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The Principles and Teachings of the Dialectical Theology

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The Principles and Teachings of the Dialectical Theology.

Those who need to inform themselves on the teachings of the dialectical theology and on the claim that the application of its principles will effect the needed reformation of Christian theology and the Christian Church, will find in E. Brunner's *The Mediator* [1] the fullest presentation of these teachings and principles that has so far appeared. While Karl Barth and E. Brunner, the two outstanding leaders of this school of theology, frequently clash, they are agreed on certain fundamentals. Let Brunner's book therefore, pending the completion of Barth's Dogmatics, serve as a fairly authoritative presentation of what the dialectical theology stands for.[2] If in the fol-

1) *The Mediator.* A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith. By Emil Brunner, Professor of Theology in Zurich. Translated by Olive Wyon. — *"Jesus Christ, in His infinite love, has become what we are, in order that He may make us entirely what He is."* (Irenaeus.) *"Nostra assumsit, ut conferret nobis sua."* (Luther.) — New York, The Macmillan Company. 1934. 621 pages, 8½×5⅞. Price, $6.50. The German edition was published in 1927. — *Christendom*, a new quarterly review, says: "Ten major works by Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Rudolph Bultmann have been translated into English, and approximately fifteen books dealing with their theology have been published in America and England. . . . Barthianism will continue to be both thought-provoking and spirit-awakening for its American readers. . . . All the more important is it that the divergent, if parallel, developments of Barthianism continue to be made available for American readers." (1935, p. 190 ff.) "One cannot escape the impression that Barthian theology must have exerted an incalculable influence upon the younger generation of Lutheran pastors and theologians, practically in all countries." (*Lutheran Witness*, 1935, p. 420, on the Third Lutheran World Convention, Paris.)

2) "Though the dialectic theology can no longer be understood as a homogeneous unit in all things, it has even now a common denominator in its emphasis on the transcendence of God, in its Biblicism and religious pessimism, etc. . . . Even Emil Brunner, *the most systematic* thinker among the dialectic theologians, has let his former connection with Karl Barth lapse. Not only has he become a friend of the First Century Fel-

lowing discussion a point or two should happen to be introduced which are not generally accepted by the dialecticalists, please label that section "dialectical theology according to Brunner."

The dialectical theology maintains — and here it is in accord with genuine Lutheran and Reformed theology — the doctrine of sin. It teaches the enormity of sin and the fearful wrath of God against the sinner. Brunner declares war on Modernism for its denial of these truths. The greater part of modern theology is dominated by Schleiermacher and Ritschl. And "it is generally admitted that Schleiermacher's conception of sin is quite extraordinarily superficial" (p. 132). And Ritschl teaches that "sin *cannot* be anything else than ignorance. . . . The idea of punishment is rejected, because it contains a forensic element mingled with the religious element, and the idea of the divine wrath is rejected as inconsistent with the love of God. . . . The only thing which Christ has to remove is, not any possible real opposition of sinful guilt, but our ignorance of the divine love, that is, of the divine will and purpose" (p. 137 f.). Add to this the influence of the idealist conception of Immanence: "The world, and man in particular, is in the depth of its being divine. This conviction colors the whole of the modern outlook" (p. 122). And we get this: "The thought of the present day is thoroughly Pelagian. . . . The idea of the divine wrath is tabu" (p. 138 f.). Over against this fundamental error Brunner stresses the Law, which reveals the sinfulness of man and the wrath of the holy God. That needs to be stressed to-day. Our Pelagian generation needs to be told: "Guilt means hostility on God's part" (p. 518). "Reconciliation presupposes enmity on both sides; that is, that man is the enemy of God and that God is the enemy of man" (p. 516). "That guilt is a real break, and indeed one which man can never mend, is expressed by the statement that 'God is angry,' 'God will punish'" (p. 148). "The Jew knows that a general statement 'God forgives because He is a kindly Father' would be a blasphemy, a mockery of the holiness of God" (p. 537). "Only the knowledge that we must be 'bought with a price' which is so costly breaks down the pride which believes that in reality we are not so bad, that at bottom we are all right." "Luther

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lowship Movement, working side by side with Frank Buchman, but he has tried to find a point of contact for the theology of revelation with science and practical sociology. In both instances he parts company with Barth." (Adolf Keller, *Religion and Revolution*, pp. 101. 104.) Barth may not go so far as Brunner, but he, too, permits science to influence his attitude towards the Bible. He accepts the findings of the higher critics. He does not hesitate to criticize the Bible. *"Die Bibel ist fuer die Schule und in der Schule eine Verlegenheit, ein Fremdkoerper. . . . Abraham, der als hoechste Probe seines Glaubens Gott seinen Sohn opfern will, . . . Elia, der die 450 Baalspfaffen schlachtet am Bach Kison, das sind alles nicht gerade sehr loebliche Vorbilder."* (*Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*, p. 25.) More of this later.

recognizes quite clearly that this is the very thing which constitutes the distinction between the Christian faith and the religions of the world. 'For I have said often that faith alone is not enough for God, but that the cost also must be there. The Turks and the Jews also believe in God, but without means and cost' (Erlangen Ed., 12, 339 [St. Louis Ed., 1, 1085])" (pp. 609. 453). "There is something infinite about sin" (p. 482). "The fact that the whole of eternity must be set in motion for his sake shows him the depth of his need" (p. 312). "Knowledge of sin — genuine horror of sin — is the presupposition of faith in the Mediator" (p. 150). "Where the idea of the wrath of God is ignored, there also will there be no understanding of the central conception of the Gospel, the uniqueness of the revelation in the Mediator" (p. 152).

Brunner stresses, in accord with Lutheran and Reformed theology, the "two natures" doctrine. "Christ, who is He? The doctrine of the Church replies: 'He is true God and true man, and for this very reason He is the Mediator" (p. 235). "The present exposition of this theme is deliberately and uncompromisingly opposed to the modern conception of this dogma [of the divine nature of Christ] introduced by Ritschl and Harnack" (p. 249). Harnack, "in whose teaching the spirit of rationalism is far more evident than it is in that of Ritschl himself," grants us the right to call Jesus "the Son of God," for He calls Himself "the Son of God," but He did that only because He knew that He occupied such a unique position, that of priority in history, that of a discoverer, and that of a unique example; He is more than a prophet, for He has proved that He "exemplifies His message in His own person." So we may still call Him "the Son of God," for "He has not yielded His place to any one else, and still to-day He gives meaning and a worthy end to the life of man" (p. 65 f.). Over against these blasphemies, clothed in various forms by the various schools of Modernism, Brunner unfolds the theme "The central truth of the Christian faith is this, that the eternal Son of God took upon Himself our humanity, not that the man Jesus acquired divinity" (p. 316). "All that I now have to do is to show briefly that behind the language used by modern theology, which is modeled as far as possible on the language of the Bible, there lies simply this general modern conception of Christ, which is a contradiction of the Christian conception" (p. 90).

This God-man, further, redeemed the sinful world through His vicarious atonement. Modern theology, denying the guilt of sin and the deity of Jesus, does not believe in *the* Mediator. It has many mediators. Schleiermacher calls those men who have the power of imparting the sense of the truth of religion in a special way "heroes" or "mediators" (p. 50), "stimulators," men who awaken the religious feeling in the hearts of others" (p. 92). But "to be

a Christian means precisely to trust in *the* Mediator" (p. 40), His vicarious atonement. "The idea of substitution gathers up all these elements into one. If the Cross really means the dealing of God with humanity, then we cannot interpret it in any other way than in the sense of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. The Passion of this Man possesses divine significance if it is not merely human suffering, but a divine act" (p. 513). And this satisfaction was rendered for all. "If Christ dies vicariously, then He dies for all" (p. 506). "God deals with the whole of humanity, because from the very outset His will of love is universal" (p. 321). Thus God is reconciled in Christ to man. "'Outside Christ' God is really angry, but 'in Christ' God is 'pure love'" (p. 519). What, then, is justification? "Righteousness is something which is given to us as a free gift, what *I* ought to do done by another and reckoned to me as though I had done it" (p. 406). "Justification means this miracle, that Christ takes our place and we take His" (p. 524). "All this, however, is only true if we take the word *faith* in its fullest sense, and this means faith in justification through faith alone, and thus faith in the Mediator. For this is justification, that we have no good thing in ourselves, but that whatever we have must first of all have been received; that righteousness is not our own, but the righteousness of Christ, which is made our own through the Word of Grace" (p. 608). Brunner adopts the "well-known phrases *sola gratia, sola fide, soli Deo gloria*" (p. 295).[3]

There are other truths which our Pelagian generation needs to be told. It must learn that faith is in no respect the product of man, but solely and entirely the gift of God. Brunner tells the Pelagian: "This is what it means to believe, that we have nothing more to examine and weigh up, that even our 'yes' cannot be regarded as our own choice, but simply and solely as God's own speech" (?) "and God's gift. Faith, the power to believe and not merely the content of faith, is the gift of God; this is the testimony of the Bible" (p. 283). "Neither speculation, idealism, mysticism,

3) We thus find that Brunner aims to enunciate the Scriptural doctrine of the vicarious satisfaction and justification by faith. In order, however, to evaluate his teaching properly, we need to examine what "faith" and, particularly, what "Word of Grace" mean in his system. That will be done later. At this time we would only call attention to the following statements: "We must admit that in general the theologians of the Reformation preferred to regard the Incarnation from the point of view of the doctrine of satisfaction" (p. 403). The point of this implied criticism of the theologians of the Reformation is seen when these statements are studied: "The existence of the God-man, as such, constitutes revelation and salvation. This is why He is called the Mediator, not primarily on account of His work, but because of what He is in Himself." "His being is itself redemption" (p. 402 ff). "The doctrine of the Church has emphasized almost exclusively the ideas of satisfaction and penalty. This one-sidedness is to be deplored" (p. 458).

nor rational moralism see this gulf. They do not take sin seriously." The Pelagian does not know what original sin means and therefore cannot see "that in his own strength man cannot possibly move towards God. . . . Man cannot lift a finger to help himself. . . . Outside the Christian religion all movement is a self-movement of man towards the unmoved Deity" (p. 291 f.).[4] The Pelagian is also told to ponder this thought: "This impiety (the teaching of the Enlightenment: 'Of course God will forgive! How could He do otherwise since He is so kindly!') is not modified if we say: 'God forgives if we repent'; for this simply amounts to a denial of guilt. What has my present repentance to do with my previous guilt? And it also amounts to a denial of sin; for the sinner can never repent in proportion to his sin. There are no human conditions in which we have the right to expect that God will forgive as a matter of course" (p. 447). "'God forgives every one who repents'— this view is based on the assumption that such people exist, and also, that neither guilt nor the will of God to punish is real" (p. 472).

There is much in the dialectical theology which — in itself, apart from its setting — will be accepted by the Lutheran. There is much more which he will have to reject. That is, for one thing, the Reformed element. Adolf Keller declares that it is the merit of the dialectical theology that it calls the Lutherans back to Luther and the Reformed Church back to Calvin (*Karl Barth and Christian Unity*, p. 81). As to the latter, Brunner has retained quite a bit of Reformed theology. So much so that, when A. Keller uses more exact language, he says: "The dialectical theology of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, . . . represents the reawakening of the spirit of the Reformation in the *Reformed* ranks. . . . In it present-day Neo-Calvinism has reached a culminating point" (*Religion and Revolution*, p. 60). Brunner rejects "the fatal doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*,"[5] because, forsooth, "Biblical criticism — so it seems

4) In this connection an important truth needs to be told the advocates of free will: "This is the point at which the Christian faith and idealism part company: the doctrine of the will as not free *and yet* responsible" (p. 129).

5) Paul Althaus (Lutheran) remarks: "I very much appreciate that he [Brunner] nowhere in his book directly gives expression to the *Extra Calvinisticum* (as Barth does in his book *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes*, p. 268 ff.). However, what else can he really mean when he insists that the Reformed Christology is superior to the Lutheran Christology, but just this *Extra*, the *finitum incapax infiniti*, the Reformed negation of the *genus maiestaticum*?" (*Theologische Aufsaetze*, II, p. 181.) Althaus himself rejects the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*. "I am on this point in accord with Brunner." (*L. c.*) Only, though both Christologies are fundamentally wrong, "the Lutheran theory is better than the Reformed theory," — because the Lutheran theory "speaks the language of *faith*, the Reformed that of *reason*"! (*L. c.*)

to me — has made the Reformed view the only possible one" (p. 342 f.). Jesus "the man was neither omniscient nor omnipotent" (p. 364). The statement: "Even as a human being, Jesus as a man like ourselves, is subject to the Law" (p. 363) is a corollary of the Reformed view of the Personal Union. Christ's "descent into hell" must be interpreted figuratively (p. 573.). Worse than this, Brunner's theology is thoroughly Calvinistic in stressing the sovereignty of God to the detriment of the grace of God in Christ. For instance: "Melanchthon's statement *'Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere'* contains the germ of the whole anthropocentric point of view of later Lutheranism, and this simply means of religious egoism. Man occupies the center of the picture with his need for salvation, not God and His glory, His revelation. . . . This is not the view of the Bible. God reveals Himself for His own sake, in order to create His kingdom, in order to manifest His glory, in order to restore His own order, His dominion. The Bible is the book in which the glory of God is the first concern, and the salvation of man comes second" (p. 407 f.). The Bible does not speak thus. It certainly insists on the *"soli Deo gloria,"* and we Lutherans love this phrase. But the Bible shows us the glory of God in the grace of God; the Gospel of the Bible is "the Gospel of the grace of God," Acts 20, 24. The theology of the Bible is Christocentric, not theocentric in the Calvinistic sense.[6] In this connection the legalism characterizing the Reformed theology must be pointed out. On the last page of Brunner's book we find the statement "This is why we said the Word of Christ is simply the First Commandment." He said it on page 593: "The message of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is understood and taken seriously only when it is understood as the exposition of the First Commandment." And: "All is not well with the Church when . . . she says that this commandment is only Law and what matters most is that the Gospel shall be preached. There is no other Gospel than this 'Law' itself" (p. 591). So what becomes of the central doctrine of Protestantism, of the Reformation, of the Bible? This: "How hopelessly men must have misunderstood the meaning of the Reformation if they have not seen that the doctrine of justification through faith alone does not mean merely comfort and reassurance for the burdened conscience, but *above all"* (italics our own) " the creation of a new moral individual" (p. 600). Finally, on the all-important matter of the means of grace Brunner says nothing. All of this will be discussed more fully later on.

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6) "It seems to me that Barthianism is essentially a repristination of the soul of Calvinism. His emphasis is on God the wholly Other; our emphasis is on God come hither in Jesus Christ. The soul of Calvinism is God. The soul of Lutheranism is God's love in Christ." (*Luth. Church Quarterly*, July, 1935, p. 293.)

The dialectical theology operates with a number of specific Reformed ideas. But worse than this, it has taken over quite a bit of modernistic theology. We cannot list everything, but instance, first, that it has cast overboard the doctrine of the verbal, plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture. Brunner faults the Protestant Christians for their "orthodox emphasis on the Bible. Orthodoxy had placed the Bible itself, as a book, in the place which should have been reserved for the fact of revelation. . . . In traditional Christian doctrine these two great forces, the infallibility of the Bible and the revelation of God in Christ, had been coupled together too closely. Hence the destruction of the dogma of verbal inspiration, with its emphasis upon an infallible Book, by the modern process of research in natural and historical science inevitably carried away with it the whole Christian faith in revelation, the faith in the Mediator" (p. 34). He does not deplore the fact that "the orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration has been finally destroyed" (p. 105). Freed from "the incubus of the old mechanical theory of inspiration" (p. 181), we can freely accept the results of the modern process of research in the sciences. And this denial of the doctrine of the verbal inspiration does not put one into fundamental opposition to the Reformers, for "the doctrine of verbal inspiration was not the basic support of the classical Protestant witness" (p. 105). They did indeed teach this doctrine, but Brunner is willing to condone that. In the days of the fathers the doctrine of verbal inspiration was "the only intelligible form in which the Bible" could "be described as the Word of God." It was "an erroneous form." It was a "form of little faith." We can no longer make use of it. But the fathers must not be blamed too severely if they thought that only under that form the concept "Word of God" could be retained (p. 326). — Barth on the inspiration of the Bible: *"Die literarischen Denkmaeler einer vorderasiatischen Stammesreligion des Altertums und die einer Kultreligion der hellenistischen Epoche, das ist die Bibel. Also ein menschliches Dokument wie ein anderes, das auf eine besondere Beachtung und Betrachtung einen apriorischen dogmatischen Anspruch nicht machen kann. . . . Die biblischen Dokumente haben Raender, und an diesen Raendern kommen die Unterschiede gegenueber der Haltung anderer Menschen ins Fliessen. . . . Moegen sie Propheten sein, in der fruchtbaren Mitte der biblischen Linie, oder Priester, mehr an den Raendern, dort, wo die Bibel aufhoert, Bibel zu sein, moegen sie es in Psalmen oder Spruechen sagen oder im behaglichen Strom historischer Erzaehlung, das Thema ist in allen Variationen gleich erstaunlich." "Die Bergpredigt, in der Menschen selig gepriesen werden, die es gar nicht gibt."* (*Das Wort Gottes und die Theo-*

logie, p. 76 f. 61.) On page 196 he uses the term *"die an sich profane Bibel"* — in itself the Bible is a profane, non-sacred book.[7]

Brunner carefully refrains from designating the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God. He has a liking for the term *tradition*. He has the New Testament in mind when he says: "This does not mean that the literal words of the Pauline tradition are beyond the reach of criticism, for this tradition must be compared with other traditions. . . . Thus the astonishing thing is not the unreliability of the tradition, but, on the contrary, its reliability, so that even in its later strata (our present Matthew and Luke) it has preserved, etc." (p. 544 f.); "the primitive Christian tradition" (p. 558); "the whole of the Christian tradition" (p. 369). Other terms by which he defines the New Testament are: "The New Testament testimony of the apostolic churches" (p. 536). "We have no other picture of the life of Jesus than that which the Church composed, based on the testimony of those who had actually experienced the Easter fact" (p. 574).

Since the Bible is not inspired of God, it is not altogether reliable; it contains errors, and the holy writers are not in perfect agreement. "In spite of the uncertainty of the tradition, etc." (p. 369). "According to the tradition, which is here not at all improbable, etc." (p. 373). "Most probably Jesus made such statements about Himself" (p. 375). "The Christian religion is not disturbed by the fact that . . . isolated facts in the statements of Scripture must be corrected by science" (p. 167). "For historical reasons there is *in essentials*" (italics ours) "nothing to be said against the synoptic narrative" (p. 426). "There are undeniable inconsistencies in the tradition. . . . Whoever asserts that the New Testament gives us a definite consistent account of the resurrection is either ignorant or unconscientious. It is impossible to coordinate the different narratives into a unity, and these inconsistencies do not lie merely on the surface. . . . Faith gives us no reason to state that the testimony to the physical resurrection of the Lord is bound up with credible testimony of the empty grave" (p. 577). And since Brunner does not believe that the holy writers spoke by inspiration, he does not feel that he is irreverent in criticizing their style in this manner:

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7) In rejecting verbal inspiration, the dialectical theologians occupy common ground with the whole of modern theology. *"Die neuzeitlike Auffassung der Bibel hat den Gedanken der sogenannten Verbalinspiration abgestossen. Das gilt nicht nur vom Rationalismus seit bald zweihundert Jahren. . . . Es gilt auch von der gesamten offenbarungsglaeubigen Theologie des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, die auf den Charakter wissenschaftlicher, das heisst, sachgemaesser Forschung das noetige Gewicht legt."* (E. Schaeder, *Glaubenslehre fuer Gebildete*, S. 18.) So it need not surprise us to find that the Neo-Lutherans of Germany and of America are not turning against Brunner on this score. The fact of the matter is indeed that because of the spiritual relationship evidenced in this point they are making common cause with the dialectical theology on other points, too.

"To-day we would express this" (the mythological catastrophic images of the New Testament) *"in a rather less naive manner,* but we would not essentially express it any better" (p. 424).

Men are telling us that the dialectical theology is taking us back to the Bible, "bringing back German theology from speculative labyrinths to the Bible itself" (*Luth. Church Quarterly,* July, 1935, p. 293). Yes, Barth and Brunner are severely castigating various aberrations of modern theology, but on the vital point of the verbal inspiration of the Bible they are in accord with the moderns. The Bible which they offer us has been divested of its unique character. Nor are they "calling the Lutherans back to Luther and the Reformed Church back to Calvin." The old Calvinists would not have permitted Brunner to sign their confession, for their confession states: "Under the name of Holy Scripture, *or the Word of God written,* are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments. . . . All which are given by inspiration of God" (Westminster Confession, chap. I).[8] And the Luther whom Brunner is bringing back is not the Luther who declared: "Scripture has been written by the Holy Ghost. . . . Holy Scripture is the Word of God, written and (let me express it thus) lettered [*gebuchstabet*] and cast into letters" (IX, 1770). "Not only the words, but also the form of speech which the Holy Ghost and Scripture employs, is divine" (IV, 1960). "Not one tittle, much less one word, was spoken by the Holy Ghost idly." (Cp. *Apology,* IV, § 107: "Do they think that these words fell inconsiderately from the Holy Ghost?") "A carnal mind makes little of this psalm or thinks that it is nothing more than the product of pious David; that is the view of the blind Jews; but David refuses to have these words ascribed to himself. They are sweet, lovely

8) The review of Brunner's book in *Bibliotheca Sacra,* July—September, 1935, is right in characterizing the dialectical theology as a *"Neo-Calvinistic movement."* Amplifying that phrase, it says: "Prof. H. R. Mackintosh, D. D., Ph. D., of New College, Edinburgh, writes the other foreword to the work. He, too, differs from the views expressed by the author, but says: 'I should find it hard to name any recent major work in its field which is comparable with *The Mediator* in direct relevance and power. The reader comes to feel that the Bible is behind this man's argument.' . . . When the reader has concluded the careful reading of this work and has noticed the outspoken scorn of the author as respects the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the sarcastic dismissal of any believing consideration of the Scriptural evidences for the fact of the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus as an inherent part of the Scriptural doctrine of the incarnation, . . . he feels like saying to the writers of the forewords, 'Almost thou persuadest me' that this work is a Scriptural setting forth of the subject of the Mediator. There are admirable presentations of certain aspects of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. But how can any work which fails totally in the above-mentioned particulars claim any *adequacy* in its exposition of our Lord's person and work? And how can such a book produce the impression that *the Bible is behind this man's arguments?"* (P. 355.)

'psalms of Israel' (he says); however, I did not write them, but 'the Spirit of the Lord spake by me'" (III, 1894 f.).

Next, Brunner has adopted to a great extent the Biblical criticism of Modernism. He cannot well do otherwise. The Bible is in his view a product of man and must therefore submit to be censored by science both as to its composition and statements. Certain statements of Scripture need to be corrected by science (p. 167). Brunner deplores "the unfortunate spectacle presented by the fact that theology, supposedly on account of its faith, closed its mind to the new scientific views" (p. 104). "This does not mean that the literal words of the Pauline tradition are beyond the reach of criticism, for this tradition must be compared with the other traditions." (P. 544.) Are the Scriptures a unity? What says the critic on the basis of science? "Historical criticism has indeed freed us forever from the conception of that unity which was the fruit of the theory of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures." (P. 172.)[9] As to the composition of the Bible, Brunner frequently takes issue with his colaborer Bultmann, an extremely negative critic (see p. 187), but he, too, applies the usual methods of modern criticism. He speaks of "the faith of the Church which is expressed in the synoptic gospels, or even in its two main sources" (p. 179) and of the tradition which "even in its later strata (our present Matthew and Luke) has preserved this existential order of the communication of the mystery" (concerning Christ's mediatorship) "so securely that at this central point it resisted for so long the temptation to allow myth or imagination to creep into the tradition" (p. 545). He tells us that "we do not know exactly what were the words He used when He said the temple would be destroyed" (p. 368). But he assures the Christian that all this need not affect his faith: "Faith may indeed be combined with criticism of the Biblical tradition about the life of Jesus, perhaps even with a *very radical form of criticism.*" (P. 168. Italics ours.) Brunner makes restrictions here. "For instance, faith cannot be combined with the kind of criticism which denies the existence of Jesus altogether or with that which represents Him as a psychopathic individual or as a proletarian revolutionary." These extreme forms of negative criticism must be ruled out. How far, then, may criticism go? "Faith can be combined with all kinds of historical criticism which do not alter the historical image of the existence of Jesus to such an extent that — so far as faith is concerned — it would

9) The unity which Brunner establishes when he declares: "For the Christian faith the Scriptures are a unity — at bottom the Old and the New Testament have only one Word of God to proclaim, and that is the message of Christ Himself. . . . It is not the letter of Scripture which is the same in the Old and the New Testament, but the Word, the Word of God," deals with a chimerical matter. The nebulous character of the "Word of God" in the dialectical theology will be shown up later.

be impossible to understand the apostolic testimony to Christ." (P. 168.) Whatever else these hazy words mean, they certainly give the critics of the Bible considerable liberty. And no one can blame the *Theological Forum* (October, 1931, p. 260) for this criticism: "The dialectical theology combines an entire submission to the Bible as God's Word with a free application of the critical methods to the Biblical text. Brunner (and Bultmann) practise this method almost as liberals." Brunner will hardly object to this judgment. He has said about the same thing: "I myself am an adherent of a rather radical school of Biblical criticism, which, for example, does not accept the Gospel of John as a historical source and which finds legends in many parts of the synoptic gospels. . . . The words of the Scriptures are human; that is, God makes use of human and, therefore, frail and fallible words of men who are liable to err. He who identifies the letters and words of the Scriptures with the word of God has never truly understood the word of God." (*The Theology of Crisis*, pp. 41. 19.) There speaks the Modernist. Brunner would cure modern theology of its illness. He calls upon it to purge itself of its Pelagianism and Unitarianism. And then, after the patient has cast out Modernism, he is given, to complete the cure, a strong dose of Modernism.[10]

Finally, the Modernism complex of Brunner's theology crops out very distinctly in the treatment of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. Brunner speaks of it rather contemptuously, of "this biological curiosity" (p. 326). He uses the same weak arguments as the Modernists. "Apart from the two passages Matt. 1, 18—25 and Luke 1, 35, in the whole of the New Testament there is no trace of this idea or of any interest in it. Both these passages, however, belong to that part of the New Testament which even the most conservative

10) Modernism censors not only statements of the Bible, but even of Jesus Himself. Brunner does the same. He is ready to say that "Jesus shared the views of His time" (p. 364). And where these views were erroneous, say, in the field of science, Jesus was not exempt from them. If Brunner had grasped the full import of the Personal Union, he could never have said that the God-man was subject to the erroneous views of His time. But the Reformed theologian, who disrupts the Personal Union, can make this statement as easily as that other one, that "Jesus, as a man like ourselves, is subject to the Law." We may remark here, by the way, that there is a natural connection between Reformed theology and Modernism with its higher criticism. From the very beginning the Reformed theologians bowed to the rationalizing spirit. And higher criticism and Modernism is the ripe fruit of rationalism. — Again: "In the literal sense the critics are indeed right: Jesus and the apostles did identify this 'soon'" (referring to the coming of Christ to Judgment) "with a point in the time series; and this definition of a special time has proved to be incorrect." (P. 421.) The plain import of this is that Jesus was mistaken in this instance. As a man, Brunner would say, He easily could be. On the other hand, Brunner insists that Jesus was not really "deceived." We shall later on submit the entire paragraph.

scientific theologian who bases his arguments on the authority of Scripture would to-day hardly dare to use as a Scriptural proof, apart from the fact that there are many indications that, even in this respect, even these early passages of Matthew and of Luke read very differently." (P. 323.) That is a very convenient way to dispose of clear statements of Scripture. Higher criticism can be depended on to help Modernism out of trouble. The Modernist further attempts to prove his case from the fact that Paul does not say "born of a virgin," but "born of a woman." "If the idea of a Virgin Birth had really meant anything to the Apostle Paul, he would hardly have laid so much stress on the fact that Christ was 'born of a woman,' as an element which He shared with all other human beings, and on His origin from the 'seed of David.'" (P. 361.) What law of sound thinking makes it necessary that wherever Scripture speaks of the birth of Jesus, it must specify the Virgin Birth? Further, Brunner is guilty of modernistic dishonesty and insincerity when he writes: "We, for our part, pass by this doctrine without attacking it" (p. 326). This after casting doubt and ridicule on it for several pages and declaring: "In earlier days this discussion used to be cut short by saying briefly: 'It is written'; that is, with the aid of the doctrine of verbal inspiration. To-day we can no longer do this, even if we would" (p. 323). Finally, Brunner employs much of the very patter of Modernism. "The history of this doctrine will probably resemble the course followed by the doctrine of the authority of Scripture. So long as the doctrine of verbal inspiration is the only intelligible form in which the Bible can be described as the Word of God, — in distinction from all other literature, — then it is better to hold firmly to it than that on account of this erroneous form the whole precious content of the doctrine, the Scriptural principle of the Christian Church, should be thrown away. The time may, however, now have arrived when these two vessels are no longer necessary, and not only so, but the time may have now come when, instead of being a protection for the content, they have actually become a danger. Both forms are attempts to make the miracle at least to some extent rational. Therefore they are forms of little faith, not of great faith, and there is no reason at all to consider oneself a 'believer' in a special sense because one holds these views." (P. 326 f.) These doctrines, as expressed by the Biblical writers, are only makeshift *forms*. They served a good purpose in their day. But we moderns can no longer use them. We can express the underlying truth in a better way. That is Fosdick at his best. "The new knowledge has not despoiled the Bible, but has set its spirit free for its largest usefulness; its basic experiences are separable from its temporary forms of thought. . . . The resurrection of the flesh was a mental setting in which alone they [many of our forefathers]

supposed that faith in life everlasting could be found. . . . What is permanent in Christianity is not mental frame-works, but abiding experiences that phrase and rephrase themselves in successive generations' ways of thinking." Etc., etc. (*The Modern Use of the Bible*, pp. 6. 98. 103.) The more we read in Brunner, the less we can understand how Lutherans can characterize him as "a staunch proponent of the theology of the Reformation" (Dr. T. A. Kantonen, in *Luth. Church Quarterly*, July, 1935, p. 211). And we shall altogether fail to understand it when we examine the theological principles underlying the dialectical theology. TH. ENGELDER.

(To be continued.)

Die Lehre vom Beruf unter gegenwärtigen Verhältniſſen.

Die Lehre vom Beruf, wie ſie in der lutheriſchen Kirche verkündigt wird, iſt klar in der Heiligen Schrift geoffenbart. An dieſer Lehre müſſen wir darum wie an allen in der Heiligen Schrift geoffenbarten Lehren unentwegt feſthalten. Sie iſt für das kirchliche Leben von der größten Wichtigkeit. Wichtig iſt es auf der einen Seite, daß wir Diener des Worts uns deſſen allezeit bewußt bleiben, in weſſen Dienſt wir ſtehen, daß wir unſer Amt von Gott empfangen haben. So nur werden wir auch unter ſchwierigen Verhältniſſen die rechte Freudigkeit behalten, unſer Amt auszurichten, und werden auch, indem wir uns der hohen Verantwortung bewußt ſind, die wir in unſerm Amt haben, es mit aller Treue verwalten. Aber auch für die chriſtlichen Gemeinden iſt es wichtig, immer recht zu bedenken, wer ihnen die Diener am Wort geſetzt hat und wozu ſie geſetzt ſind, daß ſie Chriſti Diener und Haushalter über Gottes Geheimniſſe ſind. Nur ſo werden ſie die rechte Stellung ihnen gegenüber einnehmen und den vollen Segen von ihrer Amtsverwaltung haben. Wegen dieſer hohen Wichtigkeit, die der rechten Lehre vom Beruf zukommt, müſſen wir darum auch als Kirche beſtändig darüber wachen, daß dieſe Lehre in der Praxis nicht verletzt werde. Daß ſolche Verletzungen in unſerer Mitte vorgekommen ſind und noch vorkommen, wird niemand leugnen. Unſer kirchliches Leben bietet genug Beiſpiele dafür dar. Und es zeigt ſich auch immer wieder, welchen Schaden ſolche Verletzungen bringen. Wie ganz anders würde es oft bei ſo manchen Paſtoren und Lehrern ſtehen, und wie ganz anders würde es in manchen Gemeinden ausſehen, wenn man die Lehre vom Beruf immer recht beachtete, die rechten Schlußfolgerungen daraus zöge und fleißig danach handelte! Ja, wir Diener des Worts und die Gemeinden, an denen wir wirken, haben alle nötig, immer wieder an die Lehre vom Beruf erinnert und vor Verſtößen gegen dieſe Lehre gewarnt zu werden, ſo gewiß wir alle noch das böſe Fleiſch an uns tragen, das auch hier ſtets ſeine eigenen, verkehrten Wege gehen will.