: because He wanted to. Even the creation of the damned abounds to God's glory.[70] Although this view of sin seems more serious than that of Neoplatonism, the bald

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[67]Koeberle, op. cit., p. 24.

[68]Ibid., p. 13.

[69]Nygren, op. cit., p. 278f.

[70]Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 131-45.

determinism of Nominalism vitiates the personal side of sin as much as Neoplatonism does the radical side.

These theological tensions between too high or too low an opinion of the creature are seen particularly in medieval mysticism and the medieval world view. The German mystics of the fifteenth century wanted man to find God within himself, yet they were opposed to a this-worldly creature consciousness and their severest condemnation was on the consciousness of self.[71] Koeberle[72] sees the error of mysticism in the unhappy attitude toward the world in general and the anxious attitude in particular toward the beauty of the earth, the joy of one's calling, the children that God sent. "What a contempt for the First Article of the Creed is shown by this negative, ascetic conception of the world."[73] Hugo of St. Victor is typical of the medieval mystics in giving an allegorical interpretation for everything in nature. Randall[74] remarks that a knowledge of natural history for its own sake would have been regarded as almost blasphemous in the Middle Ages, taking men's thoughts away from the essential meaning of the world.

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[71]Holl, op. cit., p. 10f.

[72]Koeberle, op. cit., p. 37.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Randall, op. cit., p. 35.

This was true also with regard to the medieval world view. This became both rational and allegorical. Dante's universe with its twelve heavens revolving around the earth as its center was tidy, ordered, and neatly arranged. It is not surprising that in such a world of completeness Thomas Aquinas could truly believe that he understood the universe.[75] But this rational universe laid down by God had to be interpreted allegorically.[76] St. Francis, who saw the world as God's good world, and regarded man and beast as God's good creatures, was a notable exception to the common opinion that viewed the world as too tainted by evil to be appreciated except in some allegorical fashion.[77]

From Petrarch down to the days of the Reformation, Humanism and the Renaissance were in violent reaction to the medieval view of man and the world. These "modern" men spurned the infinite for the finite. Whatever interest in nature there was in the Middle Ages they replaced with an interest in man.[78] The Humanist Cosimo de' Medici said: "You follow infinite objects; I follow the finite. You place

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[75] Ibid., pp. 31-3.

[76] Ibid., p. 24.

[77] Ibid., p. 72f. On p. 74f. Randall quotes Francis' beautiful "Canticle of Brother Sun." However the same author holds that also in Thomas there was hardly a trace of asceticism, and this Randall attributes to Thomas' exaltation of that most characteristic part of man, his reason. Cf. p. 117.

[78] Ibid., p. 213.

your ladders in the heavens, I on earth, that I may not seek so high or fall so low."[79] Another Humanist, Pico della Mirandola, puts these words into the Creator's mouth:

> Neither a fixed abode, nor a form in thine own likeness nor any gift peculiar to thyself alone, have we given thee, O Adam, in order that what abode, what likeness, what gifts thou shalt choose, may be thine to have and to possess. The nature allotted to all other creatures, within laws appointed by ourselves, restrains them. Thou, restrained by no narrow bonds, according to thy own free will, in whose power I have placed thee, shalt define thy nature for thyself.[80]

The high view of man in Augustine or Thomas or Biel was as nothing beside this magnification of the creature. Yet there is a difference. The vitalism of the Renaissance did not recognize physical wretchedness, just as the others did not clearly see the soul's wretchedness. The Renaissance rightly emphasized that man and the world are God's creation, but it forgot that this is the fallen creation of God.[81]

Concerning the Creator-creature relationships of the Middle Ages the first thing that must be said is that there was no clear-cut separation between Creator and creature. The Areopagite-mystic tradition had, of course, emphasized the union of the creature and the Creator. But even men like Thomas Aquinas, who had made God transcendent in Aristotelian

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[79] Ibid., p. 124.

[80] Ibid., p. 123.

[81] Koeberle, op. cit., p. 34f.

fashion, also stood on practically the same level as Scotus Erigena. The latter had said that "extra Deum nihil vere esse essentiale dicitur." True, Thomas does not see the world as an emanation from God. Rather it is an expression of God's will. For Thomas, however, God's will is identical with God.[82] Although Thomas does not regard everything outside of God as part of His Being,[83] yet he also says that as long as anything has being God is in it.[84] From this point of view it is not a far step to saying that God and the world are identical in being. Though Thomas would not take this step completely, others in the Neoplatonic tradition did take it, and the clear cut separation of Creator and creature that is found in the Bible was lost.

The medieval doctrine of grace gives evidence of this loss. There were few men in the Middle Ages like Pelagius who went all the way in making the sinner capable of reaching God on his own natural powers. But the Semi-Pelagianism that prevailed in medieval theology gave the natural man powers to

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[82]Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 107f.

[83]Thomas says: "Quod omnia alia a Deo non sint suum esse, sed participent esse," and that created beings are different "secundum diversam participationem essendi." Summa, I, ques. XLIV, art. I, quoted in Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 107.

[84]"Esse est illud, quod est magis intimum cuilibet, et quod profundius omnibus inest, cum sit formale respectu omnium quae in re sunt, unde patet, quod Deus sit in omnibus rebus ei intime." Summa, I, ques. VIII, art. I, quoted in Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 107.

prepare himself for grace that were inconsistent with man's role as a lost sinful creature. Even such advocates of divine monergism as Augustine and Biel did not completely deny the sinner's possibilities in the realm of salvation.

> Augustine is well aware that we have not chosen God, but that God chose us before we possessed any merit whatever to furnish a motive for His love....Yet fellowship with God retains the character of a choice on man's part....man decides to devote himself wholly to Him; thus by rational calculation and an act of preference, man chooses God.[85]

Nominalism too, which in a sense was a return to the sola gratia, pointed toward the natural God-given powers by which man could earn the first grace (prima gratia; meritum de congruo) and thus follow a meritorious path. Schmidt comments: "Demnach scheint doch dem Menschen alles in die Hand gegeben."[86] This religious humanism is evident in the Mass where the priest has power over the very body of Christ. He can make God.[87] It is undeniable that the Mass, by its unearthly beauty of pageantry and mystic ceremonies, helped to increase a separation of man and God. What is important to note here is that the view of the Mass as a conficere deum also broke down the separation of Creator and creature in an unbiblical, unevangelical manner. It was man who made God, just as it was man who justified himself, at least initially.

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[85]Nygren, op. cit., p. 338.

[86]Schmidt, op. cit., p. 136.

[87]Holl, op. cit., p. 6.

In the area of natural theology the creature consciousness was lost even more. The scholastics had insisted that God could be known through man's natural reason. At the foundation of the natural theology of Thomas Aquinas stands the analogia entis. Since God is altogether out of the creature class, the analogical similarity between God and the creature is only in being. God is real Being, and the creature is only the participating being. Here is a true gradation of being in which God and man are linked in the concept of Being.[88] This is developed under the "knowledge of God." There are three forms of such knowledge--an intuitive knowledge, a knowledge through faith, and a knowledge through natural reason. Since these rank in a descending fashion, God cannot be known fully by natural man. But He can be known nonetheless. The natural light of man's reason is nothing less than a participation in the divine light, and there is consequently an unmediated emanation of divine light in the intellect.[89]

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[88] Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 57.

[89] Ibid., pp. 32-42. As much as Thomas holds on the one hand that there is an unlimited separation between God and created beings, on the other he denies that God cannot be known, only that He cannot be fully understood. "Dicendum quod Deus non sic dicitur non existens, quasi nullo modo sit existens, sed supra omne existens, in quantum est suum esse. Unde ex hoc non sequitur, quod nullo modo possit cognosci, sed quod omnem cognitionem excedat, quod est ipsum non comprehendi." Summa, I, ques. XII, art. I, quoted by Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 37.

Nevertheless God cannot be known in His essence. He must be known through His creatures or by the path of working from the excellent to the more excellent and from the close to the far.[90] In Aristotelian fashion Thomas gives five arguments for God's existence working from given actuality to the Absolute Cause.[91] Although God can be known by natural man, He cannot be completely known. What is lacking must be supplied by revelation.[92] This natural theology, and particularly the proofs for God, have been subjected to careful criticism. In Stange's opinion much of what the Middle Ages said in the area of natural theology pointed back at man.[93] It was an approach of man to God in which Creator and creature were brought together in too optimistic a manner.

Yet there is in the Middle Ages a tradition that erases the boundary between creature and Creator in an even more

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[90] Ibid., p. 40. "Deus non potest videri per suam essentiam, sed cognoscitur a nobis ex creaturis secundum habitudinem principii et per modum excellentiae et remotionis." Summa, I, ques. XIII, art. I.

[91] Delitzsch, op. cit., pp. 15-22. The first argument is from the observation of movable things in the world; the second, from cause and effect; the third, from possibility and necessity; the fourth, from the steps of perfection men see in the world; and the fifth, from the design and purpose in nature. It is interesting that Thomas denied the validity of Anselm's ontological argument since man has no immediate knowledge of what God is. Ibid., p. 10f. Thomas held on the contrary that God's existence can be demonstrated only from His operations. Ibid., p. 15.

[92] Watson, op. cit., p. 76.

[93] Stange, op. cit., p. 69f.

positive way. That is the rise to God that appears in the Neoplatonic-Areopagite ladders of ascent to God. Such paths of ascent had appeared in Plato.[94] In Augustine there is a threefold mode of ascent--virtue, speculation, and mysticism.[95] Love to the neighbor becomes the ladder on which the Christian can mount up to God.[96] The ladder of speculation was the natural theology whereby men could go from the lowest creature to the Creator by admiring the Creator's might in creation.[97] The heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius are simultaneously a descent from God in Neoplatonic form and a mystical Christian form of ascent to God.[98] The latter was included in certain monastic rules in a crass form of work righteousness.[99]

Stange[100] pointedly says that by this upward movement the Middle Ages was involved in the danger of mixing divine

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[94]Nygren, op. cit., p. 246.

[95]Ibid., p. 295f.

[96]Ibid., p. 334. Nygren points to Augustine's De doctrina christiana, lib. I, cap. xxx, 33.

[97]Augustine has built up a complete natural theology on the basis of Romans 1. Nygren, op. cit., p. 297 refers to the Enarr. in Ps. cxliv, 13.

[98]Nygren, op. cit., p. 368f.

[99]Ibid., p. 376. "If we wish to attain the pinnacle of the highest humility and quickly come to that heavenly exaltation to which the ascent is made by the humility of the present life, then we must by our upward-striving works erect that ladder which was revealed to Jacob in the dream." S. Benedicti Regula Monasteriorum, cap. vii.

[100]Stange, op. cit., p. 72.

and human. That point was reached in certain of the mystics. For St. Bernard heaven involved becoming one spirit with God.[101] That was the desire of all the mystics: to lose themselves and be sunk in the flood of the divine. Koeberle[102] recognizes that mysticism in Christianity has always been restrained and limited by the historic fact of the revelation in Christ. But he believes that in the end this too ended in immediate contact with Platonic ideas. The connection with Biblical faith, Word, and Sacrament existed only at the beginning. Such an immediate union of creature and Creator, is a travesty on the Christian doctrine of Creation. This starts, proceeds, and ends in Jesus Christ, and then the result is communion, not physical union.

In the Middle Ages there is a carefully developed doctrine of Creation. But this medieval view did not always follow the God-centered Creation of the Scriptures. Nevertheless it could be said with justice that there are coursing through the Middle Ages at the same time a theocentric and an anthropocentric view of Creation. In Augustine there was the sovereign Creator and the sinful creature who needed God's grace. In Thomas there was the sovereign God who is still Creator. In Biel God's sovereignty was absolute. But even in this stress on God's sovereignty, where a theocentric view of Creation is

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[101] Randall, op. cit., p. 71.

[102] Koeberle, op. cit., p. 9.

most apparent, there is none of the Gospels' living Creator Lord. God has become almost a philosophic abstraction. And even where God is sovereign, He is not wholly other than His creation. The creaturely awe of the Gospels is lost in a philosophic analogy of being. And even where sin is still basic evil, it is not the radical evil that utterly separates between the good Creator and His perverted creatures. Yes, even where the historical creation in the beginning is still taught and believed, that creation is not a present reality. A dogma of Creation had often sapped the religious life of the doctrine.

Though the Middle Ages talked much about God in the doctrine of Creation it actually centered its attention in man. Here too was "....a grandiose attempt to possess God and to become sure of Him by means of increased spiritual power."[103] Through much of the Christendom of the Middle Ages there coursed the natural hunger of life[104] that all too often neglected the lifeblood of the Church, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The love of God in Christ is the theocentric, Christocentric dynamic for Christian faith and life. As the Church moved away from this dynamic and put its trust in the ladder of merits, it is not surprising that it also moved farther and farther away from a God-centered doctrine of Creation. It was Martin Luther who put God back into the center also of this area of theology.

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[103] Ibid., p. 2.

[104] Holl, op. cit., p. 10.

CHAPTER III

LUTHER ON CREATION

Martin Luther's relation to the Middle Ages is still the subject of lively historical and theological debate. As far as this study is concerned this relationship is no mere academic question. If Luther is a typical medieval theologian, then his doctrine of Creation should share the anthropocentric bias of medieval theology. The conclusion of the previous chapter was that much of what the Middle Ages said about Creation centered in man. Before proceeding to analyze Luther's doctrine of Creation in detail, it is important briefly to review Luther's relationship to the Middle Ages in general and to its doctrine of Creation in particular. Today it is widely acknowledged by scholars that Luther stood in the scholastic tradition of the Middle Ages. No longer may well-meaning historians write about the Reformation as if there had not been centuries of Church history preceding it. No longer can theologians treat Luther out of the context of the theology of the medieval Church.

But merely to say that Luther stood in the medieval scholastic tradition says next to nothing. Just what did he have in common with medieval theology and its views of Creation? The first problem that arises in trying to answer this question is Luther's Nominalist background. The Reformer's phrase "my master Occam" and Melanchton's report that

Luther knew Gabriel Biel almost by heart have occasioned much study.[1] According to Holl[2] Luther owed Occam much and seemed to approach the Englishman's conception of God's will as sheer arbitrary freedom. Aulen believes that it is the Nominalist emphasis that appears in two tendencies in Luther--to define man's relation to God in more personal terms and to laud God's sovereignty.[3] At any rate, it is safe to say that Luther was influenced by Nominalism and that that influence is evident throughout his life.[4] Self-evidently, then, Luther did not dispense with scholastic terminology.[5] On this academic diet he had thrived as student and teacher, and with it he addressed his contemporaries. Self-evidently Luther also adopted the world view of contemporary scholastic scientists. To be sure it was the most up-to-date world view of the day,[6] but it was still cast in terms of spheres and

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[1]Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), p. 6.

[2]Karl Holl, Gesammelte Aufsaetze zur Kirchengeschichte (Seventh edition; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1948), I, 49f.

[3]Edgar M. Carlson, The Reinterpretation of Luther (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1948), p. 153.

[4]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 6.

[5]Philip S. Watson, Let God Be God (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1950), p. 8.

[6]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 5.

spherical motion.[7]

This, however, is only half the story and perhaps not even half. Standing in the scholastic tradition, even though it was the via moderna of Nominalism, Luther rejected the errors of the theology, philosophy, and piety of the Middle Ages which had centered in man and not in God. It is very true that Luther, as well as every other Christian teacher, had inherited a Christianity tinged with philosophy and a philosophy colored by Christian thought.[8] But scholastic philosophy had negated the impact of the divine agape, and that drew Luther's ire.[9] Although Aristotle and Aquinas came in for the greatest criticism, even Occam was condemned.[10] Medieval piety was rejected because it was largely hunger after earthly life and happiness.[11] For this reason it is

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[7]Martin Luther, "Enarratio in Genesin," D. Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1911), XLII, 22. Hereafter this edition of Luther's works will be referred to as WA. Cf. Werner Elert's discussion of Luther's world view in Morphologie des Luthertums (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1931), I, 355-66. It is Elert's opinion that for Luther all scientific or natural knowledge stood in the realm of the "world." Theologically speaking, then Luther had little interest in a "world view."

[8]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 2.

[9]Ibid., p. 11.

[10]Friedrich Wilhelm Schmidt, "Der Gottesgedanke in Luthers Roemerbriefvorlesung," Theologische Studien und Kritiken, XCIII (1920-21), 128.

[11]Holl, op. cit., p. 53.

equally a mistake to view Luther's work as part of the Renaissance. Religion for him was not just a piece of culture, not the striving of man with God but the striving of God with man.[12] At first hand he had seen that medieval theology did not really glorify God. The whole Nominalist theology was built around the tenuous assurance that man could rely on God's customary procedure of rewarding works.[13] Augustine's caritas synthesis, which had been incorporated into the theology of the Church, found an opponent in Martin Luther.[14] God the Creator and Redeemer was the center of Luther's theology.

Bred in a Church and society in which men tried with their works to appease the God whom theologians and philosophers had carefully thought out, Luther returned to the Gospel. Here God was the Creator and man the sinful creature. Here God took the initiative to rescue and redeem His creatures in the person of His Son. This has rightly been called a Copernican revolution in the realm of religion.

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[12] Ibid., p. 108f.

[13] Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 146-8. This "schmale Basis" of Nominalism Schmidt regards as the factor that brought Luther to the brink of despair.

[14] Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, translated by Philip S. Watson (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), Part II, Volume I, 342. For this reason Nygren believes that it is incorrect to see Luther in the same line of thought as Augustine.

> Just as Copernicus started with a geocentric, but reached a heliocentric conception of the physical world, Luther began with an anthropocentric or egocentric conception of religion, but came to a theocentric conception. In this sense, Luther is a Copernicus in the realm of religion.[15]

Sometime near the year 1513 Luther had discovered his new relationship to God by faith in Jesus Christ, and that determined the center of his theological interest. By this discovery and the unfolding of this new relationship of faith in all his later theology Luther stood in sharp opposition to medieval theology, with regard not only to the doctrine of justification by faith, but also, as we shall see in more detail, to the doctrine of Creation. In fact, for all of Luther's theology there is only one proper subject: Man as guilty on account of sin and God as the Justifier and Savior of sinful man.[16]

The Creator God for Luther was the Lord the Holy One, the Almighty. Holl[17] has remarked how deep an impression the words of the First Commandment made upon Luther. "I the Lord thy God." In his Large Catechism the Reformer expounds this commandment at length since "it is of chief importance, because, as before said, where the heart is rightly disposed toward God

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[15]Watson, op. cit., p. 34.

[16]Ibid., p. 23.

[17]Holl, op. cit., p. 73.

and this commandment is observed, all the others follow."[18] "The first commandment is to shine and impart its splendor to all the others."[19] This Lord is the Creator "who has given and constantly preserves to me my body, soul, and life, members great and small, all my senses, reason, and understanding, and so on."[20] Holl[21] is doubtless correct in affirming that Luther's reformation did not lie in changing any single doctrine. He built up anew from the very conception of God who is the Creator Lord. Luther's theology was centered in God, the personal God who was Creator, Redeemer, and Vivifier. This was his God, his Lord. Whatever therefore had no relation to God had no place in his Christian thinking.[22]

This Creator was the Holy One, the Almighty. After expounding the First Article Luther adds: "Therefore, this article ought to humble and terrify us all, if we believed it. For we sin daily...."[23] In Luther's theology the life of the holy God is no ideal toward which men strive. God's life is

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[18]Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism," Concordia Triglotta, edited by F. Bente (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 593.

[19]Ibid., p. 675.

[20]Ibid., p. 681.

[21]Holl, op. cit., p. 2.

[22]Watson, op. cit., p. 23. Watson refers to Aulen, Gudsbilden, p. 163.

[23]Luther, The Large Catechism, op. cit., p. 683.

absolutely different from the sinful lives of His creatures.[24] Stange[25] points out that here Luther stands in determined opposition to medieval theology which had never known a radical break between the life of God and the life of men. Luther's view of God as Almighty also forced him to part company with the Middle Ages. The world was no quiet order for him as it was for the Greeks and the scholastics. The whole world was an unbroken witness to God's restless creative activity as Almighty Lord.[26] The trouble with people, Luther complained in De Servo Arbitrio, was that they do not consider what a restless sort of actor God is in all His creatures.[27]

This holy, almighty Creator Lord is the sovereign source of all. He is the source not only of man's repentance but of man's every action.[28] He is sovereign also over Satan and

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[24]Holl, op. cit., p. 58, note 1. Holl thanks Soederblom and Otto for working through the concept of the "Holy," but he holds that the distinctiveness of this concept in Luther is more apparent than either of these men will admit.

[25]Carl Stange, "Die Gottesanschauung Luthers," Zeitschrift fuer systematische Theologie, VIII (1931), 68.

[26]"Den das wortlin 'Mechtig' sol hie nit heyssen ein still ruhende macht, wie man von einem zeytlichen kunige sagt, ehr sey mechtig, ob er schon still sitzt und nichts thut, Szondern ein wirckende macht und stettige tettickeit, die on unterlass geht ym schwanck und wirkt." WA VII, 574, 12. Quoted in Holl, op. cit., p. 45, note 3.

[27]Martin Luther, "De Servo Arbitrio," D. Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1908), XVIII, 710. "Non satis cogitantes, quam inquietus sit actor Deus in omnibus creaturis suis nullamque sinat feriari."

[28]Holl, op. cit., p. 44, note 3.

evil men.[29] This was Luther's position against Erasmus who could not bring himself to see God in evil disturbances. Luther did.[30] For God could not relinquish His sovereignty over the wicked without ceasing to be God.[31] There are no Neoplatonic aversions in Luther that prevent the living God from being what He is.[32] Aulen holds that Luther stressed the sovereignty of God more than the Nominalists, but always in terms of God's love.[33] Yet the God whose real face is love is still the sovereign Lord.

It is evident that this living Lord is not the God of the philosophers. God is not in the first place Thought, but Will and Action. Hence the Creator does not will the world contingently, as the scholastics said, but in His love He created a world and put man into it.[34] Luther will have

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[29]"Quando ergo Deus omnia movet et agit, necessario movet etiam et agit in Satana et impio." Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 709.

[30]"Velut hos tumultus et sectas non vides divino consilio et opere per mundum grassari....Ego vero, Deo gratia, bene video." Ibid., p. 627.

[31]"Deus suam omnipotentiam non potest omittere propter illius aversionem." Ibid., p. 710.

[32]"Igitur Pius animus non exhorret audire, Deum esse in morte vel in inferno....imo cum scriptura testetur Deum esse ubique et replere omnia." Ibid., p. 623.

[33]Carlson, op. cit., p. 144.

[34]Holl, op. cit., p. 44.

none of a God like Aristotle's who in His self-sufficiency leaves so much to men.[35] Some of the passages in De Servo Arbitrio appear to be definitely slanted against the Homeric view of a far-off God who has left men and gone to a banquet.[36] But it was primarily because this philosophic view of God had obscured the Gospel that Luther rejected it so vehemently.[37] He wanted no far-off phantom for a god. His God was living, active, powerful--the Creator God who had come nigh to men in the person of His Son in the promise of the Gospel.

Nevertheless Luther's God is no familiar neighbor with whom man can talk on equal terms. That was why Luther was so stern with the Enthusiasts who spoke with the high majesty of God as if they were talking to a cobbler.[38] God is other than man. God is the Creator; man is His creature. In answer to what the First Article of the Creed means, Luther replies: "This is what I mean and believe, that I am a creature of God...."[39] For this reason God cannot be measured

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[35]Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 706.

[36]Ibid. In a footnote the editor suggest that Luther may have been referring to the Odyssey, I, 22ff.

[37]Cf. Pelikan, op. cit., p. 11f.

[38]"Wir haben Propheten ym landt hyn und her, die leeren die leut allzu freydig trotzen, und reden mit der hohen Majestet als mit einem schusterknecht." WA XII, 499, 15. Quoted by Holl, op. cit., p. 58.

[39]Luther, Large Catechism, op. cit., p. 681.

by human standards.[40] Even though Luther knew that man cannot live without God, he would not say that man needs God. He is the Lord, whose commandments are to be obeyed unconditionally and without thought of reward.[41] Even after the creation of the world God is within, beyond, and above all creatures. According to Luther that means that He is still incomprehensible.[42] And yet this Creator who is unapproachable approaches His creatures in creation, and particularly in His redeeming love in Christ. There is a contrast in Luther's thoughts (which Rudolf Otto has correctly seen[43]), but this contrast is the paradox of Christian faith.

As far as the anthropomorphic expressions in the Scriptures were concerned, these did not bother Luther unduly.

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[40]"Die Vernunft will allezeit Gott hofmeistern, ob er Fug und Recht habe, will Gott messen nach ihrem Gesetze und Gedanken....Aber das musst du aus deinem Kopfe lassen, wenn du von Gott reden willt, dass du kein Gesetz oder Mass auf Gott gibest; denn er ist nicht eine Creatur, er ist unermesslich." Erlangen Edition, 35, 165. Quoted by Stange, op. cit., p. 56.

[41]Watson, op. cit., p. 62.

[42]"....sentiamus Deum ante conditionem mundi fuisse incomprehensibilem in sua essentiali quiete, Nunc autem post creationem esse intra, extra et supra omnes creaturas, hoc est, etiam esse incomprehensibilem." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 9.

[43]Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, translated by John W. Harvey (Second edition; London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 100-3. For Otto this contrast results from the interweaving of non-rational and rational elements in Luther's conception of God.

They were plainly figurative. It does not actually happen that God is angry or grieves or repents.[44] God just does not love or hate as we do. Neither are His love or hate mutable.[45] The Creator was other than His creature. But again this is only half of the story. In the Reformer's opinion there had to be some anthropomorphisms. If men did not use anthropomorphic expressions about God, how else can people talk about Him?[46] Luther wanted neither a philosophic God nor a humanized God. God the Creator was the Lord.

This Creator had created man and the world in the beginning. Luther held strictly to the literal, historical account of creation in Genesis. However, it is important to note at the outset that Luther was not first and foremost a systematician.[47] His works from which references will be cited are

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[44]Cf. Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 639.

[45]"Pulchre scimus, quod Deus non amat aut odit quemadmodum nos, siquidem nos mutabiliter et amamus et odimus, ille aeterna et immutabili natura amat et odit, sic non cadunt in illum accidentia et affectus." Ibid., p. 724.

[46]Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 12. Aulen has this interesting statement. "Christian vocabulary cannot dispense with those figures of speech which belong to the sphere of human experience. These strongly volitional words serve to set forth in a picturesque, concrete, and active manner the constant, radical, and spontaneous opposition of the divine will to everything that is opposed to it." Gustav Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, translated from the fourth Swedish edition by Eric H. Wahlstrom and G. Everett Arden (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 140.

[47]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 14f.

exegetical treatises. And as an exegetical theologian Luther uses what Koeberle has called a "magnificent carelessness of expression."[48] Although such expressions may be painful for the critical theologian, they serve here to emphasize the essentially religious view of creation that Luther wishes to set forth. What he wants to portray is the relationship between God and man and the world. God was the Creator, and man and the world were His creation. It is not surprising, then, that Luther did not approach the opening chapters of Genesis for a detailed account of creation. He was satisfied that God had given only the general ideas and freely admitted that there was lack of clarity on particulars.[49]

That is not to say that the Reformer was not bound by the historical account in Genesis, or that he thought of the doctrine of Creation as unclear. Where Scripture had spoken, Luther was bound. Even on mute points like the problem of the waters above the firmament, Luther's conviction was: "Remain in the words of the Holy Spirit."[50] Though there may be a lack

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[48]Adolf Koeberle, The Quest for Holiness, translated from the third German edition by John C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1936), p. 79.

[49]"....relicta ista generali notitia nobis, quod scimus, mundum cepisse et conditum esse per Deum ex nihilo....In particularibus autem sunt plurima, de quibus ambigitur." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 3.

[50]"Oportet enim nos servare phrasim scripturae sanctae, et manere in verbis Spiritus sancti." Ibid., p. 23.

of clarity on particulars, the article of creation was clearly treated in the Scriptures. This meant that over against the philosophers who taught the eternity of the world stood the clear testimony that God had created the world for man.[51] The fact that this knowledge is primary for all other knowledge of heaven and the world makes it all the more imperative for men to realize the source of this true knowledge about creation--the sacred Scriptures and the Word of God.[52]

The Word of God was also God's medium and instrument in performing the works of creation.[53] Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, had a part in creation. It was the Son's work to separate the crude material which had been created from nothing.[54] But Luther will have none of a Logos specu-

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[51]"Sed haec sententia plane est explodenda et accommodandus intellectus noster ad verbum Dei et ad scripturam sanctam, quae clare docet Deum ista omnia condidisse ut futuro homini pararet ceu domum et hospicium. Alia, quae sine autoritate scripturae afferuntur, repudianda sunt." Ibid., p. 35. Cf. also the second sermon for Easter Monday where Luther said that the article on Creation was treated "aufs allerklarste" in the Scriptures. Dr. Martin Luthers Saemmtliche Schriften (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag, 1882), XI, 673. This edition is commonly known as the St. Louis Edition.

[52]"Ergo discamus veram sapientiam esse in scriptura sancta et in verbo Dei. Id enim non solum de materia, non solum de forma totius creaturae sed etiam de efficienti et finali causa, de principio et de fine omnium rerum docet: Quis creaverit, et ad quid creaverit." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 94.

[53]Ibid., p. 13.

[54]"Istae enim alterius Personae, hoc est, Christi filii Dei, partes sunt, ornare et distinguere rudem molem ex nihilo productam." Ibid., p. 8.

lation apart from the Logos ensarkos. He rejected the thought that God's Word is a light that enlightens the reason also of the heathen. That was a human, platonic, philosophic thought that led away from Christ instead of to Him.[55] Nevertheless the Word who was made flesh was the power of God through which God created the world. Even in such physical phenomena as keeping the sea in its place God used His Word,[56] and the cause for the continuous propagation of the race is the same Word. This Word of creation, Luther says, is unknown by reason.[57]

In connection with the historical creation Luther discusses the dogmatic concepts of the creatio ex nihilo and the imago Dei. In the beginning, before God created the heaven and the earth, there was only God.[58] He was the Deus nudus

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[55]Such thoughts are "....alliss noch menschlich, platonissche und philosophissche dancken, die unss aus Christo ynn uns fueren, sso doch der Euangelist unss will auss uns ynn Christum furen; denn er will das gottliche, almechtige, ewige wortt gottis nicht handelln, noch von yhm reden, denn alss ynn dem fleysch und blut, das auff erden gangen ist." WA X, I, 1, p. 202, 7ff. Quoted in Johann Haar, Initium Creaturae Dei (Guetersloh: Verlag C. Bertelsmann, 1939), p. 41.

[56]"Sed Deus mare verbo suo repellit et facit planiciem illam extare." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 26.

[57]The cause of generation is "....nempe verbum Dei iubentis, quod dicit ad hunc maritum: Iam sanguis tuus fiat masculus, fiat foemella. Hoc verbum ratio nescit." Ibid., p. 95.

[58]"Quia extra illud initium creaturae nihil est quam nuda essentia divina et nudus Deus." Ibid., p. 14.

who could not be conceived in terms of time. Indeed, time is one of God's creatures.[59] There was no raw material out of which God created the world. The very material from which the rest came God created "aus dem nichts." This whole creatio ex nihilo Luther likes to compare to the marvel of human birth.[60] As far as the imago Dei is concerned, Luther deals with it comparatively. In the other creatures God is only known or recognized "by His footprint," but in Adam God is truly known. For in the historical Adam before the Fall there was knowledge, righteousness, and an understanding of all things.[61] In the Fall that image of God was lost, and since that time man cannot fully know what it was.[62] All we have left is a naked title about which Luther hesitates to say too much.[63] Although he affirms that we cannot comprehend the

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[59]Haar, op. cit., p. 18.

[60]Martin Luther, "Auslegung des 90. Psalms," Dr. Martin Luthers Saemmtliche Schriften, edited by Georg Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1896), V, 749.

[61]"Coetera animali discuntur vestigia Dei, solus autem homo est imago Dei....Nam in coeteris creaturis cogniscitur Deus ceu in vestigio, in homine autem, praesertim in Adamo, vere cognoscitur, quia in eo est sapientia illa, iusticia et omnium rerum cognitio, ut recte dicatur μικροκόσμος." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 51.

[62]"Vereor autem, ne, posquam haec imago per peccatum amissa est, non satis eam possimus intelligere." Ibid., p. 46.

[63]"Ergo cum de imagine illa loquimur, loquimur de re incognita....et nihil praeter nuda vocabula audimus." Ibid., p. 47.

imago fully, yet he lauds the glory of that lost image. Luther does this in terms of man's dominion over the other creatures and in terms of man's free, obedient relationship to his Creator.[64]

Man was created to serve God. This reason for man's creation Luther saw in the sabbath observance. Even before the Fall, God wanted His Word preached and His worship performed. Man was to know why he had been created--to acknowledge God and glorify Him.[65] Holl[66] sees in Luther's explanation of the First Article--"I believe that God has made me....for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him"--the firm conviction that it was man's duty to serve God. But man was also created to have the service of all creatures. Since the world was created for man, there is no doctrine of the world per se in Luther. For example in astronomy, at least as far as Luther himself was concerned, the main value was to observe God's goodness

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[64]Ibid., pp. 46-50 passim.

[65]"Deinde ostenditur hic (santificatio Sabbati) quoque hominem praecipue esse conditum ad noticiam et cultum Dei." Ibid., p. 140.

[66]Holl, op. cit., p. 52. That this could still be within the realm of the Law is shown by one of Luther's sermons. "If we were able to fulfill all commandments of God, and in all things to satisfy His justice, notwithstanding we had not as yet deserved grace and salvation....for that He may by the right of creation require as due service, all things of us His creatures, created to live unto Him; wherefore it should yet come of grace and mercy, whatsoever should come from Him unto us." Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 90.

and power in these celestial bodies which had been created and are being preserved for man's benefit (ad nostrum usum).[67] When Luther goes into ecstatic description over mice and flies as God's beautiful creation, he does so with two things in mind. God is the Creator of every creature. Even in the lowliest creation man can see God's good workmanship.[68]

God's creation extends to the present. The germination of seed in the botanical world is still a work of creation,[69] and the same applies to the propagation of the human race. The Creative Word is still efficacious today when mothers conceive and children are born.[70] Although people do not wonder at the ever-recurring story of human birth, it is still God's miracle.[71] On the one hand Luther speaks as if God's creation in human birth were unconnected with the

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[67] "Mihi satis est, ut in istis corporibus tam elegantibus et nostrae vitae utilibus cognoscamus et benignitatem Dei et potentiam, quod tantas res verbo condidit, et adhuc hodie conservat ad nostrum usum. Haec nostrae professionis, hoc est, theologica sunt, et valent ad animos confirmandos." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 31. Cf. Elert, op. cit., p. 366.

[68] Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., pp. 39-42.

[69] "Quod autem nunc semina proveniunt, Id quoque est creationis opus plenum admiratione." Ibid., p. 27.

[70] "Aber wenn Gott ein Wort spricht, so geschieht alsbald das, was gesagt wird. So sagt er zu meiner Mutter: Empfange, und sie empfaengt; zu mir sagt er: Werde geboren, und ich werde geboren." Luther, Auslegung des 90. Psalms, op. cit., p. 757.

[71] Cf. Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 94f.

historical beginning of creation, but on the other he holds that in God's sight he was born already at the beginning of the world. Looking at himself, Luther says, he can consider something new which did not exist sixty years ago, but that the God with whom there is no beginning or end, no sooner or later, judges differently.[72] At any rate, God is still Lord of His creation. The Creator is still at work.[73]

Luther also relates the natural birth to the spiritual rebirth of the Christian. Here the connection between Creation and the rest of Luther's theology becomes apparent. Johann Haar has studied this side of Luther's theology in a short monograph entitled Initium Creaturae Dei, in which he analyzes particularly Luther's exegesis of James 1:18.[74] It is Haar's conclusion that Luther does not speak of the natural birth without also speaking of the rebirth of the new

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[72]"....coram Deo sum generatus et multiplicatus statim in principio mundi, quia hic verbum, 'Et dixit Deus: Faciamus hominem' me quoque creavit." Ibid., p. 57. According to Luther it is the Creative Word that links the creation in the beginning to his own creation. "Ita Deus per verbum suum currit ab initio usque ad finem mundi." Ibid.

[73]"Manet adhuc hodie verbum super genus humanum dictum: 'Crescite et multiplicamini,' manet verbum: 'Producat mare pisces et aves coeli.' Omnipotens igitur verbi vis et virtus est, quod totam creaturam sic conservat et gubernat." Ibid.

[74]Haar, op. cit., p. 28f., makes the point that a particular discussion of the "new creature" is lacking in Luther's works but that he discusses this particularly under James 1:18. Haar refers to WA XVIII, 754, 12ff. and XLIV, 767, 29ff.

man in Christ.[75] God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is also the Creator of the new creature. As God began physical life in man and preserved that life, so in the new creation the same Creator bestows the new life and sustains it.[76] In both creative acts God's Word is active.[77] It would therefore seem as though there were two creations of God.

Haar however maintains that Luther understood only one creation. But this unity becomes evident only to faith.[78] By faith in Christ God appears as One before whom all days are as one moment.[79] By that faith, from the understanding of God's new life, the proper understanding of one's natural birth also arises. Only the Christian can actually see God's created world in the right perspective.[80] It is a teaching intelligible only in the Church, Luther once wrote, that God the Creator destroys that He might rebuild.[81] Only in the

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[75]Haar, op. cit., p. 52.

[76]Ibid., p. 37f.

[77]Ibid., p. 42ff.

[78]Ibid., p. 55.

[79]Ibid., p. 19. Cf. WA IV, 149, 29.

[80]Cf. WA XLVI, 616, 36ff. Haar, op. cit., p. 53f. says that it is only to the Christian to whom Luther appeals not to despise God's creation.

[81]"Das ist nun eine sonderliche Lehre fuer die Kirche, naemlich, dass man wissen soll, dass Gott ein allmaechtiger Schoepfer ist, der zu diesem Leben schafft, und darnach wiederum zerbricht, was er geschaffen hat, auf dass er es zum andern Leben wiederum lebendig mache." Luther, "Auslegung von 1. Mose," St. Louis Edition, II, 1756.

Christian faith does the Creator of this world become also the Creator of the world to come. Therefore in Luther's eyes Creation is not the primary article of faith. That is justification by faith. It is from the standpoint of a child of God, renewed by faith in Jesus Christ, that Luther looked at creation, at the Creator, at the creature.

The fact remains, however, that the Christian was not released from the circle of creation. What did this mean for Luther that man was a creature of God? It meant first of all that man stood in a creaturely, dependent relationship to His Creator. It is noteworthy how Luther stresses again and again in the opening chapters of the Genesis Commentary that even the holy Adam was a creature. The purpose of God's command not to eat of the fruit of the tree was that Adam and Eve might have an external worship and work of obedience toward God.[82] Even if there had been no sin, Adam would have set this commandment before his posterity.[83] Even if man had not fallen, he would have continued to stand in a creaturely

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[82]"Discamus itaque, necesse fuisse homini sic condito, ut omnes reliquas creaturas viventes in manu haberet, ut agnosceret creatorem suum, ut ageret creatori suo gratias, ut etiam externum aliquem cultum et certum opus obedientiae haberet." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 72.

[83]"Haec igitur arbor scientiae boni et mali, seu locus, in quo magno numero huiusmodi arbores fuerunt consitae, fuisset Ecclesia, ad quam Adam cum posteritate sua die Sabbato convenisset, et post refectionem ex arbore vitae praedicasset Deum, et laudasset eum pro tradito dominio omnium creaturarum super terram." Ibid., p. 80.

relation toward God, observing the sabbath day and worshipping God.[84] Neither was it only a part of man, his "lower self," which stood in such a relation to his Creator. The whole man was God's creature. He is not the God of temporal possessions only but of all things. The Creator wanted man to worship Him with all his strength, with all his heart, with his whole self.[85]

Luther regarded the total man as a creature of God. But sin had entered the world, and sin affected the total man.[86] God had created a world that served not itself but which stood rooted in His law. But man had turned about and had become an idolater. The disposition of his mind had become ungodly "....seeking in all things, even in God Himself, the things that are its own."[87] Whether this idolatry was in the exterior form of worshipping the creature or in its inward form of loving and trusting a creature made no difference.[88] The very

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[84]"Si Adam in innocentia stetisset, tamen habuisset septimum diem sacrum, hoc est, eo die docuisset posteros de voluntate et cultu Dei, laudasset Deum, gratias egisset, obtulisset, etc." Ibid., p. 60.

[85]"Neque enim Deus noster tantum temporalium Deus est sed omnium. Necque tibi Deus esse aut coli volet dimidio humero aut claudicante pede, sed totis viribus totoque corde." Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 726.

[86]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 16. Cf. WA II, 585-7 and XXXVI, 478-696.

[87]WA V, 38, 11ff. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 139.

[88]Cf. WA I, 399, 11ff. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 86.

worst form of idolatry was to try to gain heaven by force, seeking help and salvation in works. "What else is this but to turn God into an idol or wooden image, and to set up ourselves as God?"[89] Contrary to the Neoplatonic mysticism of the Middle Ages Luther rejected the idea that the spirit of man had escaped this sin. The whole man stood under God's judgment. The total man was an idolater, a sinner.[90]

For this reason it seems as if Luther saw nothing good in man. All was mud, all was untilled ground.[91] As far as the creature's relation to his God, there was nothing good in him. The natural man was not able to let God be God.[92] He wanted to dethrone God and set up his own false deity. The eritis sicut Deus had become the hope of every man. Even man's reason, which Luther regarded as one of the Creator's best gifts, had become "the devil's whore," since it served

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[89] Ibid., p. 90.

[90] Holl, op. cit., pp. 61-3.

[91] "Sed de uno in omnibus hominibus aequaliter impotente loquimur, quod non nisi limus, non nisi terra inculta est, ut quod non possit velle bonum." Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 706

[92] "....non potest homo naturaliter velle deum esse deum, immo vellet se esse deum et deum non esse deum." WA I, 225. Quoted in Pelikan, op. cit., p. 147, note 127. It is difficult then to see how Otto, op. cit., p. 104, can say that faith for Luther is the basis of the soul, an independent faculty of knowledge on which the union of man and God can obtain.

the egocentricity of natural man.[93] The entire sex relation, God's bona creatio, was polluted by sin.[94] After the Fall the world around man also was corrupted through his sin and had become harmful. Sun and moon were clothed in sackcloth, and all creatures were deformed by sin.[95]

God had made all things good. But He is the almighty Lord. Is He then responsible for this perversion of His good creation? Is He responsible for sin? In Luther's writings there is a dualistic pattern which would apparently free God from any responsibility for the perversion of sin. Swedish Luther research has pointed to this dualistic background and its interpretation of Luther has largely been based on it.[96] There is a battle going on between God and Satan for the control of the human will. In this struggle

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[93]Watson, op. cit., p. 88.

[94]"Bona quidem est creatio, bona benedictio, sed per peccatum sic sunt haec corrupta, ut sine pudore coniuges non possint iis uti." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 75.

[95]"Haec omnia post peccatum deformata sunt, ita ut creaturae omnes, etiam Sol et Luna quasi saccum induisse videantur, et quae prius bonae fuerunt, postea sint factae noxiae propter peccatum." Ibid., p. 68.

[96]Carlson, op. cit., pp. 48-57 discusses this interpretation and gives the references to the Swedish materials, particularly to Ragnar Bring, Dualismen hos Luther.

man is impotent to decide the issue.[97] Outside the Spirit of God the universe is the kingdom of the devil where Satan rules over the wicked.[98] If Satan wins the fight and controls the heart of a man, then surely neither God nor man is responsible for the result.

The problem is not so easily solved for Luther. For this would be setting up another god in the universe. God the Lord is still omnipotent. He is the Lord also over Satan, the wicked, and all evil. The very evil in the world has its origin in God.[99] For God not only made all creatures. He moves them through His omnipotence.[100] It is true that God did not create Satan evil, but the will that He finds evil He must move just as He moves all creatures in His restless activity.[101] But this does not mean that the devil or

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[97]"Sic humana voluntas in medio posita est, ceu iumentum, si insederit Deus, vult et vadit, quo vult Deus....Si insederit Satan, vult et vadit, quo vult Satan, nec est in eius arbitrio ad utrum sessorem currere aut eum quaerere, sed ipsi sessores certant ob ipsum obtinendum et possidendum." Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit, p. 635.

[98]"Quid enim est universum genus humanum, extra spiritum nisi regum Diaboli (ut dixit) confusum cahos tenebrarum?" Ibid., p. 659. Luther can even say: "....mundum esse regnum Satanae." Ibid., p. 658.

[99]Ibid., p. 626.

[100]"Nos per nos ipsos non esse factos nec vivere nec agere quicquam sed per illius omnipotentiam." Ibid., p. 718.

[101]"Sic Satanae voluntatem malam inveniens, non autem creans, sed deserente Deo et peccante Satana malam factam arripit operando et movet quorsum vult." Ibid., p. 711. So also with the wicked. Cf. Ibid., p. 712.

the wicked can carry on their warfare against the saints of God unhindered. The devil is God's tool, especially in the personal realm. God can use the devil for His ends, but Satan cannot use God.[102] Carlson writes:

> The very exaggeration of egocentricity, which is the devil's work, opens the way for theocentric grace in the measure in which the law bankrupts the ego by its demand for spontaneous surrender. The devil may use means that belong to God, but he defeats himself by using them.[103]

It was in his controversy with Erasmus over freedom of the will that many of these thoughts of Luther were clarified. Erasmus had defined free will as the power of the human will by which a man is able to apply himself to or turn away from the things that lead to salvation.[104] Against this optimistic, anthropocentric philosophia Christi[105] Luther wanted to emphasize the helplessness of the natural man over against his Creator. Luther admitted that man has a certain free will in regard to lower things, but even as far as this "freedom" in unspiritual matters was concerned, man is nonetheless under God's direction.[106] While Luther's philosophic reasoning

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[102]"Gott bedient sich zwar des Teufels, um uns zu plagen und zu toedten, aber der Teufel vermag dies nicht, wenn Gott nicht wollte, dass die Suende auf diese Weise bestraft wuerde." Luther, Auslegung des 90. Psalms, op. cit., p. 754.

[103]Carlson, op. cit., p. 56 on the basis of Bring, Dualismen hos Luther, pp. 284-93.

[104]Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 661.

[105]Cf. Pelikan, op. cit., p. 10.

[106]Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 638.

tended toward determinism, his basic argument was religious. For this reason he could write shortly before his death that nothing he had written was so truly his own as De Servo Arbitrio.[107]

Whatever judgment of this work of the Reformer one adopts,[108] this much can be said. Luther does not teach that God is the author of sin, either now or at the beginning of the world.[109] God never forces man to sin against his will.[110] The sin that occurs in men's lives is not the fault of God but of men themselves. Men are always responsible.[111] In Luther's judgment the worst temptations of the devil come when he tells a man that he is not a sinner.[112] However, in the last analysis Luther left the problem of sin and evil unsolved. God is the Lord. Man is a sinner. "Darum laesst

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[107] Otto, op. cit., p. 98.

[108] Swedes like Runestam and Bohlin say that Luther's doctrine of God's omnipotence in De Servo Arbitrio is metaphysical determinism, where Luther leaves the personal field. Bring does not agree. He sees the key in Luther's conception of the Law, that God's Law produces in man the devil's work. Cf. Carlson, op. cit., p. 58ff.

[109] In Paradise: "Nondum enim erat peccatum: Quia Deus peccatum non creavit." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 83. At the present time: "Licet enim Deus peccatum non faciat, tamen naturam peccato, subtracto spiritu, vitiatem non cessat formare et multiplicare, tamquam si faber ex ligno corrupto statuas faciat." De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 708.

[110] Ibid., p. 714.

[111] "In nobis, id est, per nos Deum operari mala, non culpa Dei, sed vitio nostro, qui cum simus natura mali, Deus vero bonus." Ibid., p. 711.

[112] Luther, Auslegung des 90. Psalms, op. cit., p. 766.

Luther das Raetsel lieber ungeloest stehen und bescheidet sich, an dieser Stelle ein goettliches Geheimnis anzuerkennen."[113]

Before this mystery of God Luther bowed in submission. Whatever may be the correct interpretation of De Servo Arbitrio, this emphasis of Luther's goes far in determining his views on creatureliness. Erasmus is condemned because he had stepped out of the creaturely realm in opposing God's paradoxes.[114] The question why God does not bear with man's bound will or change it in every case is not a legitimate question.[115] Luther defends this position on the basis of Romans 9:19ff. and Isaiah 58:2. What is man that he should contend against God? It is sufficient for man to reverence the inscrutable wisdom of God.[116] The creature cannot put the sovereign Creator into his pocket.[117]

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[113]Holl, op. cit., p. 48.

[114]Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 631.

[115]"Verum quare maiestas illa vitium hoc voluntatis nostrae non tollit aut mutat in omnibus, cum non sit in potestate hominis....quaerere non licet." Ibid., p. 686.

[116]Of these Bible verses Luther writes: "Puto istis verbis satis demonstrari, non licere hominibus scrutari voluntatem maiestatis." Ibid., p. 690. To Erasmus' question why God acts through the Word if there is no free will, Luther gives this classic answer: "Satis est nosse, quod Deus ita velit, et hanc voluntatem revereri, deligere et adorare decet, coercita rationis temeritate." Ibid., p. 695.

[117]WA XXX, 1, p. 134, 21f. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 90.

But despite this praise of God's inscrutable will, there is another fact that stands out clearly in De Servo Arbitrio. Man even as sinner remains a creature of God.[118] Even after the Fall Satan and man are not nihil. It is true that the sinner is turned toward his own desires. Nevertheless he remains God's creature subject to God's omnipotent will.[119] Watson[120] holds that Luther viewed natural law as a divine imperative which was not modified by the Fall. Although man's apprehension of the divine will was distorted by the Fall, man's position as creature made by God, utterly dependent on God, remains even in his sinfulness. Because of sin, however, this creaturely relationship is not fully realized nor its goal actualized until the sinner is made a new creature through faith in the Son of God.

In the assertion that the sinful man was still God's creature, Luther broke with the Neoplatonic and ascetic dualism of the Middle Ages which had always negated man's physical being. Luther affirmed both mind and body as creaturely endowments of God. He praises reason as one of God's best gifts to man.

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[118] "Haec rata et certa sunt, si credimus omnipotentem esse Deum, Deinde impium esse creaturam Dei." Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 710.

[119] Ibid., p. 709.

[120] Watson, op. cit., p. 111.

It is by virtue of his reason that a man is worthy to be called and is a man.[121] What Luther condemns about reason is the use of it to determine man's relationship to God. Watson[122] points out that the rough language Luther uses concerning reason "....is the measure of his indignation at the abuse and perversion of what he regards as one of the Creator's best gifts to His creatures."

The body, too, at least in the state of innocence, was pure.[123] Hence the monks were wrong in seeing sexual chastity as the basis for original righteousness.[124] Luther's motives for bodily discipline were completely different from those of monasticism. There was no contempt for the natural but rather a disciplinary culture that springs from reverence for the body.[125] The creation is God's good creature. Carlson[126] mentions that the phrase "omnia bona sed sunt in abusu" occurs frequently in Luther. The total man, including his

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[121] Ibid., p. 86. Watson refers to WA X, 1, p. 207.

[122] Watson, op. cit., p. 87.

[123] "Nulla enim pars corporis fuit sordida in statu innocentiae; non fuit foetor in excrementis, non aliae foeditates, sed omnia fuerunt pulcherrima, sine ulla offensione organorum sensuum, et tamen fuit animalis vita." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 84.

[124] Ibid., p. 86.

[125] Koeberle, op. cit., p. 191.

[126] Edgar M. Carlson, "Luther's Conception of Government," Church History, XV (December, 1946), 270, note 52. Carlson refers to WA XL, 2, p. 203, 7 and to I, 174.

body and physical gifts, is a good creature of God, but man has perverted his entire being and turned his whole self, including the body, into evil.[127]

In the same way that Luther affirmed man's creaturely endowments he also affirmed the world as God's creation. The mystics had seen the world only as an unreal phantom. Holl[128] believes that by emphasizing the wrath of God Luther reaffirmed the reality and existence of the world against which this wrath was directed. In rejecting the medieval division of life into spiritual and earthly duties, Luther praised the lowliest of earthly callings.[129] And when Luther extols secular government and worldly offices, Carlson writes that "he is extolling creation as such."[130] Luther even rejoiced in the progress of culture. Holl[131] holds that this extended to

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[127]Concerning Ecclesiastes 7:2 which had called the day of death better than the day of life, Luther wrote: "Si coram deo sic loqui vellem: qui facit nos homines et vult nos vivere, tam impiissime dicerem." WA XX, 125, 13f. Quoted in Haar, op. cit., p. 58.

[128]Holl, op. cit., p. 40f.

[129]Ibid., p. 102.

[130]Carlson, "Luther's Conception of Government," op. cit., p. 261.

[131]Holl, op. cit., p. 108. Holl quotes as follows from Luther: "Vehementer enim et toto coelo errare censeo, qui philosophiam et naturae cognitionem inutilem putant theologia." Enders III, 245, 36.

the natural sciences despite Luther's derision of Copernicus.[132] Rejoicing in God's goodness in Christ Luther found joy in the world, in the splendor of the heavens, the happy singing of the birds, the majesty of the elements, the riches of nature.[133] It is from man's use of the world, not from God's good creation, that ills and sorrows arise.[134] Creation as a total product is unconditionally good, but this cannot be said of man who handles created things.[135] In affirming the world, however, Luther never made it autonomous, just as he never made man autonomous.[136] God is the Creator of the world and the world's Lord.[137]

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[132]Pelikan's view is that Luther's cosmology was well-developed for its day and represented the best thought of the period. For additional material on this subject cf. Pelikan, op. cit., p. 5f. and p. 122, note 16. Werner Elert discusses in detail the oft-quoted passage from the Tischreden in which Luther condemns Copernicus. Elert points out that Luther's influence was great enough to persuade the Lutheran princes to suppress Copernican teaching had he wanted to. The passage so often quoted is not only the only one in which Luther refers to Copernicus, but it is suspect since it first was reported twenty-seven years after it was supposed to have been spoken. Cf. Elert, op. cit., p. 372.

[133]Holl, op. cit., p. 89.

[134]Haar, op. cit., p. 58f.

[135]Cf. WA LI, 556, 7 referred to in Carlson, "Luther's Conception of Government," op. cit., p. 261.

[136]Cf. St. Louis Edition III, 1675 where Luther emphatically states that the world has no being in itself.

[137]Randall holds that justification by faith, in cutting faith loose from medieval superstition, left the way open for a thoroughly naturalistic ideal here in this world. But this could only happen when Luther's doctrine of Creation was left behind. Cf. John Herman Randall, Jr., The Making of the Modern Mind (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., c.1940), p. 138.

Nevertheless there remain some tendencies in Luther that might be called ascetic. For example, in contrast to the celestial regions he calls the world "haec infima orbis pars."[138] Writing of marriage Luther holds that after the Fall this estate is to avoid sin.[139] It is necessary, Luther believes, that the Christian pass from this life to the spiritual or heavenly one through death and infinite trials and crosses.[140] Viewed in the light of Luther's vivid consciousness of sin these assertions lose their ascetic flavor. Although Luther can hardly be thought to possess any affinity to the mystics whose "higher self" rose to union with God, it is true that Luther speaks of a "scintilla aeternae vitae" in the fact that man can understand the motions of the heavens.[141] Holl[142] declares that it was a fundamental statement for Luther that man carries the stamp of the divine in him, but this was never something self-chosen or self-thought. This was the gift of creatureliness; and as Holl shows in his chapter

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[138]Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 34.

[139]Ibid., p. 88. "Et Magister sententiarum erudite dicit coniugium in Paradiso esse institutum ac officium post peccatum autem ad remedium quoque, Itaque cogimur hoc sexu uti ad vitandum peccatum."

[140]Stange, op. cit., p. 89.

[141]Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 34.

[142]Holl, op. cit., p. 35.

"Luther und die Schwaermer,"[143] Luther was not one of those of his day who thought that man had some kind of continuity with his Maker. By stressing both man's sinfulness and creatureliness Luther made a clean break with the Neoplatonism of the Middle Ages.

What does Luther have to say about the relationship between Creator and creature, about the way in which and by which the one reaches the other? Here such vital areas as natural knowledge and revelation must be treated. Already it is plain that Luther taught that sin had separated the creature from his Maker. Does Luther then teach a natural knowledge of God? The answer to this question will come up again in the chapter on Brunner since he bases his stand in the Anknuepfungspunkt controversy with Barth largely on Luther's position. The Reformer taught a two-fold knowledge of God--a general and a particular knowledge.

> All men have the general knowledge, namely, that there is a God, that He created heaven and earth, that He is just, that He punisheth the wicked. But what God thinketh of us, what His will is toward us, what He will give or what He will do to the end that we may be delivered from sin and death, and be saved (which is the true knowledge of God indeed), this they know not.[144]

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[143] Ibid., pp. 420-467.

[144] Galatians Commentary, 4, 8ff. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 73.

It is this general knowledge of God which goes by the name "Natural Knowledge of God" in later Lutheran theology.

The young Luther did not take up natural theology in his first exposition of Romans. In later life, although he still shunned the usual arguments for God's existence, he gave more space to some phases of a natural theology.[145] Pelikan believes that the reason Luther gave as much space to natural theology as he did was due to his emphasis on Angst.

> A natural theology thus oriented around the concept of dread is something far different from the natural theology of the scholastics. But it does allow for a knowledge of God apart from revelation.[146]

In Luther's opinion natural reason, even without Scripture, must be convinced of God's omnipotence.[147]

But from this general or natural knowledge of God has sprung all idolatry.

> For upon this proposition which all men do naturally hold, namely, that there is a God, hath sprung all idolatry, which without the knowledge of the Divinity, could never have come into the world. But because men had this natural knowledge of God,

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[145] Cf. Pelikan, op. cit., p. 21ff.

[146] Ibid., p. 22.

[147] "Atque ipsamet ratio naturalis, quae necessitate illa offenditur et tanta molitur ad eam tollendam, cogitur eam concaedere, proprio suo iudicio convicta, etiam si nulla esset scriptura. Omnes enim homines inveniunt hanc sententiam in cordibus suis scriptam." De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 719.

> they conceived vain and wicked imaginations of God....and so dreamed that God is such a one, as by nature He is not.[148]

The religion of the natural man is built on his natural knowledge of God, but it is a false religion for it brings a false conception of God.[149] It brings a false conception of God because of what man does with this knowledge. They know that God is powerful, invisible, just, and good, but they do not worship Him as God.[150] Indeed they cannot, since as sinners they are not in the right relationship with God.[151] Hence Luther's views on natural knowledge brought no continuity between man and God but rather emphasized still more the distance between the holy Lord and His sinful creation.

The particular knowledge of God was the knowledge of the Creator in His Son. Without this knowledge of God man

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[148] Galatians Commentary, 4, 8ff. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 74.

[149] Ibid., p. 91.

[150] Holl, op. cit., p. 54, note 1 brings this quotation from Luther's Roemerbrief II, 19, 3ff. "....in hoc ergo erraverunt, quod hanc divinitatem non nudam reliquerunt et couerunt, sed eam mutaverunt et applicuerunt pro votis et desyderiis suis. et unusquisque divinitatem in eo esse voluit, qui sibi placeret, et sic dei veritatem mutaverunt in mendacium. cognoverunt ergo, quod divinitatis sive eius, qui est deus, sit esse potentem, invisibilem, iustum, immortalem, bonum; ergo cognoverunt invisibilia dei sempiternamque virtutem eius et divinitatem. hec maior syllogismi practici, hec syntheresis theologica est inobscurabilis in omnibus. sed in minore errabant."

[151] Watson, op. cit., p. 74f.

could never avoid idolatry. But Luther did not assert an essential disharmony between the general and particular knowledge of God.[152] He explains the false effects of the natural knowledge in this way. We can be distantly acquainted with a man and even have much to do with him and still be ignorant of his personal attitude toward us. Thus we will construct a false picture of the man which might color our personal attitude toward him. So also with the natural knowledge of God. It has given us a false picture of God because we stood in the wrong relationship to Him.[153]

It is important neither to overemphasize nor to underemphasize what Luther says about this general knowledge of God. Orthodoxy, as we shall see in Chapter IV, had an imposing theologia naturalis. And in as far as that was based on Luther's general knowledge of God, that there was an awareness of some numen in all men,[154] Orthodoxy was correct. But Protestant Orthodoxy all too often carried on the scholastic tradition of positing a continuity between Creator and creature

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[152] Ibid., p. 85.

[153] Ibid., p. 74f.

[154] "Even the heathen have this awareness (sensum) by a natural instinct, that there is some supreme deity (numen).... as Paul says in Romans 1, that the Gentiles knew God by nature." WA XLII, 631, 36ff. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 80.

and of seeking the Creator through the works of creation.[155] Others have rejected a natural theology completely, going as far as Barth in denying even a revelation in creation. For Luther the natural knowledge of God in terms of a natural law written in the heart could be a point of contact for the preaching of the law.[156]

What sets Luther off from the natural theology of the scholastics and of the later dogmaticians, as well as from the spiritualistic tenets of the Schwaermer, was his view of the larvae Dei. Luther acknowledged no unmediated relationship to God, and he rejected all attempts to achieve union with God outside of the historic revelation in Christ or in isolation from the created world.[157] It is God Himself who confronts His creatures in the works of His creation and in

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[155] Ibid., p. 77f. and p. 135.

[156] "If the natural law were not written and given in the heart by God, one would have to preach long before the conscience were smitten. One would have to preach to an ass, horse, ox, or cow for a hundred thousand years before they accepted the law, although they have ears, eyes and heart as a man. They too can hear it, but it does not enter their heart. Why? What is wrong? Their soul is not so formed and fashioned that such a thing might enter it. But a man, when the law is set before him, soon says: Yes, it is so, he cannot deny it. He could not be so quickly convinced, were it not written in his heart before." WA XVI, 447, 26ff. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 84f.

[157] Carlson, "Luther's Conception of Government," op. cit., p. 261.

His Word, and it is only there that He reveals Himself.[158] "The whole created world, then, as Luther sees it, occupies a kind of mediatorial position between God and man."[159] The various orders in society such as prince, magistrate, teacher, father, as well as the created world itself, are God's veils or masks. Through these masks God confronts men in their environment.[160] It is sheer folly to try to approach God without these veils.[161] God must wear such masks in His dealings with men to shield them from the light of His unapproachable glory. Even Christ is a veil (involucrum) in which God approaches men with His gifts.[162] But it is not as though men should use the created world to rise up to God. No, "....God is one who comes down veiled in the larvae of His creatures and meets man precisely in the 'material sub-

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[158]"Ideo Deus quoque se non manifestat nisi in operibus et verbo, quia haec aliquo modo capiuntur...." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 9.

[159]Watson, op. cit., p. 79. Watson refers to the Galatians Commentary, 2, 6.

[160]Watson, op. cit., p. 112-4.

[161]"Ergo fanaticum est, sine verbo et involucro aliquo de Deo et divina natura disputare....Qui autem extra ista involucra Deum attingere volunt, isti sine scalis (hoc est verbo) nituntur ad coelum ascendere, ruunt igitur oppressi maiestate, quam nudam conantur amplecti, et pereunt." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 11.

[162]Watson, op. cit., p. 78.

stantial sphere' of the external world."[163] This revelation of God in creation is at the basis of the general knowledge of God.

The words that Luther uses to depict this revelation in creation (Larvae, Mummenschanz, Masken) show that God is in a sense concealed by His creation (and even by Christ). But the larvae Dei are also the media of divine revelation. "All created ordinances are masks or allegories wherewith God depicts His theology; they are meant, as it were, to contain Christ."[164] They can be said to contain Christ because the God whose masks they are is the same God who in a special way reveals Himself in Christ.[165] The miracles of creation are given man so that he is forced to wonder at them, and by that wonder his faith will be increased. For learning God's power, man learns not to doubt His promises. In several passages in the Genesis Commentary Luther says that the works of

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[163] Ibid., p. 115. J. Baille in Our Knowledge of God, p. 178ff. tries to do justice to both aspects of Luther's thought by calling this revelation a "mediated immediacy." Cf. Watson, op. cit., p. 80.

[164] WA XL, 1, p. 463, 9. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 79.

[165] Ibid.

creation are there to give us a correct knowledge of God and to strengthen our faith.[166] Watson writes:

> We shall hardly be wrong if we suggest that it was Luther's theocentric interest that led him to this insight into the character of our knowledge of God. It is at any rate entirely in line with his dominant theocentric emphasis. He will have nothing to do with any natural theology that assumes the capacity of the natural man to make his own way to God, or to discover God for himself. The natural knowledge of God which Luther teaches is wholly God-given. Even his 'concessions' to the traditional theologia naturalis actually assumes the priority of this natural knowledge; for if, as he says, there could be no religion without it, neither could there be any argument about God Himself.[167]

It is already clear then that only the Christian who has learned to know God properly can see God's face in the creation works. The natural man who has not seen God in Christ does not recognize Him, does not distinguish between the veils and God Himself.[168] God actually confronts such a man in His

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[166]For example: "Hoc verbum facit....ut ex talibus operibus cognoscamus, qualis sit noster Deus: nempe Deus omnipotens." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 20. And also: "....admiratio paulatim fidem confirmat. Nam cum possit Deus ex aqua coelum producere et stellas....An non posset etiam corpus meum aut contra hostes et Satanam defendere, aut postquam in sepulchram positum est, ad novam vitam resuscitare? Ergo Dei potentia hic est cognoscenda, ut plane nihil dubitemus de iis, quae Deus promittit in verbo suo." Ibid., p. 37.

[167]Watson, op. cit., p. 84.

[168]"This the natural man cannot see: but the spiritual man only discerneth....the veil of God from God Himself....But here wisdom is required, which can discern the veil from God Himself: and this wisdom the world hath not. The covetous man, hearing 'that man liveth not by bread alone'....eateth the bread, but he seeth not God in the bread....And thus he honoreth not the Creator, but the creatures, not God, but his own belly." Galatians Commentary, 2, 6. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 80.

masks but that man turns this general knowledge of God into a lie. Koeberle[169] summarizes Luther's position in this way: Whoever looks into the heart of God in His Son can look on His face in creation. The soul that trusts in the revelatio specialis will be led to the revelatio generalis. Thus while Luther preserves the unalterable distinction between Creator and creature, he also maintains that the most intimate personal fellowship between the two is divinely intended.[170]

It is the revelation in Christ to which Luther points men. God wills to be sought as He is revealed in Christ. This is the climax of what Luther has to say on Creator-creature relationships. It has already been noted in this chapter that man's creatureliness should prevent him from investigation God's inscrutable counsels. Luther has summed this up in the concept of the Deus absconditus. It is unlawful for man to penetrate into God's unrevealed will.

> Ich sage, Gott hat verbotten die sunde und will der selben nicht, Dieser wille ist uns offenbart und not zu wissen. Wie aber gott die sunde verhenget odder will, das sollen wyr nicht wissen, denn er hats uns nicht offenbart....Eyn knecht soll nicht wissen seynes herren heymlickeyt, sondern was yhm seyn herre gebeut. Viel weniger soll eyn armer creatur yhrs Gotts maiestet heymlickeyt erforschen und wissen woellen.[171]

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[169] Koeberle, op. cit., p. 132.

[170] Watson, op. cit., p. 127. Stange comments: "Fuer das Gefuehl Luthers verliert der Gegensatz von Transzendenz und Immanenz ueberhaupt seine Bedeutung." Stange, op. cit., p. 73.

[171] WA XVIII, 549, 35. Quoted in Holl, op. cit., p. 52, note 3.

This God who has hidden Himself from us is not be sought after.[172] With God as He is in His own nature (deus nudus) men have nothing to do.[173]

It is the God who has revealed Himself in Christ with whom His creatures are to deal. Here man can see God's heart, His love for men in Christ, His very life which is so different from the life of men. It is true that God is the Deus revelatus also in creation, but His life cannot be known through the creation but only in Christ.[174] It is not enough, Luther said, that the creature know how his Creator stands over against Him. Man must know how God is in Himself.[175] But knowing God's love in Christ the revelation in

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[172]"....aliter de Deo vel voluntate Dei nobis praedicata, revelata, oblata, culta, et aliter de Deo non praedicato, non revelato, non oblato, non culto disputandum est. Quatenus igitur Deus sese abscondit et ignorari a nobis vult, nihil ad nos." Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 685.

[173]"Reliquendus est igitur Deus in maiestate et natura sua, sic enim nihil nos cum illo habemus agere, nec sic voluit a nobis agi cum eo." Ibid. Many men, including Emil Brunner as we shall see, have been struck by Luther's treatment of the Deus absconditus. For example, Otto writes that the phrases divina maiestas and metuenda voluntas "have rung in my ears from the time of my earliest study of Luther. Indeed, I grew to understand the numinous and its difference from the rational in Luther's De Servo Arbitrio long before I identified it in the qadosh of the Old Testament and in the elements of 'religious awe' in the history of religion in general." Otto, op. cit., p. 99.

[174]Stange, op. cit., p. 53f.

[175]"Weiter sagen wir, dass wir Christen nicht genug daran haben, wie der Schoepfer zu rechnen und zu halten sei gegen der Creatur, sondern wir wissen und lehren der Schrift, was Gott in sich selbst ist." Erlangen Edition, 46, 35. Quoted in Stange, op. cit., p. 54.

creation is not excluded. In the works of creation the Christian learns to see the same face of God that has been revealed to him in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus the Christian learns about creation through God and not the other way around.[176] In all of God's relations to His creatures--in the general knowledge of God, in His confrontation through masks, as Deus absconditus and Deus revelatus, God is in the center of Luther's thoughts. God remains God.

That is true also in all of the life and experience of the Christian. God is God. The Christian is His creature, His redeemed creature, His child and heir by faith in Christ, but still a creature. Commenting on Philippians 2:5 Luther wrote:

> Hie schleusst St. Paulus mit einem Wort den Himmel auf und raeumet uns ein, dass wir in den Abgrund goettlicher Majestaet sehen und schauen den unaussprechlich gnaedigen Willen und Liebe des vaeterlichen Herzens gegen uns....[177]

Luther could also write that the believers live in God and that the believer becomes "ein Kuchen"with Christ.[178] But

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[176] "Wer Gott erkennet, der erkennet auch die Kreatur, versteht dieselbige und hat sie auch lieb." Erlangen Edition, 5, 304. Quoted in Stange, op. cit., p. 62.

[177] Erlangen Edition, 8, 171. Quoted in Stange, op. cit., p. 79.

[178] Holl, op. cit., p. 81. But Werner Elert, in a careful scrutiny of the relevant passages, challenges this phrase as a cardinal proof for Luther's Christ-mysticism. Cf. Elert, op. cit., p. 152, footnote.

at the same time he extolled prayer as a wonderful way to acknowledge utter dependency on God,[179] and he stressed the fact that God wanted to form, and not to be formed.[180] In spite of Luther's stress on the oneness of man and God through faith in Christ, Aulen believes that Luther never allowed the human and divine to melt together. Rather he went beyond the various representatives of the various schools of medieval theology in asserting both the nearness of God and the distance from Him without any sense of conflict.

> In a sense, the distance increases with the nearness....The closer God approaches man, the more intimately he binds the bonds of fellowship, the more clearly and inescapably the distance between man and God becomes simultaneously apparent.[181]

The creaturely relationship exists to the present day for the Christian. The Creator is the potter. We are His clay.[182]

What Luther wrote, preached, taught, and believed about Creation were no isolated fragments about a certain doctrine

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[179] Watson, op. cit., p. 40f.

[180] "Deus vult formare, non formari." WA XIII, 39, 5. Quoted in Holl, op. cit., p. 55, note 3.

[181] Aulen, Den kristna gudsbilden, p. 244. Quoted in Carlson, The Reinterpretation of Luther, op. cit., p. 149.

[182] "Quanquam autem haec cum brutis communis generatio est, non tollit tamen illam gloriam originis nostrae primae, quod sumus vascula Dei ab ipso Deo ficta, quod ipse est figulus noster, nos autem lutum eius, sicut Iesaias 64. loquitur. Idque non solum ad originem nostram attintet, sed per omnem vitam et usque ad mortem et in sepulchram manemus lutum huius Figuli." Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 64.

of the Christian faith.[183] For him doctrine was not in the first place information about God or truth about God. Doctrine was the very witness of the activity of God reaching out to men. And this activity of God was centered in the love of Christ. In all of Luther's theology this love of God on behalf of sinners shown through. But this love was not confined to the revelation in Jesus Christ.

> God does all things and wills all things to be done in redemption according to His revealed will, which He has revealed abundantly enough in that He has created heaven and earth, though supremely in that He has given us His Son.[184]

Creation and justification are therefore closely linked together.[185] Confidence in prayer is connected to God's creative might and His favor.[186] When writing of God's omnipresence, Luther gives also this doctrine a soteriological twist: God is everywhere because He loves His creation.[187]

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[183]Carlson, The Reinterpretation of Luther, op. cit., p. 140.

[184]WA XXXIX, 289, 6ff. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 136.

[185]"Nam justificare est opus solius Dei. Sicut creatio quoque solius Dei est...." WA XXV, 373, 1f. Quoted in Haar, op. cit., p. 57.

[186]"Einen solchen Gott haben und verehren wir, zu einen solchen Gott beten wir, auf dessen Geheiss alle geschaffenen Dinge entstehen. Was fuerchten wir uns denn, wenn uns dieser Gott guenstig ist?" Luther, Auslegung des 90. Psalms, op. cit., p. 750.

[187]Cf. Erlangen Edition, I, 63. Quoted in Stange, op. cit., p. 62.

In dealing with the order of creation Luther will not be drawn into an argument why God made this on that day. He wants to set forth the Creator's care in creating so beautiful a world for man.[188] Luther's theology is never disconnected, and he is never concerned merely with particular points of doctrine in isolation from each other.[189] But it is certainly true that Luther did not elaborate a comprehensive and well-ordered system. In fact he left the task of systematization unfinished, thereby opening the possibility for philosophy again to take a larger part in subsequent theological development.[190]

Since Jesus Christ and His redemption stood in the very center of Luther's thinking, his theology can rightly be called Christocentric. That is Watson's conclusion.[191] Luther's doctrine of Creation is also Christocentric, since all questions and problems raised by this area of theology center in the Son of God. Who the Creator is, how He performed His work of Creation, what He did for His sinful creatures, how He revealed Himself to them--the answers to these revolve around Jesus Christ. In answer to the question,

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[188] Luther, Enarratio in Genesin, op. cit., p. 29.

[189] Watson, op. cit., p. 5.

[190] Pelikan, op. cit., p. 15.

[191] Watson, op. cit., p. 96.

what should the creature do in thinking about God? Luther replied: Let him occupy himself with the Incarnate God, namely the crucified Jesus.[192] Einar Billing writes:

> Whoever knows Luther, even but partially, knows that his various thoughts do not lie alongside each other, like pearls on a string, held together only by common authority or perchance by a line of logical argument, but that they all, as tightly as the petals of a rosebud, adhere to a common center, and radiate out like the rays of the sun from one glowing core, namely, the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.[193]

Is then Luther's doctrine of Creation theocentric? Watson has the following quotation:

> Only Christocentric theology is theocentric, because it takes seriously the revelation of God in Christ, and renounces the theoretical construction of a conception of God.[194]

That is what Luther did. He writes in his Commentary on Galatians:

> My doctrine is such that it setteth forth and preacheth the grace and glory of God alone, and in the matter of salvation, it condemneth the righteousness and wisdom of all men. In this I cannot offend, because I give both to God and man that which properly belongeth unto them both.[195]

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[192] "Occupet vero sese cum Deo incarnato seu (ut Paulus loquitur) cum Ihesu crucifixo." Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 689.

[193] Einar Billing, Our Calling, translated from the Swedish by Conrad Bergendoff (Rock Island: Augustana Book Concern, 1950), p. 7.

[194] Obendieck, Der Teufel bei Martin Luther, p. 30. Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 101, note 113.

[195] Quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 14.

The religious relationship in Luther did not center in man but in God who had made man, who justified him in Christ, who sent the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament to lead him to God's own heart.[196] Faith for Luther was saying yes to God. That is decisive, and is the highest thing man can do, for here he gives glory to God.[197] On the other hand to strive with God in an Anfechtung is to blaspheme God to His face.[198] To all questions which the creature would like to throw up to his Creator Luther answered: "Deus est."[199]

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[196]Watson delineates egocentric and theocentric religion in this way: if the religious relationship centers in man, then the religion can be described as egocentric or anthropocentric. If it centers in God, then it is theocentric. He admits that all religion to some extent is theocentric, but even if a religion is theoretically theocentric, man may still live as if he were the master. Luther's theology was theocentric not only in theory but in practice. Ibid., pp. 34-6.

[197]Holl, op. cit., p. 43.

[198]Ibid., p. 78f. Holl quotes the following: "Simul hic gravis illa tentatio blasphemiae tangitur, qua homo per daemones urgetur ad desperationem, ut maledictionem dei super se putet ferri, ac sic deum pro deo non habet, dum nihil boni de eo sentit. hoc enim est deum blasphemare." WA V, 95, 18ff.

[199]Such questions are the following: Why does God not change the will of the wicked? Why did He allow Adam to fall? Why does He make us who are infected with sin? Why did He not create us from different seed or purge the corrupted seed? Luther replied: "Deus est, cuius voluntatis nulla est caussa nec ratio, quae illi ceu regula et mensura praescribatur, cum nihil sit illi aequale aut superius, sed ipsa est regula omnium....Creaturae voluntati caussa et ratio praescribitur sed non Creatoris voluntati, nisi alium illi praefeceris creatorem." De Servo Arbitrio, op. cit., p. 712.

God was the sovereign and unquestionable Lord of man's existence.[200] He had made man, the world, and all that was in the world. Man had no claim on God, but God claimed man as His creature. Even in sin man is responsible to the Creator Lord. For although God is sovereign also over the sinner, He is not the author of sin. Rather He takes the initiative to redeem man. In all His revelation to man God confronts him, in the revelation in Christ as well as the revelation in the creation. But God's love is never obscured by His sovereignty. The Creator is the God of love who made this world for man, who preserves him even though a sinner, who showed His love in the decisive act of the cross, who recreates anew in those who are His children by faith. This is Luther's theocentric doctrine of creation. It stands as a high point in the thinking and faith of Christendom, opposed both to the anthropocentric view of the Middle Ages as well as to much of the theology which followed him during the centuries which we call modern times.

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[200]This Watson sees as the distinguishing mark which sets off theocentric religion from egocentric religion. For in the latter fellowship with God depends ultimately on man's achievement and is sought ultimately for man's own ends. Cf Watson, op. cit., p. 35.

CHAPTER IV

THE MODERN PERIOD ON CREATION

The centuries of Christian thought between Martin Luther and the middle of the twentieth century cannot easily be synthesized within the scope of a few pages. Yet in order to compare Luther's and Brunner's doctrine of Creation, we must treat these centuries. For in many respects the theology of Emil Brunner is a revolt against the anthropocentric theology that dominated much of the modern era. After the Reformation, however, theology was not the dominating force that it had been in the medieval synthesis. During the four centuries that have elapsed since the days of Luther, philosophy and science have both offered new and differing answers to the age-old questions of life, existence, and God, and in giving these answers have become independent of the Church and its theology. For this reason we must give more space to the specific philosophic and scientific positions as they influenced theology and the doctrine of Creation. This chapter will deal almost exclusively with Continental, particularly German, theology and thought, since Brunner's theology and doctrine of Creation has grown out of the evangelical tradition of the mid-Continent.

Before proceeding to the doctrine of Creation that was held in this modern period, a brief historical-theological sketch of these centuries might prove helpful. Fifty years

after Luther's death Lutheranism had taken on the aspects of what today is called Orthodoxy. Philosophy of the Aristotelian stamp, against which Luther had taken such a determined stand, again had become entrenched within the Church. With a philosophical orientation had come an extreme stress on the possibility of the intellect to discover the true nature of reality. Revelation, of course, was strictly upheld as the ultimate factor of assurance, but Aristotelian philosophy and its emphasis on the intellect had far-reaching effects on the Christian doctrine of God and Creation. God became the Absolute, and too close a link between God and man issued in a full-blown *theologia naturalis*.[1]

A much more serious threat to Christian theology came with the Age of Reason in the eighteenth century. Several factors combined to inaugurate this era. Orthodoxy had maintained a framework of revelation.[2] Copernicus had destroyed the band-box world of Aristotelian scholasticism. Descartes

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[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), pp. 69-75 *passim*. The author regards the seventeenth century as the period when Lutheran philosophy built props for theology, and the eighteenth century as the record of how those props were challenged in the age of Rationalism.

[2] J. L. Neve, *A History of Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1946), II, 771. Pelikan also sees the historical continuity between Orthodoxy and Rationalism. Leibniz is a good example of the philosopher who tried to combine theology and philosophy. Cf. Pelikan, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-6.

and Newton had given, at least to the intellectuals, a mechanical, mathematical conception of the universe in which man was alone in a cosmic machine.[3] Nature and reason became the watchwords and creed of the age. Although men were still religious, believing in God and in a future life of recompense, their religion was the religion of nature and reason, which in the case of extreme vulgar rationalism had placed man squarely in the center of an anthropocentric creed.[4] Although rationalism in Germany did not produce an atheistic materialist like Holbach[5] and its Aufklaerung was of a more religious nature, yet here too the emphasis was on man. The aim of the Enlightenment was a new view of the world and of life.[6]

Rationalism had produced its own destroyer in the person of Immanuel Kant. He struck the death blow at both the rationalistic speculations of Orthodoxy and at the rationalistic repudiation of Christianity by its critics.[7] But after Kant came Idealism and Romanticism, which again posited a continuity between God and man either on a spiritualistic or a

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[3]John Herman Randall, Jr., The Making of the Modern Mind (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., c.1940), pp. 226f.

[4]Ibid., p. 287.

[5]Holbach in his Systeme de la Nature had denied any being outside of nature. Cf. Randall, op. cit., p. 274.

[6]Neve, op. cit., p. 98f.

[7]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 97f.

naturalistic basis.[8] At the beginning of the nineteenth century, with close contacts with both Idealism and Romanticism,[9] came the man who has been called the Reformer of the entire century--Friedrich Schleiermacher. This chapter will have more to say about this controversial figure whom Brunner considers the arch-heretic of modern times.[10] At this point it will be merely necessary to mention that Schleiermacher's theology was oriented around feeling--the Selbstbewusstsein.[11] Starting with man and speaking to the men of his age, Schleiermacher wanted to tell those of the educated classes who had scoffed at religion that religion in general and Christianity in particular was a necessary part of life and culture.[12] As Barth[13] says, Schleiermacher wanted

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[8]Adolf Koeberle, The Quest for Holiness, translated from the third German edition by John C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1936), p. 14. Here however Koeberle points out that German Idealism was never pure Greek thought. Restrained by Christian or Kantian influences, it never placed God and the world on an equal plane.

[9]Carl Stange, "Die geschichtliche Bedeutung Schleiermachers," Zeitschrift fuer Systematische Theologie, XI (No. 4, 1933-4), 692. Neve, op. cit., p. 101, contends that both Schleiermacher and Frank of the Erlangen school used the Ego philosophy of Fichte.

[10]Cf. Emil Brunner, Die Mystik und das Wort (Tuebingen, 1924), referred to in Pelikan, op. cit., p. 163, footnote 77.

[11]Schleiermacher held that every dogma represented an element of Christian consciousness. Cf. Karl Barth, Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert (Zuerich: Evangelischer Verlag Ag. Zollikon, 1947), p. 397.

[12]Ibid., p. 394.

[13]Ibid., p. 386ff.

above all things to be a modern man. In trying to be this Schleiermacher fell prey to an anthropocentric theology.

Most of the nineteenth century followed this interest in man and his world, but no theologian showed this more than Albrecht Ritschl, who dominated the theology of the second half of the century. Ritschl worked toward a completed Enlightenment, toward an anti-metaphysical, moralistic interpretation of Kant, toward understanding Christianity as the realization of the practical ideal of life.[14] Mayer writes: "According to Ritschl, man's moral destiny in this world is man's true end. He makes Christianity truly anthropocentric and entirely this-worldly."[15] Even the anti-Ritschlian theologians of the Erlangen school preserved much of the subjective emphasis that had begun with Schleiermacher.[16]

The materialistic or naturalistic world view that had developed in the nineteenth century did much to persuade theology to keep the center of its interest in this world. In fact, theology had made one concession after another to the

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[14] Ibid., p. 599.

[15] F. E. Mayer, "Ritschl's Theology," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (March, 1944), 150.

[16] There is no theologian who has denounced the Erlangen school, particularly von Hofmann, more than Francis Pieper has done. Cf. Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), I, 60f. and 114. For a less critical view of Erlangen theology cf. Neve, op. cit., p. 117.

ideals of the growing world.[17] There had, of course, been vigorous protests against an interpretation of Christianity that centered in man and his world.[18] Soeren Kierkegaard stands out as one of the lone prophets of the age battling against the intellectualistic perversion of Christianity by the Hegelians.[19] But it was not until the appearance of Karl Barth and his Neo-evangelical school that the reaction against the liberal, humanizing theology of the nineteenth century set in with earnest.[20] Echoing Kierkegaard (and certainly Luther, and certainly the Gospels), Barth asserted man's impotence in the face of God's supreme righteousness.[21] This was so utterly different from the theology of the nineteenth century that Harnack was completely bewildered when he heard

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[17]Randall, op. cit., p. 534.

[18]Cf. the description of the position taken by the Erlangen school on Creation found in Neve, op. cit., p. 132.

[19]Cf. Pelikan, op. cit., pp. 113-18 for a brief digest of Kierkegaard's philosophy as it pertains to theology.

[20]Mueller holds that theology on the whole before World War I was utterly anthropocentric and egocentric. Cf. John Theodore Mueller, "Karl Barth," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (June, 1944), 372.

[21]Randall, op. cit., p. 569.

Barth speak in 1920.[22] The theological pendulum had again swung back.[23]

To determine how the doctrine of Creation was treated during these centuries we again turn to those specific areas around which this thesis is organized--God as Creator, the creation proper, man as creature, and Creator-creature relationships. God as the living Creator Lord remained in early Lutheranism. But while some of the dogmaticians had referred to God as essentia spiritualis,[24] in Gerhard, Hollaz, and Baier God became an ens spirituale. Elert comments:

> Gott ist hier also zuerst ein Neutrum--die personbildenden Zuege wirken wie Akzidentien....Diese Definitionen abstrahieren von der unausweichlichen Alternative zwischen Unglaube und Glaube. Sie sind,

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[22]William Arndt, "Harnack's Theological Positions," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (April, 1944), 245.

[23]Barth's theology has been even more criticized than praised, yet his position in the history of theology seems secure. Although Sasse feels that all evangelical churches will have to repudiate Barth's theology, he writes: "What the conservative theologians failed to accomplish, what neither the consciously Lutheran nor the consciously Reformed theologians succeeded in doing, was done by this student of Wilhelm Herrmann and Adolf Harnack. In Karl Barth liberal theology brought forth its own conqueror. He could overcome the liberal theology because he was bone of its bones and flesh of its flesh." Hermann Sasse, Here We Stand, translated from the second German edition by Theodore G. Tappert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1938), p. 155. For a good bibliography of books and articles by Barth and about Barth until 1944 cf. Mueller, op. cit., pp. 382ff.

[24]For example, Melanchthon, Chemnitz, Selnecker, and Hutter. Cf. Werner Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1931), I, 50.

> wenn man sie ganz ernst nimmt, der Anfang der Gottlosigkeit der Aufklaerung.[25]

No doubt much of this neutralization of God arose because Aristotelian philosophy had again found a greater influence in theology.[26] Luther's Creator Lord seemed to become something less than the living Lord of heaven and earth in the formulations of some of his followers.[27]

A more serious abstraction of the Christian belief in a living Creator Lord resulted from the scientific advances of the seventeenth century. The scientific faith of Isaac Newton had indeed posited a Creator, but He was the great Watchmaker who was entirely apart from the created world.[28] Although Newton remained a Christian, the science which went by his name prepared the way for the spread of Deism among the

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Pelikan, op. cit., p. 70, gives two causes for this depersonalization of God in later Lutheranism. Many of Luther's successors did not share or understand the impact that the living God had made upon him. Later Lutherans were preoccupied with natural theology and the harmonization of Christian and Aristotelian views on God.

[27] Rudolf Otto claims that the Lutheran school, by not doing justice to the numinous side of God, had deprived the forms of worship of genuinely contemplative or devotional elements. Cf. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, translated by John W. Harvey (Second edition; London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 108. That this judgment is not altogether correct can be seen from the many chorales of sixteenth century Lutheranism and from the devotional meditations of a man like John Gerhard.

[28] Randall, op. cit., p. 295.

educated classes of the eighteenth century. The belief of the Deists in a personal God did not go beyond belief in a "first cause" who established an unchangeable mechanical order of the universe.[29] By this mechanical view of God, which became dominant also in the German Enlightenment, the picture of the Creator whose love moved Him to create man and the world had virtually disappeared.[30]

At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century came the reaction against this external view of God. Here it was Idealism and Romanticism that joined forces to produce a more immanent God. The God of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel was some version of the Absolute, either as the absolute moral law,[31] or as the Weltgeist,[32] or as the dialectic process of thinking and becoming.[33] For the Romanticist the Creator became a Force in man and the world to be interpreted through the soul of

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[29]Neve, op. cit., p. 52.

[30]"Was Luther hineinlegt, die Liebe, die etwas sich selbst Gleiches schaffen will, fiel bei der Aufklaerung zu Boden." Karl Holl, Gesammelte Aufsaetze zur Kirchengeschichte (Seventh edition; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1948), I, 43, footnote 1.

[31]For a discussion of Fichte's view of God cf. Pelikan, op. cit., p. 103f.

[32]Ibid., p. 105f.

[33]Ibid., p. 108f. Cf. also Randall, op. cit., p. 422f.

man.[34] In both cases God was no longer the personal Lord. In both cases the Absolute or World Soul was to be found within the framework of man's own self and his own world. It was this optimistic, pantheistic philosophy as it was developed in the Hegelian synthesis which aroused Kierkegaard's ire.[35]

Schleiermacher's doctrine of God has affinities both for the Idealistic and the Romantic views of God. The question of Schleiermacher's pantheism is still being debated.[36] But it is clear that his God is not Luther's personal Creator Lord but the Infinite Being of the Idealists. True, in relation to Him finite beings are nothing, but the Infinite Being is everything, and everything is an expression of the Infinite.[37] With Schleiermacher began the nineteenth century tradition to recast theology in terms of human experience, and it was the revival of Kantian moralism by Ritschl that began the reconstruction in terms of morality. Both men set forth

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[34]Randall, op. cit., p. 419.

[35]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 114.

[36]Cf. Neve, op. cit., p. 107.

[37]John Theodore Mueller, "Schleiermacher, His Theology and Influence," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (February, 1944), 79f. Schleiermacher writes in his Reden: "Gott ist nicht alles in der Religion, sondern eins, und das Universum ist mehr....Mitten in der Endlichkeit eins werden mit dem Unendlichen, und ewig sein in einem Augenblick, das ist die Unsterblichkeit der Religion." Quoted by Werner Elert, Der Kampf um das Christentum (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1921), p. 40.

a humanized God.[38] Stange[39] holds that it is just as much a perversion of the Christian belief in God to regard Him as a perfected moral Personality as to call Him the Cause or Purpose of the world.

Even when a naturalistic evolution had completely removed God from the world of some of the intellectuals of the nineteenth century, the Christian doctrine of God as Creator was not removed from the minds and hearts of millions of Christians. Yet for most of the spokesmen of the scientific and philosophic world and even for most of the theologians of the Church, the Creator had either been depersonalized or humanized. But by going back to the Bible, by way of Kierkegaard and the Reformers, the theology of Barth and Brunner, together with much of the theology of the middle of the twentieth century, now takes the Creator Lord more seriously than was common during the past two hundred years.[40]

Luther's attitude towards upholding the historical account of creation recorded in the book of Genesis found strong support in later Lutheranism. But Luther's habit of viewing Genesis from the religious standpoint, of seeing in the historical creation God's love, and of using it as the basis for a

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[38] Pelikan, op. cit., p. 99.

[39] Stange, op. cit., p. 68.

[40] According to Wilhelm Pauck it was Rudolf Otto who first introduced into modern theological terminology the concept of God as the Ganz Andere. Cf. Mueller, "Karl Barth," op. cit., p. 370.

creatio continua, was not always preserved among his followers.[41] Werner Elert deserves much credit for thoroughly investigating this problem. Although the early Lutherans were not the bitter foes of the Copernican system that they are often thought to be,[42] the later theologians of Lutheranism did not share Luther's position that the Church as such has little interest in deciding between different scientific world views.[43] Because they were firmly convinced that Copernicus had destroyed the Biblical doctrine of Creation by

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[41]Chytraeus held that every chapter of Genesis held proofs for several Loci. August Pfeiffer found all twenty-eight articles of the Augustana in Genesis. In 1689 J. Deutschmann wrote a book proving that Adam was the first true Lutheran theologian. Cf. Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, op. cit., p. 51.

[42]Andrew Dickson White asserts that nowhere were the facts confirming the Copernican theory kept out of sight more carefully than at Wittenberg. He claims that Melanchton called Copernicus' teachings impious, and that two Wittenberg professors, convinced of the Copernican system, were forced to teach the Ptolemaic theory. Cf. Andrew Dickson White, A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1901), p. 127f. These claims are thoroughly refuted by Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, op. cit., p. 368f. In pp. 374-6 Elert demonstrates how the Copernican views were taught throughout Lutheranism without opposition during the first half century after Luther's death.

[43]Elert, Morphologie, op. cit., p. 371. It is interesting that Pieper, although he does not seem to favor the Copernican system, does not contend for the Ptolemaic or any other world view. He is quite Lutheran in refusing to let any humanly constructed world view speak in the Church, especially in the interpretation of Scripture. Cf. Pieper, op. cit., p. 473.

upsetting the "Biblical cosmology," the theologians of orthodox Lutheranism, in common with Reformed and Catholic theologians, waged a bitter war against the new Copernican astronomy.[44] In striving for the absoluteness of God's revelation of Himself as Creator in the inspired Scriptures, Orthodoxy had all too often tied the doctrine of Creation to a human world view.[45] And in stressing the historical side of creation, the living vitality of God's creation was neglected.

What Orthodoxy had to say about Creation was forcefully challenged in the Age of Reason. But although the war between theology and science continued over the Copernican system, there was a similarity between the orthodox theologians and the rationalistic exponents of science. The latter also clung to a historic creation. Newton, for example, believed that God had created the world at a fixed point in time.[46] Randall remarks: "The whole form of Newtonian science practically forced men, as a necessary, scientific hypothesis, to

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[44]White, op. cit., p. 147. White singles out Calov as the man who transmitted to future generations the denial of the Copernican system. He is amazed at the appearance of Astronomische Unterredung, a bitter attack on the modern system of astronomy, published anonymously by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis in 1873. Cf. also F. E. Pasche, Die Bibel und Astronomie (Milwaukee: Germania Publishing Co., 1906).

[45]According to Elert, the later dogmaticians had taken the traditional Aristotelian world view and had turned it into an apologetic for a "Biblical world view." Cf. Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, op. cit., p. 356.

[46]Randall, op. cit., p. 276.

believe in an external Creator."[47] Creation in the Age of Reason had become a scientific principle. The Watchmaker had wound up the watch many years ago. But here, as with much of Orthodoxy, the religious significance of Creation was truly minor.[48]

In the nineteenth century Creation as a scientific principle vanished.[49] Instead came the mechanistic and naturalistic principles that were developed in biology and geology. Instead of a Newtonian world machine that had sprung fully formed from the Creator's hand, the world became a system of energy that followed its own laws of development, growing from simple beginnings to the present complex structure.[50] The beginning of life no longer was an event occurring many years ago, but one which in its primordial stages keeps on repeating itself all the time.[51] Although there was something valid in this, for the extreme naturalists among the proponents of evolution God was no longer the Creator in any sense.[52] And even for the

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Yet, as Randall maintains, there still remained the faith that a wise and loving Father had built all this vast machinery for the good of man. Ibid., p. 227.

[49] Ibid., p. 554.

[50] Ibid., p. 466.

[51] Ibid., p. 480.

[52] The story goes that when Napoleon asked Laplace where the Creator came in under his view, the scientist replied: "Sire, I have no need of that hypothesis." Ibid., p. 485.

men who kept God in their evolutionistic system He became little more than a vague initiator and guardian of the process. The false gods of Nature, Reason, and Utility had been dethroned, but in their place came the enthronement of the Ideals of the growing world.[53]

The theology of the nineteenth century gave in to this anthropocentric perversion of Creation, but not without bitter protests from conservative theologians. Unfortunately many of these men fought evolution with only chronological arguments. The leading theologians of Europe had all given up the rationalistic belief in God that was linked to a scientific principle. This should have freed them from the necessity of linking God's revelation to a contemporary world view. Yet on the basis of the principles of evolution the liberal theologians gave up the literal authority of the first chapters of Genesis. For them evolution merely became a more exact description of the way in which God's creative acts took place.[54] Scripture was no longer decisive for the revelation of God's creation.

Luther had taken the position that man was a creature of God, a sinful idolater, and that the world was involved in this sin. This view of man was persistently and disastrously watered down in the centuries that followed. This began already with

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[53] Ibid., p. 490.

[54] Ibid., p. 554.

Orthodoxy, already with Melanchthon. Since Melanchthon was always so much of a Humanist, he had considered man's reason as his distinguishing feature.[55] Accordingly the Imago Dei then consisted primarily in mental matters, in information about God and His Law. The Fall into sin had only dimmed this knowledge of God.[56] Although Orthodoxy was prevented by the strong sense of sin from overemphasizing man's rational endowments as much as Rationalism did, the Formulations of some of the dogmaticians pointed in this direction.[57] During the Age of Reason religion became thoroughly permeated with ancient humanism's emphasis on the worth of man, particularly his

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[55]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 28.

[56]Melanchthon wrote the following in his Loci of 1543: "Imago Dei erat in mente, illa firma notitia de Deo et agnitio Legis et in voluntati conversio ad Deum....etsi autem post lapsum voluntas averso est, et in mente notitia obscurior facta est, tamen manet notitia, ut extet aeternum et immutabile iudicium Dei contra peccatum, testificans Deum irasci peccato." Corpus Reformatorum XXI, 801. Quoted in Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Melanchtonian Blight," Concordia Theological Monthly, XVIII (May, 1947), 328.

[57]For example Hollaz wrote in his Examen: "God willed that after the Fall there should exist in the human intellect some common and practical precepts....so that all men might from them acknowledge, worship, and praise God for His....benefactions to all creatures." II, 460. Quoted in Jaroslav Pelikan, "Natural Theology in David Hollaz," Concordia Theological Monthly, XVIII (April, 1947), 260. Elert holds that it was the doctrinal tradition which began with John Gerhard which lost the sharp break which Luther had made between man's natural relation to God and the relation of faith. Cf. Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, op. cit., p. 50.

reason.[58] Every man had the lumen naturale within him with which he could find God and lead a virtuous life, with or without the help of revelation.[59]

Although the early nineteenth century had turned its back on this rational interpretation of man, the Romanticists, Idealists, and theologians of that period were no less optimistic about the role of the creature. Here it was the emotional rather than the rational side of man that claimed attention.[60] With his Geist or soul or personality man could reach God. In fact God was within man and the world.[61] At first glance it might seem that Schleiermacher was an exception to this optimistic view of man. With him the schlechthinniges Abhaenigkeitsgefuehl was basic.[62] But as Barth[63] points out, Schleiermacher identifies this feeling of absolute dependency with the pious self-consciousness itself. It is identical to the very relationship to God. Hence the center of Schleiermacher's theology is man, the creature rather than the Creator. Barth writes: "Schleiermacher hat die reformatorische Anordnung umgekehrt. Ihn interessiert die Frage nach dem Tun des Menschen

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[58]Randall, op. cit., p. 282.

[59]Cf. Koeberle, op. cit., p. 12.

[60]Randall, op. cit., p. 395.

[61]Cf. Ibid., p. 415 and Stange, op. cit., p. 693.

[62]Barth, op. cit., p. 421.

[63]Ibid., p. 405.

Gott gegenueber."[64] Neve puts it more strongly.

> ....Schleiermacher brushed aside the theocentric interest in theology and replaced it by the anthropocentric. He declares 'the description of human conditions as the dogmatische Grundform.'[65]

It was however the optimistic view of the Christian moralists that gave a particular imprint to the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century. Even Schleiermacher, whose ideal was aesthetic, was bound up in a moralistic interpretation of Christianity.[66] But it was in Ritschlian moralism and its views of man that nineteenth century optimism reached its heights.

> The central thought of Ritschl's theology is the Kingdom of God as 'the moral unification of the human race through action prompted by universal love to our neighbor.'[67]

In Ritschl's theology the Creator Lord has receded into a moralistically conceived "Father God" with whom man must merge himself through the higher moral force of Christ.[68] Under this

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[64] Ibid., p. 411. But Barth does not want to condemn Schleiermacher completely. He writes further: "Diese Verschiebung des Interesses brauchte nicht notwendig zu bedeuten: der Mensch ohne Gott, der Mensch in seiner eigenen Welt. Es konnte auch bedeuten: der Mensch im Angesichte Gottes, sein Tun dem Tun Gottes gegenueber." But Barth questions whether this would be the right approach.

[65] Neve, op. cit., p. 115. Even Stange, who writes somewhat apologetically for Schleiermacher, admits that Schleiermacher's theology begins with man and not with God. Cf. Stange, op. cit., p. 694.

[66] Neve, op. cit., p. 114.

[67] Mayer, op. cit., p. 147.

[68] Randall, op. cit., pp. 564ff.

view man has become the solid, pious citizen of pre-World War I variety. As Randall[69] has correctly pointed out, here men actually create God.[70]

While such theology may have contained the necessary reaction to a naturalistic philosophy in which man's God-origin was passed off as superstition, these liberal theologians had sacrificed the Christian doctrine of sin. A neglect of the radical features of this doctrine is characteristic of the whole period from the Reformation to modern times. For Luther sin had been idolatry, a violent, radical, active evil by which man set himself against his Lord. But for some of his followers it became only an impersonal aberratio,[71] and in the days of the Enlightenment sin was merely what was lacking in the realization of the ideal man.[72] Of all men in the eighteenth

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Ritschlian theology culminated in Adolf Harnack and Ernst Troeltsch. Harnack has been called "....the prophet of easygoing liberal optimism, which basks in the sunshine of its own culture, solves neatly to its own satisfaction the problems of the universe, and has nothing but a shrug of the shoulders for such mysteries as still remain." Arndt, op. cit., p. 244. The basic question for Troeltsch was: How can I find my soul again? Cf. Neve, op. cit., p. 160.

[71] Hollaz's definition of sin was: "Peccatum est aberratio a lege divina." II, 57. Elert asserts that this definition does not express clearly enough the immediate relationship to God and that it lacks the element of an active contradiction of the sinner against God. Cf. Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, op. cit., p. 29.

[72] Ibid., p. 30. Elert quotes the following from Johann Toellner: "Eine jede wirkliche Suende entspringt aus unterlassenem Gebrauch der Freiheit."

century except those clinging to the doctrine of original sin Randall writes:

> They believed with all their ardent natures in the perfectibility of the human race. At last mankind held in its own hands the key to its destiny; it could make the future almost what it would. By destroying the foolish errors of the past and returning to a rational cultivation of nature, there were scarcely any limits to human welfare that might not be transcended.[73]

In the theology of Schleiermacher sin was the disturbance of man's natural powers in his relation to God,[74] a lack of the domination of the absolute feeling of dependence, a lack of higher consciousness in his life.[75] If for Schleiermacher sin was such a negative abstraction, for the Ritschlians sin was more positive. The sins of man were his deeds against life in the Kingdom.[76] But these sins were directed only against man, not against the "Father" who already was at-one.[77] Connected to the whole Ritschlian scheme to create the Kingdom of God by moral fervor was a fundamental disregard of man as a sinful creature.[78]

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[73]Randall, op. cit., p. 381.

[74]For this reason Koeberle sees in Schleiermacher a continuation of Neoplatonism. Cf. Koeberle, op. cit., p. 190.

[75]Barth, op. cit., p. 423.

[76]Ibid., p. 602.

[77]Mayer, op. cit., p. 152.

[78]Cf. Koeberle, op. cit., p. 5. Koeberle regards this as an attempt to gain righteousness by way of law.

> The one nineteenth-century thinker of first magnitude who refused to be stampeded by the spirit of the time and saw clearly the chasm separating the sinner from God was Kierkegaard.[79]

Kierkegaard felt creatureliness to the very depths of his being. He saw the terror and horror of sin, that infinite abyss between God and man. He realized that even the best in man needs forgiveness.[80] And yet in Kierkegaard's existentialism[81] that involved the total person in the meaning of life there were still individualistic and subjectivistic blindspots.[82] What Kierkegaard as philosopher could not do, Karl Barth as theologian has done. Barth has reawakened modern theology to the fact that God is God and man is man.

> Over against the Immanentism of his decadent theological age, over against the humanizing of God and the deifying of man, he preached that the difference between God and man is a qualitative difference.[83]

Barth also reawoke theology to the fact that sin is the idola-

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[79] T. A. Kantonen, Resurgence of the Gospel, p. 63. Quoted in Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard, op. cit., p. 166, note 112.

[80] O. P. Kretzmann, "Soeren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth," American Lutheran, XXII (October, 1939), 3740.

[81] For a discussion of Kierkegaard's existentialism as it relates to Luther cf. Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard, op. cit., pp. 16-21.

[82] Ibid., p. 118.

[83] Mueller, "Karl Barth," op. cit., p. 372.

trous deification of man. Man can never become the creator Creatoris. He is and remains a creature.[84]

The world no less than man received great attention in modern times. Up until the end of the eighteenth century man stood apart from the created world. Kepler's work in astronomy had destroyed forever the Aristotelian hierarchy of being which had done so much in the Middle Ages to establish a link between God and the world.[85] As a result of Newtonian science all that men could do was to gaze in wonder at the structurally ordered universe that God had provided. Lutheranism, however, had preserved a closer link between man and the world. The world was God's good creation, and the praise of that creation remained in sermons, hymns, and prayers.[86] It was Pietism, as Elert[87] demonstrates, which brought a strange spirit into Lutheranism by censuring laughter as such, drinking as such, and dancing as such. Nevertheless in condemning Pietism Lutheranism always was conscious of the fact that the world had been made evil by man's sin. Even in sin a basic relationship between man and the world remained.[88]

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[84] Ibid., p. 373. The author points out that in stressing man's utter humility, Barth overlooks the Gospel and makes salvation come by way of the Law.

[85] Randall, op. cit., p. 232.

[86] Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, op. cit., p. 395.

[87] Ibid., pp. 398-402.

[88] Elert calls this relationship "Erdverbundenheit." Cf. ibid., pp. 393-406.

The nineteenth century produced several conflicting "isms" which reinterpreted the world and man's relation to it. By addressing nature in personal terms, and by making nature the living force in which man lives and moves, Romanticism effected a pan-anthropism.[89] Man was linked to the world not as created humanum to the created world, but as the divine to the divine. Idealism in turn unified man and the world under the principle of Geist. At the middle of the century came the biological revolution. In the view that man is essentially an animal the humanum, whatever it is that distinguishes man from the subhuman, disappeared.[90] Randall writes:

> The effect of the biological revolution of the last century was on the whole naturalistic: that is, it placed man and his enterprises squarely in the setting of a natural environment, and gave them a natural origin and a natural history. In the long run the outcome has been humanistic as well: man has been transformed from a being supernaturally divorced from and elevated above the rest of nature, and wholly dependent on his Creator, into a creature capable of interacting and cooperating with the other forces and resources in his natural environment, and in some measure bending them to his will.[91]

In each of these movements man and the world are brought together on spiritualistic or naturalistic grounds that are

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[89] Randall, op. cit., pp. 417-9.

[90] Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1947), p. 35.

[91] Randall, op. cit., p. 459.

contrary to the Christian doctrine of Creation.[92]

One area still remains for scrutiny--that of Creator-creature relationships. It was mentioned in Chapter III that in contrast to Luther his followers soon developed a rather complete theologia naturalis. This began already with Melanchthon. Although in his early period he denied the capacity of natural man really to know God, later Melanchthon began to list the rational proofs for God's existence. At first this was merely as an encouragement for the Christian: the Holy Ghost used these proofs to produce certainty. Later these proofs became powerful also in the case of the natural man.[93] In man's reason Melanchthon had posited a connecting link between Creator and creature that would allow the natural man by his own rational powers to "prove" God. Elert comments: "Wieweit sind wir hier bereits von Luther entfernt."[94]

The later Lutheran dogmaticians followed the path Melanchthon had blazed. They believed that the remnants of

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[92]According to Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard, op. cit., p. 101, materialism and Idealism both share an essentially monistic world view. They both seek one unifying principle in man and in the universe by which all the phenomena of nature as well as of consciousness could be explained.

[93]Caemmerer, op. cit., p. 331.

[94]Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, op. cit., p. 47. For a study of natural theology in the first century of Lutheranism cf. Ernst Troeltsch, Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Johann Gerhard und Melanchton (Goettingen, 1891), referred to in Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard, op. cit., p. 34.

the divine Image lay in the intellectual sphere.[95] Therefore what the natural man knew about God through his reason could be used as steps to acquire the knowledge of faith.[96] According to Elert[97] these men had forgotten Luther's doctrine that the knowledge of the natural man was idolatry and led only to unbelief, and that faith was a complete break with natural knowledge. David Hollaz wrote the following in his Examen:

> The natural knowledge of God is that by which a man partially recognizes the existence, essence, attributes, and actions of God from principles known by nature; it is divided into the innate and the acquired. The innate natural knowledge of God is the perfection with which man is born, similar to a habitus; with its assistance the human intellect understands the truth of evident propositions about God without pondering them, having grasped their results, and grants them undoubting assent. The acquired natural knowledge of God is that which is gained through pondering, on the basis of the testimony of others, as well as of an observation of creation.[98]

Luther had not denied a natural knowledge of God, but this led in the case of the natural man to idolatry. What Luther had stressed was the actual confrontation of the Creator in

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[95]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 61. Concerning the question of the "scholastic" nature of Orthodoxy, Pelikan writes: "Lutheran theology in the seventeenth century surely deserves the name 'scholastic' if by scholasticism is meant the integration of Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy." Ibid., p. 55.

[96]Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, op. cit., p. 46f.

[97]Ibid.

[98]Examen, I, 209. Quoted in Pelikan, "Natural Theology in David Hollaz," op. cit., p. 259.

his creation masks. For Hollaz this has become an Anhaengsel. The sharp break which Luther declared existed between Creator and creature was on its way to being erased.[99]

Elert holds that "Die Entwicklung der 'natuerlichen Theologie' ist der Gang der Geschichte von Luthers Urerlebnis zur Aufklaerung."[100] This development ended in the error that Christian faith and the natural knowledge of God were identical. One of Newton's pupils wrote the following:

> Natural science is subservient to purposes of a higher kind, and is chiefly to be valued as it lays a sure foundation for Natural Religion and Moral Philosophy; by leading us, in a satisfactory manner, to the knowledge of the Author and Governor of the universe.[101]

The role that revelation should play in this natural theology became increasingly doubtful. At its height Rationalism was supremely confident of reason's ability to discover the ultimate nature of reality, and very consistently the rationalist

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[99]Apparently some of the dogmaticians in their precise formulations about the articuli mixti, the parts of Christian doctrine which are partly known from the light of nature and partly believed from supernatural revelation, had overlooked what Pieper many years later stressed: The arguments supplied by the science of apologetics cannot change the human heart, cannot produce an inner acceptance of the Gospel. Cf. Pieper, op. cit., p. 65.

[100]Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, op. cit., p. 52. Pelikan, "Natural Theology in David Hollaz," op. cit., p. 255, footnote 12, promises to produce a further study of the development of natural theology from Gerhard to Pietism.

[101]Colin Maclaurin, An Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophical Discoveries, p. 3. Quoted in Randall, op. cit., p. 275.

refused the aid of a theology which at best could only substantiate what reason had already proved.[102] From the harmonious world machine man could move to the sure knowledge of the Architect. The optimistic link between God and man that the Middle Ages had set forth was repeated again.

But in the eighteenth century came Hume's telling criticism of the arguments of natural theology and finally the philosophic revolution of Immanuel Kant.[103] The sage of Koenigsberg proved

> ....that all attempts to establish a theology by the aid of speculation alone are fruitless, that the principles of reason as applied to nature do not conduct to any theological truths, and, consequently, that a rational theology can have no existence.[104]

The older rational theology was consequently dead in the nineteenth century. But Idealism did not reject the link between Creator and creature that was implicit in natural theology. Rather Idealism carried this to a new extreme in seeking God in man and nature itself. The Christian dualism in the doctrine of Creation was rejected in favor of a depersonalized God whose difference from the world was at best one of degree rather than kind.[105] The philosophical revolution of Kant, which could

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[102]Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard, op. cit., p. 90.

[103]Randall, op. cit., p. 301.

[104]Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p. 473. Quoted in Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard, op. cit., p. 92.

[105]Pelikan, op. cit., p. 102.

have been a boon to theology, resulted instead in the liberal moralistic theology of the nineteenth century.[106]

Schleiermacher again heads the nineteenth century in the matter of Creator-creature relationships. For the pious soul, according to Schleiermacher, there is no more separation between heaven and earth.[107] Although definite pantheistic statements do not appear in Schleiermacher's Glaubenslehre, Kattenbusch is of this opinion:

> Again and again, up to his end, he has statements that make problematic and unsatisfactory the religious thoughts regarding the distinction between God and the world, for which the theologians must stand.[108]

Following Schleiermacher came almost one hundred years during which much of theology was dominated by the supremely optimistic but unchristian faith that man would go forward in the unutterable blessedness of building the Kingdom of God.[109] Randall believes that the modernist faith of the last century is summed up in these words of Father George Tyrrell:

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[106] Ibid., p. 96.

[107] Barth, op. cit., p. 406. Because Schleiermacher saw in the Old Testament such a separation between heaven and earth, he was no friend of this section of the Scriptures. Ibid., p. 403f.

[108] Ferdinand Kattenbusch, Die deutsche evangelische Theologie seit Schleiermacher, p. 27. Quoted by Neve, op. cit., p. 112.

[109] Randall, op. cit., pp. 554-6.

> In the Ideal, in the True, the Good, and the Fair, we have the Finite variously transfused and transfigured by the rays of the Infinite, forcing upon us the conception of an illuminating source beyond, whose precise form and nature lies shrouded in mystery.[110]

Not until the coming of Karl Barth was the optimism of such theology successfully challenged and refuted.[111]

The period from Martin Luther to the twentieth century is characterized by a decided negation of Luther's theocentric doctrine of Creation. For much of theology God was not the living Lord, Creator of heaven and earth. His work of Creation was not the historic "once" of Genesis bound to the dynamic creation in the present. The creature became more than a creature, more than a sinful creature. And in varying degrees the line separating Creator from creature was erased.[112] But more than anything else, the last four centuries have turned their backs on Luther's Christocentric emphasis in

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[110] Ibid., p. 557.

[111] "Barth, following in the wake of the great nineteenth century critics of ecclesiastical Christianity, Kierkegaard and Overbeck, unsparingly exposed the falsification of revelation, of faith, and of the church in modern Christianity." Sasse, op. cit., p. 155.

[112] That this optimistic creed has not been wholly dampened, at least in America, is shown by this concluding statement of John Herman Randall: "Whatever kind of progress we still hope for today we regard not as the gift of God or evolution, but as the responsibility of human intelligence and planning. We have far less confidence than our fathers that the results of what we do will be good; but we are far more convinced that whatever is done we shall have to do ourselves." Randall, op. cit., p. 394.

Creation. The Christian doctrine of Creation, when understood at all, was viewed from the standpoint of the world, or of science, or of the Selbstbewusstsein, and not in the light of the new creation that is by faith in Jesus Christ. Inasmuch as the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins was neglected or lost, it is not surprising that man and not God became the center of the universe, the center of theology, and the center of the doctrine of Creation. Against this background we now turn to Emil Brunner, the modern German theologian of the Dialectical school, who together with Karl Barth rejects very decidedly the anthropocentric theology which prevailed to a greater or lesser extent in the preceding centuries.

CHAPTER V

BRUNNER ON CREATION

Emil Brunner, professor of theology in Zuerich, Switzerland, is one of the best known and most widely read theologians of the contemporary twentieth century. In spite of his break with Karl Barth on the question of natural theology, Brunner stands with Barth as a leader of "Neo-orthodox" or Dialectical theology. Hence many of the statements made about Barth in the last chapter apply also to Brunner. He too stands in direct contrast to the anthropocentric view of creation that dominated the nineteenth century. That century had been gripped by the realities of this world, and with great strides in science had come philosophies shaped by that scientific growth or at least rooted in the optimistic faith that man would triumph over his world. Brunner[1] sees the modern world as dominated by a completely secularist culture and permeated by mass atheism. Modern education, for example, has used natural science to nurture this faith: what cannot be proved scientifically cannot be proved.

Brunner's doctrine of Creation is opposed to this naturalism, and he is not happy at all over the fact that

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[1]Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1946), p. 5.

> the most characteristic element of the present age, and that which distinguishes it from earlier periods in history, is the almost complete disappearance of the transcendence and the consciousness of revelation.[2]

Neither is he happy over the role that evolution exercised in shaping thought in the last century. For Brunner the philosophy of evolution does not go hand in hand with the concept of revelation, which, as will become increasingly clear, is primary for his understanding of creation.[3] But neither is Brunner happy in the company of Schleiermacher, one of the founts of nineteenth century religious thought. For in Brunner's opinion Schleiermacher developed a pantheistic Absolute which had made the independence of the creature an illusion. Above all Brunner wishes to preserve that independence.[4]

If Emil Brunner stands in opposition to the nineteenth century, he is even more opposed to the theistic speculations of the Enlightenment. The God of the philosophers is anathema to Brunner. That God is not one to whom man can pray,[5] not

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[2] Ibid., p. 4.

[3] The ἐφάπαξ in Christ is decisive for Brunner here. Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God. Dogmatics: Vol. I, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1950), p. 67.

[4] Ibid., p. 262. Brunner's main criticism of Schleiermacher here is that he has equated the omnipotence and the omniscience of God.

[5] Ibid., p. 126.

one who makes any demands upon man, not one who can turn the "captain of his soul" into a "servant of God."[6] There is no communion with the God of the theist other than that which is established by man's own rational efforts.

> The God who is the result of thought cannot be set free from the thinker and his world. Philosophical Theism, the effort to 'think' the Creator and the Creation, always remains a hopeless enterprise.[7]

It is therefore a mistaken apologetic, says Brunner, that lays as little stress as possible on the difference between a philosophical theism and the Christian idea of God. "The God who is known this way (theistically) has no connexion with the Creator Lord of the Bible. It is directly opposed to this Biblical idea."[8] But Brunner sees this philosophic speculation about God also in the Middle Ages as did Luther. The Fathers had injured the Christian Idea of God through a synthesis of theology and the Platonic idea of the Absolute. After the third century Neo-Platonism exercised a decisive influence in molding the Christian doctrine of God.[9]

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[6] Ibid., p. 146.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 155. Brunner admits that there has been a Christian influence on the philosophical idea of God, but holds that theism is just as far away from the Christian idea of God as Aristotelianism was.

[9] Ibid., p. 153f. Brunner gives examples from Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. Clement particularly had "spiritualized" the idea of God δι' ἀναλύσεως that is, by a process of abstraction, until the finite ideas about God were gradually eliminated.

For this very reason Brunner is very critical of the period of Orthodoxy and the doctrine of God and Creation that it developed. It was the Reformation, and particularly Luther, who had recaptured the meaning of God as Person. But it was a throwback when Orthodoxy again introduced speculation into theology by beginning its dogmatics with the chapter "de existentia et notione dei."[10] In the doctrine of God itself Protestant scholasticism sought a compromise between the Biblical conception of God as Almighty and the potestas absoluta of Neo-Platonism by positing a potestas ordinata. Even Luther comes in for Brunner's criticism on this score, but on the whole Brunner is quite sympathetic to Luther on God and Creation.[11] But Brunner's thought involves no return all the way to Luther. The intervening centuries have made that impossible. The cumulative impact of Orthodoxy, rationalism, idealism, and naturalism left theology to confront "nothing" in the twentieth century. According to Brunner it was then only

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[10] Ibid., p. 130f. Brunner also agrees with Nygren's main conclusions on the history of ἀγάπη : This vital concept was obscured by Neo-Platonic speculation about the summum bonum, rediscovered by the Reformers, and hidden again by later scholastic speculation. Cf. pp. 200-4.

[11] Ibid., p. 295f. Here as elsewhere Brunner holds that the early Luther taught a double predestination under which he held to a potestas absoluta. Luther's uniqueness here lay in the fact that he taught that the velle of God, not the esse, was absolute. Although Brunner believes that Luther later corrected his position on double predestination, he did not correct his teaching on the Omnipotence of God, but subsumed a potestas absoluta under the Deus absconditus.

through a return to the Biblical concept of revelation that theology could again speak.[12] It is in the framework of this theology of revelation that Brunner's doctrine of Creation is set.

In order to discuss Brunner on Creation it will first be essential to let him speak on the Creator. There can be no Creation without the Creator, and who He is will be of paramount importance for an understanding of Brunner's views on Creation, on Man, on the relation between Creator and Creature, and ultimately also for answering the question, "Is Brunner's doctrine of Creation theocentric?" Brunner begins his doctrine of God with no abstract definition of the nature of God, but with a description of the majestic "I, the Lord, thy God." God is Person, the unconditioned Subject.[13] Immediately after the chapter on Prolegomena in his dogmatics Brunner expounds the Name of God. This very concept "Name of God" suggests not an "It" but a Person.[14] And when God speaks, He speaks as

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[12] Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 11. According to Brunner this return was paved through Schelling's Philosophie der Offenbarung and through Jacobi's Von den goettlichen Dingen und iherer Offenbarung. Here too Brunner blames verbal inspiration for the impasse to which theology had been brought. It is of course an important question whether this doctrine really conflicts with a dynamic revelation such as Brunner is propounding.

[13] The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 137. Here the author points to the fact that more than one thousand sentences in the Bible begin with the Divine "I."

[14] Ibid., p. 121.

Person, as Subject, as "I." This is God--a living acting Person. He is the Creator.[15]

"God is the Personality who speaks, acts, disclosing to us Himself and His will."[16] This personal God is one who reveals Himself as the Lord, the Holy One, the Loving One, as Love itself. In this revelation of Himself God meets man as the Unconditional Subject in such a way that He claims man for Himself. In doing this to men who are parts of the world, God reveals Himself as absolute Power. "Only as this power--as the power of the Creator--is He able to assert an absolute right over us. We belong to Him unconditionally, because He has created us."[17] Hence for Brunner Revelation and Creation belong intimately together. Knowing God as Creator and acknowledging Him as Lord are simultaneous. Yet there is a certain primacy. "The being of God as Creator is that which is known in and through His Being as Lord."[18] Therefore the statement that God is the Creator is not a theoretical one about the world coming into existence, but primarily it states the uncon-

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[15]Brunner stresses that the Bible never calls the Son, who is the Mediator of Creation, the Creator. This is in harmony with Brunner's doctrine of the Trinity and with his insistence that God's revelation in Creation spoken apart from Christ cannot be referred to Christ. Cf. ibid., p. 232.

[16]Ibid., p. 139.

[17]Ibid., p. 142.

[18]Ibid.

ditional responsibility of man over against His Creator.[19] While the knowledge of the Creator does form part of the creaturely existence of man, God for Brunner is the Unknown God till He makes Himself known.[20] Even the "creaturely feeling" evoked by God's holiness and man's attitude toward "The Holy" is not the true knowledge of God.[21] Really to know God is to be in communion with Him, and this comes only via God's self-revelation.[22] This God who reveals Himself is the Creator.

God is absolutely different from the world. The Old Testament commandment against graven images means that we have

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[19] Ibid. Here is a precisely drawn example of Brunner's emphasis on the religious value of the doctrine of Creation. In this he parallels Luther rather closely.

[20] Ibid., p. 121. Romans 1:19 is quoted.

[21] Ibid., p. 157. While Brunner expresses great admiration for the work of Rudolf Otto, he points out that Biblical revelation is not concerned with "The Holy" as an abstract conception toward which the religious act is directed, but with the Holy One as a personal Being. The question then becomes: How much value has Otto's work for Biblical theology? Brunner would no doubt find that value in the realm of the natural man, pointing up man's inability to reach this Holy One without His self-revelation.

[22] Ibid., p. 163. But in this same connection Brunner makes this starting statement: "All revelation is self-communication, and self-communication is inclusion." From the context it is apparent that Brunner believes that the very revelation of the gulf that exists between man and God at the same time by this manifestation removes the gulf. While elsewhere revelation is closely tied in with the Person and Work of Christ, there is here no mention of Christ. Here Brunner manifests his Calvinistic confusion of Law and Gospel, and confirms the suspicion that his theocentricity is not as Christocentric as one might wish.

no right to compare God with anything known to us. For this reason Brunner regards that doctrine which lays most stress on the mystery of God as closest to the truth.[23] But it is only the Creator Lord who is different.

> Only the Creator Lord, by His very nature, is different from all other existence, in such a radical and absolute manner as indeed only Creator and creature can be different. The Creator has no trace of 'the world' or of 'the creaturely' in Himself, and conversely, the creature as such has no trace of 'non-creatureliness,' of 'divinity,' and therefore of 'holiness.'[24]

This very first article of the Christian creed was attacked by the Arian dogma, which placed an intermediary between God and His creatures. Brunner calls this the "arch heresy" that had to be rejected.[25] Neither is Law in the Kantian sense sovereign. God is the Lord of the Law.[26]

Because God is absolutely different, certain attributes cannot be ascribed to Him. Beauty, for example, is too closely connected with visible form for us to apply it to God.[27] And Perfection, if used in speaking about God, would imply a standard outside of God by which one measures whether there

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[23] Ibid., p. 117.

[24] Ibid., p. 159.

[25] Ibid., p. 222.

[26] Ibid., p. 277. Brunner maintains that God's demands are based upon His Sovereignty, and that the Law as lex aeterna is given with Creation.

[27] Ibid., p. 288. Probably this accounts in some measure for Brunner's antipathy to Schleiermacher.

is anything lacking in God.[28] Nevertheless God does share in what happens on earth. He is not separate from the world in an absolute sense. Yet He is absolutely different.

> The Biblical statement about the relation of God to the world which He has created occupies a middle position between a Deistic doctrine of Transcendence and a Pantheistic doctrine of Immanence.[29]

But this is no concession to the anthropocentric view of modern man to whom the idea that God "becomes" is so dear.

> The idea of a 'God who becomes' is a mythological and unreal idea....The God of the Bible is eternally Unchangeable. He shares in Time as the One who is high above the Temporal....God stands above Time because He is its Creator and Lord.[30]

This personal, self-revealing, wholly-other God is the Creator.

It should be self-evident then that the Creator is not the philosophically conceived Absolute. But Brunner drives this point home again and again. The impersonal Absolute as the object of thought is derived from man's own cosmology, and by that very fact is the opposite of the Creator Lord, who is known only through His own revealing action.[31] It makes no

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., p. 175.

[30] Ibid., p. 269. The last statement, however, cannot be pressed, especially if the conclusions of Oscar Cullman are granted: that the New Testament conceives of time as a straight line running backward beyond the Creation into the infinite past, and forward into the infinite future with the Christ-event as the Mid-point. Cf. Oscar Cullman, Christ and Time, translated by Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950).

[31] Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 24.

difference who constructs the Absolute--Aristotle, Spinoza, Hegel, Thomists, Theists, the Orthodox, or Idealists--Brunner opposes them all. For while the Creator of the Bible is the sovereign Person, philosophy has constructed the prima causa, the Prime Mover, the Ground of the World, the Origin. Brunner maintains that these constructions are all neutral. "A cause is not a Causer, a Prime Mover is not a Creator....One cannot replace a Subject, an acting Person, by something neuter without injury."[32]

Even when the speculative Absolute has become subject as in Idealism, God is never really apart from the world or apart from self. In both Spinoza, who started with object, or Hegel, who began with subject, God is not the Lord of the world and the Lord of Self.[33] Brunner admits that Theists in extreme cases could conceive of a personal God. But this is still some-thing, the object of thought.[34] This is still an "it." Only the "I," the living God, has real transcendence.[35]

But the Absolute has also appeared within the Church. Because Brunner regards the substantia in the hallowed words

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[32]The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 146. Brunner also makes the point that the "Unfathomable" of the agnostics or mystics is not really mysterious. The God of revelation alone is that. Cf. Ibid., p. 118.

[33]Ibid., p. 143f.

[34]Ibid., p. 122.

[35]Ibid., p. 158.

of the Athanasian Creed: "una substantia, tres personae," as an impersonal, speculative aberration, he is necessarily critical of it. Whatever the value of his criticism, his motives are consistent: "....thus 'God' now becomes a neutral ens, 'the Absolute,' instead of God who is 'Lord' of heaven and earth."[36] When the Biblical conception of God's omnipotence is equated with a scholastically conceived potestas absoluta, then creaturely independence is utterly lost and God becomes the Sole Reality, the Pantheistic Absolute.[37] But that is not God. He is the living God, who loves. The Absolute cannot love.[38]

Brunner also faces the problem of the so-called anthropomorphisms in the Scriptures. Philosophers have raised the charge of anthropomorphism when God is spoken of as a Person. Even the highest concept of personality is too creaturely, too human, for them.[39] The expression at which philosophers most frequently balk is "God repented Himself." Brunner sees this as just another objection raised against any expression that

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[36] Ibid., p. 227. Brunner does not mention the fact that substantia was not the lifeless concept for the early Church that the Middle Ages made of it.

[37] Ibid., p. 248f. Brunner shows in discussing Aseity that he is not opposed to philosophic formulations in themselves. He is not opposed to the idea of Aseity if it is not used for a speculative construction of an idea of God but only for a closer definition of God's sovereignty. Cf. ibid., p. 142.

[38] Ibid., p. 187.

[39] Ibid., p. 139.

regards God as personal.[40] Church fathers too have been bothered by the attributes of God which seemed to limit God and make Him finite. Quenstedt even goes so far as to say: "Si proprie et accurate loqui velimus, Deus nullas habet proprietates."[41] To Brunner this is one more token of the influence of Platonic philosophy upon theology,[42] and he makes the point that from the speculative standpoint indeed every Christian statement about God must inevitably end in humanum transire.[43] The Creator is wholly other than His creatures, but as the living Lord who reveals Himself He is known as Person. Just because expressions that reveal this living Creator Lord seem unfitting to the speculative mind, that in no way changes the validity or reality of such statements.

In much that Brunner has to say about God he echoes Luther, but in nothing is that echo more apparent than in Brunner's exposition of Luther's Deus absconditus. The following is a brief summary of Brunner's thinking on this subject.[44]

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[40] Ibid., p. 268.

[41] Ibid., p. 241. The quotation from Quenstedt is from Theol. did. pol., I, C. 8, Sect. 3.

[42] Brunner shows how Gerhard and Quenstedt in dealing with God's Simplicity denied all motion in God. Then he points out how Strauss in his Dogmatics used this very idea of the Absolute to destroy the Christian conception of God. Where there is no motion, there is also no mercy. Cf. ibid., p. 294.

[43] Ibid., p. 242.

[44] Ibid., pp. 168-73 for a complete discussion well supplied with quotations from Luther's writings. On the whole Brunner's exposition is faithful to Luther.

It will be quickly apparent why Brunner makes so much of Luther's insight here. Luther used the concept of Deus absconditus in two ways. The Deus absconditus is first of all the God under whose wrath man stands when he does not flee from God's wrath to God's love in Christ. It is therefore in the whole sphere of the natural man and natural knowledge of God that God stands as a hidden God. It is useless, vain, and forbidden for speculative reasoning to clamber up to God in His hidden majesty, for there He is Deus absconditus, terrible in His wrath.

Luther's second use of the concept comes to light under the terms Deus nudus and Deus velatus. The Deus nudus is God's naked majesty before which the sinner is without protection. For God to veil Himself is therefore a gracious condescension, and the Deus velatus becomes none other than the Deus revelatus. For this reason, when speaking of God's gracious hiding of Himself, Luther does not use the term Deus absconditus. Here the parallel with the Deus absconditus is the Deus nudus or absolutus. But other ideas emerge under the Deus nudus: the Irrational Numinous before whom man sinks in nothingness, the Absolute as the object of speculative thought, and the God of the Law. Though these differ somewhat, they all represent the God outside of Christ, the God whom man encounters in the natural sphere. He is God, but God as He is and remains outside of Jesus Christ.

With this ammunition Brunner can make war even more energetically on the Absolute. He is not always in agreement with Luther. In fact he criticizes the Reformer for positing objective reality to the Deus absconditus.[45] But because of his general agreement with Luther the high spot of Brunner's thinking again shines forth. God the Creator is the living Lord who reveals Himself to man. He is not the Absolute who can or should be reached by climbing to the hidden heights of His majesty. Revelation is needed to bring this wholly other God to man. Here Creation enters the picture as one form of that revelation.

When God created man and the world, He was manifesting His love. Although He was sufficient to Himself, and did not need a creation, He willed to create a world. He willed to impart Himself to another, to man whom He created in His own image.[46] Creating man who had a relative independence, God actually limited Himself. Here too Brunner finds an expression of God's love.[47] In fact God's final aim in Creation is love. When the

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[45] Ibid., p. 173. This criticism is directed mainly against the early Luther who believed that the wrath of God forced a double decree of God. Brunner admits that even the early Luther always wanted God to be regarded only in Christ, but he finds too wide a gulf between Luther's objective understanding of the truth and his religious understanding of the same truth. "He did not yet see clearly that the inmost Being of God, that which He is in Himself, must be identical with that which He is for us."

[46] Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 193.

[47] Ibid., p. 251.

creature loves the Creator, God's will in creation will be perfectly fulfilled.[48] It is apparent that when Brunner describes creation as the revelation of God's love, he thinks primarily of man. God limited Himself in creation, He disclosed His love for the sake of man. Man is the meaning and end of creation.[49]

But although man may be the meaning of creation, God is the sole origin of all created existence.[50] That God is the Creator is the fundamental article of the Christian faith for Brunner.[51] But this fundamental article includes a deeper thought. "Biblical ontology is not content with this. It states that God has created all that is outside Himself through His Word."[52] This Word or revelation of God, which became manifest in the Logos ensarkos, Jesus Christ, is the ground of all existence.[53] Brunner definitely identifies the Word of God through whom all was created with the Son.[54]

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[48]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 34.

[49]Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1947), p. 411.

[50]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 307. Brunner especially singles out God's thought and will as the origin of the world.

[51]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 70.

[52]Ibid., p. 71.

[53]Ibid. Brunner refers to Matthew 4:4.

[54]Cf. The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 307. "The Son is the meaning of the world, for whom God in free decision determines and creates the world." Cf. also Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 66. "The Word of God which has been given back to us is Jesus Christ." For other remarks on the forms in which the Word of God is expressed cf. pp. 66-8.

This means that a Mediator stands between the Creator and the creation. In Him lies man's special relation to God, his responsible existence, his being created for love.

> Human responsibility has no other ground than that of the Word of God, that is, that man, in contrast to all other creatures is not only borne by this Word of God, but is borne by Him in such a way that he is in some way or other aware of it.[55]

This grounding of human existence in the Word of God is one of Brunner's primary concerns. For this reason he has much to say about the doctrine of Creation. What he wants to deal with, however, is not a static doctrine concerning the historical beginnings of the world or of man, but rather with a dynamic doctrine of Creation that concerns itself with the "origin" of man and the world as they exist today.[56] As a Biblical theologian Brunner draws heavily upon the opening chapters of Genesis in his discussion of creation, but his position is that the kernel of the doctrine of creation is the invisible divine origin of man and the world that lies behind, above, and beyond the visible and earthly beginnings.[57] Brunner admits that the story of Adam in Genesis is told in

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[55] Ibid., p. 73.

[56] Brunner holds that the Psalmist in Psalm 139 was not reflecting on a first man. He was reflecting on his own origin in God which he knew directly. Cf. ibid., p. 89.

[57] "The Christian doctrine of Creation does not give us any particular view of the beginning of man, but it takes over a view which is well known to everyone; yet it is itself the doctrine of the invisible Divine origin behind, above and within this visible and earthly beginning." Ibid.

historical fashion, but this expresses "a fact which in itself is super-empirical and super-historical."[58]

> ....when we talk about the origin of man we are not speaking of a certain man called Adam, who lived so many thousand years ago, but of myself, and of yourself, and of everyone else in the world.[59]

Brunner wants to put every living person under the hand of God. Creation means that I am a creature of God and that my world is God's creation.

Because of this existential emphasis, which is reminiscent of Luther's explanation to the First Article, Brunner feels that he must protest against a doctrine of Creation that regards the events in Genesis 1-3 as true historical facts. Here even Martin Luther was wrong. The story of Adam living in an original state of holiness in Paradise does not mean that such a man ever lived. "This idea is merely the historical husk concealing the kernel of the Biblical message."[60] The error of the Reformers was in failing to identify every man with the original Adam.[61] At any rate, today under the

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[58] Ibid., p. 333.

[59] Ibid., p. 88.

[60] Ibid., p. 104. The question then becomes: Is the story of Jesus' death also a historical husk? It seems to the writer that Brunner here betrays spiritualizing, Nestorian tendencies that are the heritage of Calvinism.

[61] Ibid., p. 112. For very good reason Luther did not identify every man with the original Adam. Before the Fall Adam had not sinned. Luther certainly does, however, relate every man to his creation by God. Cf. Chapter III, p. 76f.

pressure of scientific knowledge, the older historical view of the creation accounts cannot stand.

> The pitiable comedy which is produced when theology claims that a 'higher, more perfect' human existence of the first generation existed in a sphere not accessible to research....should be abandoned, once for all, since it has for long provoked nothing but scorn and mockery.[62]

In fact, Christians must be prepared for the possibility that scientific research will establish that the human race is not a unity, but had a plural, not a single origin.[63]

Against the charge that such a view of Creation would violate Scriptural authority Brunner writes:

> ....the Holy Scriptures contain no divine oracles about all kinds of possible cosmological facts, but they are the human witness to God's saving revelation in the Old Testament, and above all in Jesus Christ.[64]

The Holy Spirit just does not guarantee world facts, historical or cosmological.[65] Hence the Scriptures cannot be reliable

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[62]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 86. Brunner stands against a metaphysical evolution which leaves God out of the picture, but in his opinion the scientific doctrine of evolution cannot any longer be challenged. Cf. ibid., p. 88, footnote 2 and Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 279.

[63]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 332.

[64]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 280. There is certainly some truth to at least the first part of this statement. But the question is: Is not creation itself a cosmological fact? Is not the revelation in Christ a fact of cosmic significance?

[65]"The testimonium spiritus sancti is strictly limited to its own sphere of reference. The Spirit testifies to the Father and the Son, but not to all kinds of other matters." Ibid., p. 175.

for a historical picture of the "beginning of the world." Brunner, however, does not admit that his position sacrifices anything. Neither is it a concession.

> It is not our concern to modify our theology to meet the increasing pressure of secular knowledge....our position rather is this: the fact that the increasing pressure of secular knowledge has awakened us to the nature of this problem leads us to reflect upon the real meaning and content of our own message.[66]

Nevertheless it is plain that with regard to the historical creation and Scriptural authority the positions of Luther and Brunner do not meet.[67]

Brunner's doctrine of man, however, together with the Dialectical school in general, reflects one of the basic Biblical-Reformation emphases. Brunner deals with the whole man. Man was created by God as a psycho-physical unity.[68] Although he decides the perplexing question of dichotomy or trichotomy in favor of the latter, Brunner declares that it is the whole man who is body-soul-spirit.[69] This whole man has

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[66]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 88. Brunner also writes the following: "The statement, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' is just as valid today, in the days of the telescope on Mount Wilson, as ever, and Darwinism has not made the slightest difference to the statement that 'God created man in His own image,' in so far as evolution has become part of the world outlook of every educated person." Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 280.

[67]For the latter cf. H. Armin Moellering, "Brunner and Luther on Scriptural Authority," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXI (November, 1950), 801-18.

[68]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 218.

[69]Ibid., p. 362f.

been created in the Image of God. Above all it is this latter concept which Brunner wants to restore to the Christian doctrine of Creation and to the Christian doctrine of Man. According to Brunner the history of the Imago Dei is the history of the Western understanding of man.[70]

What does this Imago Dei mean for Brunner? It means that God has created a creature "over against" Himself, one to whom He wills to impart Himself through His Word.[71] It means that each man is Adam, created in and through the Word of God with a rational being that can apprehend God in that Word. It means that man has a theological structure of existence.[72] Man is a theological being who cannot be known from himself but only from God in and for whose Word he has been created.[73] Luther's view that man must always have either a god or an idol is one of Brunner's favorite quotations to demonstrate man's theological being.[74] It is this creation in the Image of God which distinguishes man from the rest of creation.[75]

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[70] Ibid., p. 92.

[71] Ibid., p. 103.

[72] Ibid., p. 104.

[73] Ibid., p. 64f. Brunner calls this Christianity's first article of belief in the doctrine of Man.

[74] "Der Mensch hat immer Gott oder Abgott." This is one of Brunner's favorite Luther quotations. Cf. ibid., p. 25, footnote 2 and p. 180, footnote 4.

[75] Ibid., p. 110.

Man's theological being, the Imago Dei, involves responsible existence. Responsibility is not an attribute but the very substance of human existence, man's humanum itself.[76] This responsible existence was established at the very outset between God and man.[77] For the divine Word has called man's being into existence, and man's answer to that call in free, believing love is God's purpose in the call. This Brunner regards as the exposition which the New Testament gives of the Old Testament story of Creation.[78] But this responsible existence, this humanum, can never be understood as a thing "in itself," never apart from the relation to God.[79] "When we speak of responsibility we speak of God; apart from God, responsibility is an empty phrase."[80] Man the "theonomous" being still remains a creature. Between him and his Creator stands an infinite distance, the distance between Him whose Being is unconditioned and independent, and him whose being is conditioned and dependent.[81]

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[76]Cf. Ibid., pp. 46ff. and 50f.

[77]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 134.

[78]Brunner, Man in Revolt, p. 99.

[79]To regard the humanum as a thing in itself Brunner regards as the first lie of anthropology. Cf. Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 56f.

[80]Ibid., p. 55.

[81]Ibid., p. 25.

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But this man created in the Image of God, constituted as a theological being, and called by God's Word into responsible existence is a sinner. Man is not only empty of God. He has separated himself from God and has closed the door between himself and God.

> He lives no longer in God, but against God; he no longer has God for him but against him. He has been detached and alienated from his Creator, the Source of his life, from the Good, from love, which is his original life.[82]

The root of this sin is the deification of the creature.[83] "The final ground of sin is this, that we love ourselves more than our Creator."[84] Not only is sin rebellion against God. It is also man's rebellion against himself. Sin is contradiction, the contradiction of the whole man against the whole man.[85] Brunner writes:

> Sin is not natural; it is unnatural. To sin is not human; it is inhuman. To live without God, to wish to be one's own master, is the rebellion of man against his divinely created nature, the cor incurvatum in se.[86]

All of man's powers stand under this contradiction of sin. Even the reason, God's highest gift to man, is always sinfully

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[82] Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 270.

[83] In this connection Brunner refers to the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21. Cf. Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 51.

[84] Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 132.

[85] Ibid., p. 118. Although Luther used the customary terminology regarding sin (corruptio naturae), Brunner believes that he transferred this terminology into personalistic patterns.

[86] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 40.

self-sufficient apart from its restoration through the Word of grace.[87] In fact it is from the mind that sin enters into the bodily instinct.[88]

Brunner emphasizes that sin is a present fact. It is not a quality or substance, not something that simply happened once long ago. Sin is and remains an act which man continually does.[89] "The theme of the Bible is not the historical origin of sin, but the universal and irresistible power of sin as affecting man's being."[90] Brunner holds that the Biblical emphasis lies on the solidarity of all mankind in sin but that the Bible does not tell how this comes about.[91] What Brunner is reacting against is a doctrine of original sin which he believes has severed the present man from Adam.[92] What is even worse, this has made man responsible for someone else's sins.[93]

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[87]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 254. But here Brunner manifests an unawareness of the battle between flesh and spirit that is basic in the Christian life. Even after conversion the Christian has to war against a reason that is sinfully self-sufficient.

[88]Ibid., p. 382.

[89]Ibid., p. 148f.

[90]Ibid., p. 119f., footnote 1.

[91]Ibid., p. 142ff. According to Brunner the use of the "Fall story" as an explanation for sin is foreign to the Old Testament, and with the exception of Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:21 to the New Testament as well. Cf. ibid., p. 119, footnote 1.

[92]Ibid., p. 276. That such a severance has taken place at various times through an overemphasis on the historical cannot be denied.

[93]Ibid., p. 143.

Here too Brunner wants to preserve the fact of man's responsibility. Sin is man's present rebellion, man's present contradiction.

This responsibility remains because man, even in sin, is a theological being.[94] Man *is* created in God's Image. Even in sin he remains before God.

> Even the being of the sinner is a being in God's Word, or being 'in the sight of God'--otherwise how could it be sinful? But it is a perverted being-in-the-Word-of-God.[95]

This perverted state of sin has replaced the Creator Lord with a rebel, the "I" itself.[96] Yes, the *Imago Dei* has been broken or defaced, but this does not mean that it does not exist. It does remain, but it remains as a perverted relationship, a perverted responsibility.[97] That this is Brunner's carefully

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[94]"It is characteristic of the Biblical anthropology that it always regards even the 'natural man,' even the pagan and the atheist, as one who is in the sight of God. This view of man has no room for any understanding of man which excludes him from a relation to God--nor can it conceive any 'neutral' view of man's nature. Man is always 'before God,' negatively or positively; he always has a certain relation to God." Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

[95]Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

[96]"God has been removed from the centre, and we are in the centre of the picture; our life has become 'ec-centric'....The dominant note in our life is now no longer the *dominus* but the rebel: the 'I' itself." *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[97]"Man *was* not, in his origin, a responsible being, but he *is* still a responsible being, even in his irresponsibility, there, where he denies his responsibility and sets himself in opposition to his origin." *Ibid.*, p. 79.

conceived position is shown by this statement from Man in Revolt:

> The fundamental idea of my book is this: that even the unbeliever is still related to God, and therefore that he is responsible, and that this responsibility is not put out of action even by the fullest emphasis upon the generous grace of God, but, on the contrary, that God requires it.[98]

Brunner is well aware that he stands in opposition to both Luther and Calvin, who taught that the Image of God was lost through the Fall. Nevertheless they spoke of the "relics" of the divine Image. This, Brunner concludes, says too much, since then there would be an area of life unaffected by sin. It also says too little since it does not take into account that precisely in sin man bears witness to his original relation to God.[99] Brunner wants to go beyond both and recognize that the humanitas that sinful man still possesses and the iustitia originalis of the Reformers has one and the same content.[100] But it is against Barth's view that the Image is utterly lost that Brunner is most firm. Such a teaching has turned the humanum into a profanum. None of the Reformers

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[98] Ibid., p. 11.

[99] Ibid., p. 105. Yet in a later book Brunner calls responsibility "this vestige of the Imago Dei." Cf. The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 135.

[100] Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 96. Brunner states that this is only possible by dropping the historical-mythical doctrine and thus relating each person to his origin in God and to the Fall. Again, as in his polemic against verbal inspiration, Brunner oversimplifies.

dared to do what Karl Barth has done in severing the humanum from man's relation to God.[101]

Above all Brunner wants to preserve a regard for God's good creation. All is still good in man because he is created by God, but all this good stands under the law of sin.

> As upon a chess-board which has been shaken, all the individual chessmen are still there, unbroken, 'good,' as they came out of the workshop of the turner; yet at the same time everything is confused and displaced and meaningless--so is the nature of man.[102]

So Brunner can say that love as the specifically human element in sex is never lacking, but also maintains that unnatural deformations of sexuality are present in man.[103] And reason which is "the unmistakable sign that man comes from God" has its use perverted also.[104] Man's rational nature remains as a good creation of God but "as a result of man's apostasy, the use of reason is in opposition to his divine destiny, which is timeless and eternal."[105] Nevertheless, to depreciate reason as such is a sign of the lack of adaptation to creaturely existence.[106]

In trying to uphold the humanum also in sin Brunner takes up the problem of man's freedom in his perverted existence.

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[101] Ibid., p. 95.

[102] Ibid., p. 137.

[103] Ibid., p. 347.

[104] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 56.

[105] Ibid., p. 69.

[106] Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 250.

Founded on his responsibility man has freedom to say yes or no. But this is part of man's creaturely existence.[107] And even here man is the property of God. Brunner is against a freedom of the will in the sense of a liberum arbitrium indifferentiae.[108] Man must say either yes or no. But sin has perverted this freedom. "Man has turned the word of the Creator, 'You must yourself say 'yes;' I will not force you,' into, 'I can say 'yes' or 'no,' just as I will.'"[109] Now man has only unfreedom, the non posse non peccare, the freedom to sin. Even then man is responsible.[110]

Brunner is therefore not satisfied with Luther's De Servo Arbitrio or with the formulations of the Formula of Concord in which man is called truncus et lapis. Both wanted to say the same thing, namely that man is utterly unable to earn grace. Brunner agrees, but makes this qualifying statement:

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[107] Ibid., p. 264. Such a freedom Brunner regards as an imperfection. In heaven there will be a more perfect freedom--the non posse peccare.

[108] "From the outset man is the property of God; he does not become God's property first of all by his self-determination, Self-determination ought only to accept that which already is, that which already exists." Ibid., p. 265. Cf. also p. 262f. where Brunner states that man's true freedom is based on his dependence upon God.

[109] Ibid., p. 287.

[110] Ibid., pp. 271-3. But Brunner does not want to make human sin Satanic. From Luther he quotes the following: "In the devil there is a far greater enmity against God....than there is in man." Ibid., p. 131.

> But all this lies within the dimension: 'Word-responsibility,' 'Divine Person--human person.' This means that man can never earn grace, and further, that he cannot even rightly understand the word of grace and believe it, save as the Holy Spirit opens his heart to do so. But in all this man remains 'person,' and the transaction between God and man remains a personal one, something which takes place within the sphere of responsibility, and it ought never to be transferred into the dimension of 'power-thing,' 'cause-effect.' Even sinful man is a subject, not an object, and even 'given' grace is a personal act, and not the cause of an effect. In the truth of Scripture this personal fundamental relationship is never affected, but it is explicitly preserved; hence man, even as the recipient of grace, remains a responsible subject, and never becomes 'truncus et lapis.'[111]

Even where the Bible asserts the creatureliness of man because of the infinity of the Creator, it does not eliminate the relative independence of the creature.[112] But the temptation to do this is always present, especially because of the corruption of the original creation.[113] In fact, to deprecate or secularize the specifically human element that remains even in sinful man, and to forget that even fallen man always lives in the sight of God is particularly a current danger. Between

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[111]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 316. Koeberle approaches the problem from a different side when he writes that truncus et lapis are not the severest similes, since they do not express the thought of a conscious, willful, aggressive opposition to God. Cf. Adolf Koeberle, The Quest for Holiness, translated from the third German edition by John C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1936), p. 25, footnote 3.

[112]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 257.

[113]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 171.

a false Pelagian assertion of freedom and a fatalistic determinism Brunner regards the latter as the more dangerous.

> Today our slogan must be: No determinism, on any account! For it makes all understanding of man impossible. If Luther had been obliged to grapple with a determinism of this kind, he would never have written his 'De servo arbitrio' as he did--and possibly had to--when faced by the liberalism of his own day.[114]

In all of what Brunner has to say about the creature he tries to do justice to three things: man's creatureliness, the fatal cleavage because of sin, and full responsibility.

The basic emphases in Brunner's doctrine of Creation that have already been mentioned appear also in what he has to say about the world. There is not only a boundary between God and man, but also a boundary between God and the world.[115] Failing to realize this second boundary, Pantheism adopts a fluid transition between God and the world that ends in the deification of nature.[116] Although Brunner condemns such a perversion of the Lordship of the Creator, he stresses the fact that the world is not separated from God. The world is a world from God.[117]

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[114] Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 257. Hence Brunner sees the Christian doctrine of freedom as nearer to Idealism than to materialistic determinism. Cf. Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 261. Brunner apparently overlooks the fact that, at least in America, a democratic philosophy of voluntarism still places the independence of the creature at too high a level.

[115] Ibid., p. 409.

[116] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 350f.

[117] Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 91.

For this reason it is an abstraction to speak of a secular world. God is at work in the darkness, doom, and death in the world.[118] Hence the Christian doctrine of Creation is a protest not only against Pantheism, but also against any Deistic separation of God and the world.[119]

The third boundary that exists is between man and the world. Man is not merely a bit of the world, but something very special. Man is created in God's Image, made for His revelation, made for fellowship and love, while the other creatures are not. God truly is the Lord over Creation, but He is Lord not only "over" man but "of" man.[120] In the full sense of the word God is Lord only where He is consciously revered and acknowledged as such, that is, by man.[121] "Man is in the centre of the world, in spite of the fact that God is his Creator and Lord...."[122] Even as a sinner man remains over against the world and dominates it, although now he does this in a way foreign to God's purpose.[123]

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[118]But this is just what is repellent to any system of monism. Cf. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 231.

[119]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 91.

[120]Cf. John McCreary, "Brunner the Theological Mediator," Christendom, XII (Spring, 1947), 180.

[121]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 33.

[122]Ibid., p. 409.

[123]Ibid., p. 411.

It is easy to understand then why Brunner takes a firm position against any naturalistic dogma or metaphysical evolution that denies man's position "over against" the world.[124] Yet the Swiss theologian also posits a continuity between the human and the sub-human. "In spite of the famous 'missing-link' between man and the primates, the fact of a continuity between man and the animals cannot today be left in any doubt at all."[125] It has already been mentioned that Brunner accepts a "scientific" evolutionary process, and this he extends also to anthropology.[126] But while he sees such continuity between man and animals in their physical beginnings, he staunchly maintains that the boundary between man and the rest of creation must be preserved on the theological level in the fact of the Imago Dei.[127] "Even the highest animal does not show a trace of spirit."[128] Only man has been created a responsible person.

From what he says about the world it is plain that Brunner wants no Neoplatonic asceticism. The body of man as well as the created world in general is God's creation. There can be no shunning of the material, even in opposition to a naturalism

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[124]Cf. for example the chapter "Man in the Centre of the World," Ibid., pp. 412-18.

[125]Ibid., p. 418.

[126]McCreary, op. cit., p. 179.

[127]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 418.

[128]Ibid.

that leaves God out of the picture.[129] In a sense Christian thought is materialistic since body as well as mind comes from God.[130] Yet Brunner also has statements, just as the Gospels and Luther did, which could leave the way open to a charge of Neoplatonism. For example, he speaks of the "lower" elements (material, biological, physical, rational) in man that rank beneath his responsibility to God.[131] Then too he believes that the cosmic element in the Scriptures is little more than scenery in which the history of mankind takes place.[132] Brunner wishes to reject two errors: a naturalistic interpretation of man and the world that omits God, and an evolutionary interpretation of the world that omits man.

Here Brunner's conception of truth must be mentioned. There are two kinds of truth--objective impersonal truth of things, and the personal truth of revelation, "Wahrheit als Begegnung."[133] When the Creator created man, He gave him the capacity to know the world as it is. It is true that sin sets

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[129] Ibid., p. 369.

[130] Ibid., p. 374. But for Brunner the meaning of the body lies in its possibilities to express the spirit and to realize the will. Ibid., p. 380.

[131] Ibid., p. 69.

[132] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 34, note 4. Cf. also Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 417.

[133] For a rather complete discussion of Brunner's conception of truth on the basis of secondary materials of. Vernon Boriack, "Emil Brunner and his Idea of 'Christian Philosophy,'" Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1948.

up a barrier to this rational knowledge of the world.[134] But there is no real conflict between the two kinds of truth, between science and faith, between world truth and faith truth. The limits between them must merely be maintained.[135] Brunner desperately wants to bring to a close the conflict between revelation and reason. And yet he is not advocating a system of truth like the one Catholic Scholasticism produced. There can be no coordination of the knowledge of the world with the knowledge of faith. "All that we know of Christ contradicts all that the world shows us."[136] The higher personal truth includes the lower objective kind, but this does not work contrariwise.[137] There is in Brunner both an affirmation of the world, and a subordination of the world to the personal realm where the encounter with God takes place.

In the theology of Emil Brunner the relation between Creator and creature assumes a large role in what he writes about Creation. This is true mostly because of the bitter controversy that has raged for more than fifteen years between Brunner and Karl Barth over the problem of natural theology. Before hearing Barth's side of the picture we shall permit Brunner to speak. There is no absolute gulf between the

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[134]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 381f.

[135]Ibid., p. 373f.

[136]Ibid., p. 188.

[137]Ibid., p. 373.

Creator Lord and His creature. For in the very act of creation God was revealing Himself. This did not occur only once, but ever since the creation of the world, through the works of creation.[138] "God manifests Himself in that which He creates. His work points to Him, the Master Worker."[139] This means that God's revelation has come to man in more than one way, through these works of creation as well as through the Prophets and through Jesus Christ.[140] This means that God's creation is accessible to man's reason.[141] God's glory is in the world He created, and reason can recognize God's works in Creation as the revelations of divine Wisdom.[142] This doctrine of general revelation, or revelation in creation, Brunner finds in the Bible, in the teaching of the Church, in Martin Luther.[143]

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[138] Ibid., p. 63.

[139] Ibid., p. 67.

[140] Ibid., p. 58. Yet there is a unity of the Revealer and a unity of the revelation. Brunner holds that only in this variety of revelation can the inner unity be understood.

[141] Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 283. This, however, does not mean for Brunner that God's Creation is rational in itself.

[142] Ibid., p. 286f.

[143] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 59f. He refers to the following Old Testament passages: Psalm 19; 104; 8; 136; Proverbs 8:22ff.; Job 26:38-40; Amos 5:8; Isaiah 40: 12ff.; and Jeremiah 31:35ff. Ibid., p. 83. Brunner refers to the following New Testament passages: Romans 1:18ff.; 2:14ff.; 1:28-32; John 1:4-9; Acts 14:17; 17:26f. Ibid., p. 61. But Brunner writes that even if the Bible did not explicitly teach a general revelation, the Church would still have to teach it, since it is implicit in the doctrine of Creation. Cf. ibid., p. 67.

But between this revelation in creation and the natural man stands the fact of sin. The natural man, unaffected by the historical revelation in Christ, cannot perceive this revelation in creation. Or more carefully stated: the distortion of sin prevents man from understanding rightly the nature and meaning of revelation in God's works of creation.[144] But this does not mean that the revelation in Creation was destroyed by sin.[145] Sin is a present, not a past apostasy, and therefore this revelation, which for Brunner is implied in the Scriptural view of the natural man, is also still here. Yet man always turns this original revelation into a false god, a self-imposed world view, or some form of mythology.[146] Brunner again refers to the Scriptures and Luther for this interpretation.[147]

In this combination of original divine revelation and human sin Brunner finds the key for the Christian interpreta-

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[144]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 133.

[145]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 72. To support this, Brunner offers his belief that creation is not fallen, but only man is. He says the phrase "fallen creation" is foreign to the Bible. However Romans 8 gives a different picture.

[146]Ibid., p. 52.

[147]He refers to Romans 1:19. Cf. The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 134. He quotes the following from Luther's Vorlesung ueber den Roemerbrief, edited by J. Ficker, II, 18: "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." Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 60.

tion of religion. Behind all religion there lies communication from God, the testimony of the Creator to Himself.[148] Man takes these testimonies of God in the world and constructs his own God either as a finite Being (idolatry) or as an impersonal Being (philosophy).[149] Even then there is some stammering of truth in non-Christian religions.

> From the standpoint of Jesus Christ, the non-Christian religions seem like stammering words from some half-forgotten saying. None of them is without a breath from the Holy, and yet none of them is the Holy. None is without its impressive truth, and yet none of them is the Truth.[150]

So, as Brunner sees it, the naturalistic and the idealistic theories of the origin of religion are equally right and equally wrong. The first does not see how much religion is "from below," and the second does not see "how much" from above religion is.[151] Both God's revelation in creation as well as man's sin have produced the fact of religion.[152]

Despite the fact that the natural man does not truly know God in His works of creation but rather sets up his own

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[148] Ibid., p. 262.

[149] Ibid., p. 264. "'Religion' is the product of man's sinful blindness." Ibid.

[150] Ibid., p. 270.

[151] Ibid., p. 265.

[152] Brunner therefore is in perfect agreement with Luther that if sin did not exist, man would always live in continual contemplation of God in His revelation in creation. Cf. ibid., p. 73.

form of religion where he wants to "realize himself,"[153] the significance of such a general revelation is absolutely fundamental. "Only through it can man be addressed as sinner, only through it can he be responsible for his sin...."[154] The original revelation is a basic presupposition for Christian theology. It is true that this general revelation has its own necessity and limitations: it makes men guilty, but cannot free from sin.[155] But the very Creator Himself should force us to admit the reality of such a revelation, for what kind of a Creator would God be if He did not leave His imprint upon His Creation?[156] This doctrine is even implicit in the doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ as its presupposition.[157] By the revelation in the creation works man is called to account. He is viewed as a responsible creature, one whom the Creator has not only created in His Image, but to whom He reveals Himself as Lord, addressing man as His creature. Without such a revelation the Christian

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[153] Ibid., p. 272. If a man understands Christianity in this way, then Brunner holds that Christianity too has become a "Religion" which must be judged as much as any other.

[154] Ibid., p. 66. This is the Anknuepfungspunkt where the Church must meet the natural man. For Barth, as we shall see, the point of contact is the Gospel, which must be used to call men to account.

[155] Ibid., p. 62.

[156] Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 133.

[157] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 66.

Church would have no point of contact with the man outside of faith in order to call him to account.[158] Here again Brunner wants to preserve God's Lordship and man's responsibility in a doctrine which is Biblical and in the tradition of the Reformation.

No doubt the reason that Emil Brunner has expressed himself at such length on the problematics of a revelation in creation lies in the bitter controversy he has had with Karl Barth on this question.[159] Although in his early development Barth sidestepped the problem of natural theology,[160] after the early thirties, stimulated by the position taken by Brunner, Barth began to reject all revelation outside of Christ.[161] Brunner, according to Barth, had returned to a scholastic tradition which linked Creator and creature in an unholy manner. Brunner had returned to natural theology, to "eine abstrakte Speculation ueber ein Etwas darstellen, das mit der Offenbarung Gottes in Jesus Christus nicht identisch ist."[162]

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[158] Cf. ibid., p. 76.

[159] For a complete discussion of Brunner's doctrine in opposition to Barth cf. ibid., pp. 58-80, especially pp. 77-80 where Brunner directs himself specifically to Barth.

[160] Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), p. 21.

[161] For a condensed history of the conflict between Brunner and Barth cf. Boriack, op. cit., pp. 16-20.

[162] Karl Barth, "Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner," Theologische Existenz Heute, XIV (1934), 12.

This was Barth's "Nein!" There was no Wortmaechtigkeit or Ansprechbarkeit in man, for the Image of God was lost.[163] The formal preservation of man's responsibility has nothing to do with God's revelation.[164] This revelation is only in Christ, and it is unthinkable that the true God reveals Himself outside of Christ, since then there would be two revelations.[165] According to Barth, Brunner in his wish to proclaim the Gospel to the world has introduced an impious link between God and sinful man.[166]

Brunner has answered Barth's objections. He agrees that natural theology in the rational sense of medieval and Protestant scholastics was wrong. Faith has no interest in the rational proofs for God. Indeed the God of such proofs is not the Creator Lord, the Living God of faith.[167] For this reason any natural theology there is does not belong under the doctrine of God, but under the doctrine of man. "For," writes Brunner, "natural theology is an anthropological fact, which

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[163] Ibid., p. 16f.

[164] Ibid., p. 25.

[165] Ibid., p. 18f.

[166] Ibid., p. 59.

[167] Cf. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., pp. 342-7. Here Brunner discusses the rational proofs for the existence of God. He seems to have most sympathy for the teleological argument, which he regards as the rational formulation of the revelation in creation.

no one can deny."[168] By "Natural theology" Brunner means what man has done with God's revelation in his perverted existence. This is not natural theology as the scholastics understood it, as Barth understands it.[169] Brunner definitely says that it is wrong to equate a *theologia naturalis* with the general revelation in Creation.[170] When the Reformers spoke of natural law, for example, this is no relic of natural theology, but the view of natural man who even in sin is still responsible.[171] Barth therefore is wrong when in his great "spring cleaning" he throws out much that had nothing to do with natural theology.[172]

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[168] Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, *op. cit.*, p. 133f.

[169] Brunner writes: "We agree at the outset with the enemies of 'natural theology' of this kind (Knowledge of God on rational grounds in competition with the revelation in Christ) when they maintain that there is no connection between natural theology and the Biblical knowledge of God....Biblical and natural theology will never agree; they are bitterly and fundamentally opposed." *Revelation and Reason*, *op. cit.*, p. 61. That Brunner and Barth are not alone in refuting the claims of natural theology Pelikan shows by referring to Stoeckhardt's polemic against those who make the natural knowledge of God a kind of means of grace. Cf. Pelikan, *op. cit.*, p. 158, note 126.

[170] Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Here Brunner admits that he may have fostered this false equation by the phrase "Christian *theologia naturalis*" in the first edition of *Natur und Gnade*.

[171] Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, *op. cit.*, p. 70. "The Reformers' *theologia naturalis* consists in the view that apart from Christ man inevitably conceives the pagan idea of God; this view, again, is based upon the Scriptural doctrine of the revelation in the Creation." *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[172] Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, *op. cit.*, p. 235. For further material on Brunner's disagreement with Barth, cf. *Man in Revolt*, *op. cit.*, pp. 527-41.

It is Barth's concern to reject any doctrine that teaches a similarity or likeness between Creator and creature. For this reason he opposes vehemently the classic analogia entis of Catholic theology.[173] Brunner, however, does not agree completely. He agrees with Barth that the analogia entis by itself is not sufficient for any natural theology. Left to himself man understands such an analogy in a pantheistic sense.[174] And yet Brunner will not admit that the analogia entis is specifically Roman Catholic. Rather it expresses a phase of the Imago Dei and of the revelation in Creation. The created bears the stamp of the Creator.[175] Going even farther, Brunner holds that there is an element of truth in a graduated hierarchy of being. Created existence is a whole which has been created in stages with man as the summit. It is only the scholastic argument that deprecates the lower stages which Brunner sees as dangerous.[176] The correct knowledge of such a likeness between Creator and creature is only possible through revelation.

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[173]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 175. He refers to Barth's Kirchliche Dogmatik, I, 1, third edition, Preface, p. 8.

[174]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 80.

[175]Ibid., p. 67.

[176]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 414.

Also here God must be in the picture.[177]

As much as Brunner stresses the fact of the Imago Dei and the revelation in Creation, he retains the dialectic of sin. As much as he sympathizes with an element of truth in the analogia entis, he retains the dialectic of man's creatureliness. The distinction between Creator and creature must remain all along the way. Creation does mean that there is a gulf between Creator and creature.

> Now this is the first and the fundamental thing which can be said about man: He is a creature, and as such he is separated by an abyss from the Divine manner of being.[178]

Brunner rejects unqualifiedly the viae of Neoplatonism that lead from man to God. Such belong to a natural theology which Brunner wishes to condemn as vehemently as Barth does.[179] Even the most moderate systems of Idealism must also be rejected because ultimately they end in the identity of the human spirit with the divine spirit.[180] God's sovereign Lordship is very real. Brunner writes that the parable of the

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[177]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 176f. For a penetrating critique of the Barth-Brunner controversy in which Brunner is rated over Barth cf. Paul Lehmann, "Barth and Brunner: The Dilemma of the Protestant Mind," Journal of Religion, XX (April, 1940), 136-40. Lehmann believes that Brunner is more consistently dialectic than Barth.

[178]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 90.

[179]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 243ff. Brunner says that the via eminentiae were followed especially by the Protestant scholastics. He refers to Hollaz' Examen, p. 190.

[180]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 353.

Potter in Isaiah 28:16 and Jeremiah 18:6

> ....expresses the absolute right of God to dispose of His creature as He chooses. The creature has no right to claim anything over against God; He may do with it what He wills. He does not have to account for His actions to anyone. God is the Lord, and His authority knows no limits.[181]

Faith removes the contradiction in man between his false self and his real self. Faith retraces the whole false path to the beginning and then obeys the original Word of God.[182] Here the Gospel of Jesus Christ plays a decisive part. "We need Christ the Mediator in order to be able to know and recognize the Lord God as Lord."[183] The atonement is the rediscovery of man's original position in his restored position in God.[184] This is not the place to enter upon Brunner's doctrine of redemption. The thing to note here is that even in faith there is no removal of the distinction between Creator and creature. Rather it is the enlightened Christian who will not fall into the error of

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[181]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit.

[182]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 481. Although Brunner would surely object, and with some justice, to having his doctrine of faith called anthropocentric, yet it is still true that faith for him is a doing rather than a receiving. Cf. Revelation and Reason, op. cit., p. 35 and 39.

[183]Emil Brunner, The Mediator, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), c.1947, p. 592.

[184]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 491.

deifying the creature.[185] It is in faith where the renunciation of false independence and the abdication of self take place.

> But where the power of sin has been broken, and faith has taken its place, man abandons his egocentric view of himself and becomes theocentric; his autonomous existence becomes theonomous; once more man is living by the Word of God, in which he finds the basis of his true being.[186]

Even in the revelation in glory where the Christian will be drawn into the inner being of God, the relation is still only one of fellowship, not of identity.[187]

Brunner's doctrine of Creation runs through his entire system. In all the areas of theology that he treats there are constant references to God as the Creator, to man as the creature of God, to God's purposes in Creation. The sovereignty of the Creator Lord, the sinfulness and yet the responsibility of man, God's revelation in Creation are not just isolated _loci_ in a dogmatical system, but rather focal

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[185] Brunner, _Revelation and Reason_, _op. cit._, p. 77. Brunner again does not relate the fact of sin to Christian life after conversion.

[186] _Ibid._, p. 173. Brunner regards prayer as the final confutation of solipsism. But while Luther would say that prayer shows man's dependence upon God, Brunner says that communion with God established by prayer makes man truly independent. Cf. _Man in Revolt_, _op. cit._, p. 290.

[187] Brunner, _Revelation and Reason_, _op. cit._, p. 192.

points around which Brunner's dogmatical thinking revolves.[188] In the next chapter Brunner's doctrine of Creation will be compared with Martin Luther's. Here it probably is sufficient to point out that in all of his theology, including the doctrine of Creation, Brunner is a theologian who is very much interested in man as well as in God.[189] Brunner is fighting a battle on two fronts. God is transcendent, but man is responsible.

Nevertheless Brunner's doctrine of Creation is definitely theocentric. Man may be in the center of the world, but he is not the center. That center is the Word of God.[190] In this sense Brunner is also Christocentric. Revelation through this Word means the end of all self-sufficient isolation of the self. Here again Brunner asserts a theocentric theology. "It is not that you are the starting-point, and God is the End, but that God is the starting point, and you are the end

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[188]The doctrine of election also is connected to the Creation. "God the Creator does not create humanity, but He creates each individual human being separately, He has 'called thee by thy name,' He knows you 'personally,' 'specially.'" Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 322.

[189]Randall of course comments on the transcendence of God in Neo-orthodoxy in general. But it is the following statement that is significant. "But it is after all a new conception and concern with human nature that this Neo-orthodoxy expresses: it is a moral protest against the intolerable evils of modern life in time of crisis." John Herman Randall, Jr., The Making of the Modern Mind (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., c.1940), p. 539. Such a conclusion, while not wholly just, is certainly more applicable to Emil Brunner than to Karl Barth.

of the movement."[191] Faith is the force that pulls all dogmatical thinking back toward the center, namely, toward God.[192] Yet for all of this, man as the goal of Creation, man created in God's Image, man endowed with responsible existence, is very prominent in Brunner's system, not in a primary but at least in a secondary measure. How Brunner's theocentric doctrine of Creation compares with the theocentricity of Martin Luther will be the subject of the last chapter.

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[191] Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 125.

[192] "Theological thinking is a rational movement of thought, whose rational tendency at every point is continually being deflected, checked, or disturbed by faith." Ibid., p. 76.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Both Martin Luther and Emil Brunner are theologians whose doctrine of Creation stands in marked contrast to the anthropocentric theology that preceded them. Both of them reject any sort of natural link between God and man such as medieval or orthodox natural theology erected. Both uphold the sovereignty of God and the creatureliness of man, over against centuries which had humanized God and deified man. Both stress the radicalness of sin in opposition to theologians and philosophers for whom sin had become at most a moral perversion. Both claim theocentricity for their own theology and doctrine of Creation, and their followers, noting the sharp antithesis to previous anthropocentric theology, have readily granted their claim.

Nevertheless there are some differences between the theology which Luther faced and that against which Brunner was reacting. Although both the Middle Ages and the modern period were dominated by an anthropocentric view of Creation, it is nevertheless true that Brunner faced Idealism and naturalism and a watered down Ritschlian liberalism rather than Nominalism, Thomism, and the medieval caritas synthesis. As a whole the Middle Ages still stood sub specie aeternitatis, while for many modern men even the idea of the Transcendent was an unnecessary hypothesis. Although there was a humanistic natur-

alism current in the Renaissance of Luther's days, it was not the deterministic naturalism which Brunner faced in the first decades of the twentieth century. The world known to Martin Luther was avowedly Christian. Emil Brunner's world is anything but Christian. These historical observations make several conclusions inescapable. To produce an objective comparison between Luther and Brunner is not an easy matter. Where differences between them do arise, the possibility must be kept in mind that the difference exists because each man was reacting against a slightly different antithesis. This is not to propose a standard of historical relativism. For both Luther and Brunner are Christian theologians who use the Bible as the source of divine revelation. Ultimately the Scriptures and the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins which is the core of the Scriptures must be the judge.

It is of course impossible to ask Luther what he thinks of Brunner. But the Zuerich theologian leaves noone in doubt concerning what he thinks about Luther. Concerning anthropology, Brunner writes: "I learned most from Luther, for I came to see that in this question, of all the Reformers his teaching is the most Scriptural and the most profound."[1] Brunner's fondness for Luther is evident through what Koeberle

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[1]Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1947), p. 10.

has called "a mighty rushing stream of Luther quotations."[2] Although Brunner is particularly fond only of certain Luther quotations,[3] it is apparent by a quick glance through the footnotes of any of Brunner's volumes how much more he owes to Luther than to the master of Reformed theology, John Calvin. Even on points where Brunner takes exception to Luther, he wants to have Luther agree with him.[4] If he can, he tries to harmonize the Reformer's position with his own.[5] Even Brunner's controversial exposition of "truth as encounter" owes something to Luther.[6]

Yet Emil Brunner does not want to be a Luther scholar who repristinates sixteenth century theology. In one breath he can say that he must sit at the feet of the Reformers, and in

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[2]Adolf Koeberle, The Quest for Holiness, translated from the third German edition by John C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1936), p. 108.

[3]One such quotation is: "Der Mensch hat immer Gott oder Abgott." Another such favorite is: "Christus dominus et rex scripturae." Cf. Brunner, Man in Revolt, op. cit., p. 67. Also Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1946), p. 276.

[4]So on the question of determinism.

[5]In order to show (as his thesis holds) that God's holiness and His love are the same, Brunner equates God's glory and His holiness. Then he quotes Luther: "Faith gives glory to God." Cf. Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1950), p. 169.

[6]Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), p. 19.

the next he says:

> ....yet we cannot ignore the fact that we think differently and teach differently from them and that we teach differently because we ought to do so, and we cannot avoid it.[7]

Also a Lutheran will admit that there is some truth in this statement. Few Lutherans would follow Luther blindly in everything he wrote about Creation. But it is not only in exegetical niceties where Brunner parts company with Luther, but in such vital areas as sin, man, and Scriptural authority. Despite all his admiration for Luther, Brunner nevertheless operates with the traditional Reformed emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the tendency toward Nestorianism, the tendency to turn the Gospel into Law, and the lack of appreciation for the struggle of sin in the new man. Despite all his abhorrence for the nineteenth century, Brunner has inherited its prime concern for man. Despite his utter rejection of philosophy, Brunner shows his sympathies for Idealism. And while Luther was no systematic theologian, Brunner's calling in theology is to systematize. All these factors make an objective comparison of the two even more difficult. But that is the task at hand.

In speaking about the Creator Lord Luther and Brunner stand on common ground. God is not any speculative Absolute but the living Lord. However, when they take up the work the Creator performs, then there is only partial agreement between Luther and Brunner. Common to both is a religious approach.

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[7]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, op. cit., p. 67.

to Creation. What is important is the relationship set up between the Creator and His creatures. But on the question of the historical in Creation Brunner rejects Luther's view. For the Reformer there is no division between historical beginnings and theological origins. For Brunner there is. He holds that such a division must be made. For then theology will avoid the irrepressible conflict between what Genesis says about man's beginning and what modern science says.

Luther would not have understood such a division between the historical and the religious side of Creation. God was the Creator of the total man. He was the God of the "beginnings" also. By limiting the Christian doctrine of Creation to super-historical origins, Brunner shows a tendency that negates an emphasis on the total man. If his views are taken in earnest, man's life is divided into historical and theological levels that are not vitally linked by the Word of God who is both the medium of Creation "in the beginning" and the ground of every man's existence today. Brunner of course looks back upon centuries of wrangling between theology and science, and he wants to keep each in its limits. But in trying to do this Brunner concedes too much to evolutionary science, especially as to its finality. He ought to be more aware as a theologian of what Randall as a philosopher thinks is true.

> Scientific theory and concepts, it is only too apparent, develop and change in time; and he would be hardy today who maintained that any of the present ideas express 'the way things really are.'[8]

The area where there is most marked dissimilarity between Luther and Brunner is in their doctrine of Man. Yet even here they are agreed that the total man stands under the dominion of sin. But while Luther's primary word about man was that he was a sinful creature, Brunner's is that man is created in the Image of God. Brunner's watchword is responsibility, even in sin. Against any naturalistic determinism Brunner wants to preserve the humanum, man's theological existence, which remains even when man has perverted this existence. No doubt this is the reason that Brunner has so little to say about the devil and about evil as controlling factors in men's lives. Luther had much to say about this, but had always continued to assert God's Lordship and man's creatureliness.

Noone can fault Brunner for taking a firm stand against determinism. Man must be called to account. Nevertheless the fact is that Brunner often vitiates the condemning Law by speaking of the humanum at such length and with such praise that men might easily forget its perversion and see it as some good that remains in man. Luther had been at a loss

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[8]John Herman Randall, Jr., The Making of the Modern Mind (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., c.1940), p. 478.

to know just what the Imago Dei was, but Brunner builds his entire doctrine of Man around it. And he does this not from the vantage point of the renewed image in Christ, but from the Imago of Creation. Because of this approach, Brunner must amplify to a considerable degree what the Bible says about the Image of God in Creation. If, however, one agrees that the Imago Dei means responsible existence, then Brunner's assumption that the Imago is not lost is correct. Luther preferred to stay with Scripture and its Christocentric habit of seeing the Image of God only as restored by faith in Jesus Christ.

When Brunner speaks of the Christian in whom the contradiction of sin is overcome, there is often a bland unawareness of the battle between the flesh and the spirit that still goes on. Sin is not the radical evil also for the Christian that it was for Luther. Brunner has neglected the conflict that exists in the Christian who is simul iustus et peccator. For him the reason of the Christian is apparently free of the self-sufficiency that characterizes the reason of the unbeliever. This is certainly true, but only in the realm of the Gospel, and of the new man who lives by faith. Brunner, it is true, stresses Christ as Mediator and faith in Him, but faith becomes a doing of obedience, and not as in Luther the obedience to the Gospel where faith says "yes" to the Word of forgiveness.

These observations hold to some extent for what Brunner says about the world. For Luther the world was corrupted

through sin, and yet he affirmed the world by giving honor to the lowliest of callings. Brunner denies that the world is fallen. He maintains that his position is not only Scriptural but also in accord with his basic premise of responsible existence. Therefore, in his doctrine of truth Brunner can say that there is no conflict between faith-truth and world-truth. The world is no longer a realm of sin and death or a kingdom of Satan as it was for the writers of the Gospels or for Martin Luther. At the same time that Brunner has separated the earthly world from the spiritual realm he has also brought them together into his system. By doing the first Brunner has again divided man, whose life is part of the world. By doing the second Brunner has subtly introduced the Law (the realm outside of Christ) into the Gospel (the realm of faith).

On the question of Creator-creature relationships Luther and Brunner are again quite close. At any rate Brunner's position in his controversy with Karl Barth is much closer to Luther than Barth's is. Luther certainly did not teach a scholastic natural theology, but he did teach a revelation in Creation which in every instance led to idolatry for the natural man. However, Brunner makes more of the revelation in Creation than Luther did. But the greatest dissimilarity between Luther and Brunner lies in their approach to revelation and its effect on Creator-creature relationships. Even when writing about the revelation in Creation Luther pointed to

the Deus revelatus et incarnatus. Only in Jesus Christ was God's heart revealed. Only by faith in the Savior could men find forgiveness and intimate communion with God. And only then could the Christian see God's face also in Creation. For Brunner the revelation in Creation, which Luther regarded as Law except for the Christian, is God's call to responsibility, a call of love different only in form from God's call through Christ. Although men would know God as Lord only through Christ, Brunner has actually amplified the Gospel to include God's revelation in Creation.

Can it be said then that Luther and Brunner, with all their similarities and dissimilarities, both have a theocentric doctrine of Creation? That has been the conclusions of the preceding chapters. It is true that Brunner's doctrine of the Imago Dei tempts one to label his doctrine of Creation anthropocentric. But even then man remains God's creature, just as he does in the Gospels and Luther. Koeberle[9] has written that all attempts to worship God have been predicated on the belief that access to God at last must be attained because the separating interval is not of a qualitative but only of a quantitative nature. This is anthropocentric theology, but this is not a description of Luther's or of Brunner's doctrine of Creation.

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[9]Koeberle, op. cit., p. 18.

God is the center of heaven and earth. He is the Creator. He is and He remains man's Lord.

And yet Luther's theocentric doctrine of Creation is different from Brunner's. Luther's doctrine of Creation is Christocentric. He rejected the God of the philosophers because such an abstraction obscured the Gospel. He does not speak of man's natural birth without speaking of his rebirth through the Gospel. Although he admits that God is the Deus revelatus in Creation, he denies that God's life can be known there. It is only by rejoicing in Christ that Luther finds joy in the world.[10] Hence Creation was not the primary article of faith for Luther. He viewed Creation Christologically, and that meant from the standpoint of the Gospel, from the cross of Christ. Luther put the humbling, forgiving Word of the cross in the center of his theology. That meant of course that God was there--also in the doctrine of Creation.

In a sense Brunner's doctrine of Creation is also Christocentric. The Word of God is the medium of Creation and the ground of all existence. And Christ as Mediator is the final revelation of the Creator's Lordship. Yet for Brunner the Word is more a Word of responsibility than the Word of forgiveness spoken in Jesus Christ. Brunner certainly views Creation theologically, but not always Christologically. Often man's

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[10] Koeberle writes: "Only where deus in mundo incarnatus is loved is it also possible amare mundum in deo." Cf. Koeberle, op. cit., p. 127.

natural birth, his creation in the Imago Dei, is treated apart from the Logos ensarkos. The Word is very much in evidence, but not always the Word who became flesh to die so that man by faith can be born anew. And even where Jesus Christ does step into Brunner's thinking on Creation, the Christocentric emphasis does not entwine itself around the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins. The Gospel becomes more of a call to responsibility than a gift of God's free love. Brunner put the Word and Christ into the center of his theology. But this unfortunately does not always mean--at least in Brunner's doctrine of Creation--that the God who is love in Christ is the center of his theology.

Real theocentric theology is Christocentric theology, and real Christocentric theology is theology rooted in and revolving around the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins. The doctrine of Creation found in the four Gospels is theocentric in that sense. Both the Middle Ages and the modern period lost to some degree the theocentric-Christocentric-Gospel emphasis in Creation. But in Martin Luther there is a theocentric doctrine of Creation that revolves around Christ and His Gospel. Emil Brunner's doctrine of Creation echoes the great Reformer in many instances, but contemporary theology will not find in Brunner a modern restatement of the doctrine of Creation that retains the full dimension of theocentric emphasis found in Luther.

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