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A Study of Epistemology in the Theologies of Emil Brunner, Martin Heinecken, Taito Kantonen, and Joseph Sittler

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Short Title: A STUDY OF THEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

A STUDY OF EPISTEMOLOGY

IN THE THEOLOGIES OF EMIL BRUNNER,

MARTIN HEINECKEN, TAITO KANTONEN, AND JOSEPH SITTLER

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
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Master of Sacred Theology

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by

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CHAPTER I

THE THEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF EMIL BRUNNER

Introduction

Ever since the reading of Emil Brunner's The Divine-
Human Encounter this writer has felt the compulsion to delve
more deeply into Brunner's position on the nature and percep-
tion of religious truth.[1] This little book, a revised pre-
sentation of the 1937 Olaus Petri Foundation lectures, is
certainly one of the reasons that a man like David Cairns
could say that as a theologian Brunner has had a far more
pervasive influence than Barth.[2] Excerpts from this book,
labeled by Dale Moody, "a turning point in the interpreta-
tion of truth,"[3] and by Paul Tillich, "perhaps his most
suggestive book,"[4] occur in a wide gamut of current theo-

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[1]It might be well to state at the outset that "religious
truth" in this study is understood as synonymous with Biblical
or Christian truth. There is no attempt to denote the truth(s)
of some vague religiosity by the use of this term.

[2]"The Theology of Emil Brunner," Scottish Journal of
Theology, I (1948), 307.

[3]"An Introduction to Emil Brunner," The Review and
Expositor, XLIV (July, 1947), 326.

[4]"Some Questions on Brunner's Epistemology," in The
Theology of Emil Brunner, edited by Charles W. Kegley
(New York: Macmillan Co., 1962), p. 99.

logical writing. The problem of theological epistemology,[5] however, penetrates most of Brunner's major writings. Paul Jewett says, "In the final analysis, the basic question is the epistemological one [for Brunner]. How do we know?"[6] P. G. Schrotenboer concludes that Brunner's theology is "largely a theological epistemology."[7] Because of Brunner's vibrant interest in this subject, his lucid method of presentation (in contrast to certain other contemporary European theologians), and his often original and engaging thought in the area of theological epistemology, this writer has chosen his writings for the major field of investigation for this study.

A concurrent interest in the thought of contemporary Lutheran theologians in America has motivated the second, subsidiary field of investigation for this study. Three current American Lutheran theologians, Martin Heinecken, Taito Kantonen and Joseph Sittler, were chosen largely on the basis of their contributions and influence in Lutheran theological circles in America today. Furthermore, each of

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[5]The term, "theological epistemology," is used in this study to refer to the primary God-man knowledge relationship, and not to the discipline of epistemology within the science of theology.

[6]Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation (London: James Clarke and Co., 1954), p. 139.

[7]A New Apologetics: An Analysis and Appraisal of the Eristic Theology of Emil Brunner (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1955), p. 45.

them is interested, to varying degrees, in the epistemological problem and its concomitant, the nature of religious truth. Heinecken, especially, makes frequent reference to these issues. These men, together with Brunner, all ask the same question: What is religious or Biblical truth, and how can it be known by the individual? Can religious truth be "known" by ordinary rational measures, or is a unique epistemology operative when the subject matter is Biblical truth? This study will attempt to present the answer Brunner gives to this question and compare with his position the viewpoints of Heinecken, Kantonen and Sittler.

A study of the various antitheses against which these men are plying their own theological epistemologies will shed light on the precise shape and direction they give to their thoughts in this area. Also, each man's position on revelation and on the relationship between reason and faith will, of necessity, be important corroborative areas of investigation.

The major source materials for this study will include thirteen of the principal works of Emil Brunner and, with several minor exceptions, all of the writings in book or journal form by Heinecken, Kantonen and Sittler. The study will be found heavily documented, with frequent direct citations from the primary sources. It is hoped that these quotations will be carefully perused. The aim of this study is to present Brunner's position compared with that of the three Lutherans; the quotations are an integral part of this

presentation and are being supplied for didactic as well as documental purposes.

Chapter I of the paper will deal with Brunner and Chapter II with Heinecken, Kantonen and Sittler in comparison to Brunner. The concluding section will summarize Brunner's position, evaluate the comparison made between his position and that of the three Lutherans, and raise several questions for further investigation in this field.

The Historical Perspective

The historical and theological phenomenon which, to the greatest extent, gives rise to the particular theological epistemology of Emil Brunner is an early begotten and long lasting doctrinaire intellectualism within the Church and its theology. A relationship had become an idea. Faith in God had given place to acceptance of doctrine. The Word who possesses man had been supplanted by a word which man possesses. The _fides qua creditur_ had been displaced by the _fides quae creditur_.

Brunner saves his heaviest arraignment in this respect for Orthodoxy, but he sees this misguided intellectualism as having made its entrance into theological circles as early as the second century.

> From the middle of the second century the Church has instructed its believers that one "must believe" this and that doctrine in order to be a Christian--"whoever wishes to be saved must, above all things, embrace the Catholic faith." Once let dogma be the object of faith, and faith is then determined by means of the Object-Subject Antithesis, by means of the rational concept

of truth, and remains thus, even though the dogma is
applied as revealed truth.[8]

Brunner sees the two chief issues in the early Church--the

doctrines of the Trinity and of the two natures of Christ--

as being a case in point. These issues and the formulations

they engendered were not an unfolding of the apostolic

confession of faith, according to Brunner, but instead, an

ontological construction which directed faith in another

direction than did the New Testament witness to Christ.

Truth to be found in a relationship was being displaced

by truth found in a positive dogma.

According to Brunner, the second century Church, in her

new interest and involvement in doctrinal formulation, did

something which has, since then, always been disastrous in

her history:

> she sought for certainties. She created for herself
> an instrument of differentiation, which she could use
> in a legalistic way; this instrument was the concept
> of the divinely inspired, and therefore "infallible"
> doctrine.[9]

In her creeds as well, the early Church gave a dangerous

direction to the living truth of the Word of God.

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[8]The Divine-Human Encounter, translated by Amandus W.
Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 153.

[9]Revelation and Reason; The Christian Doctrine of Faith
and Knowledge, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The
Westminster Press, c. 1946), p. 8.

As the Apostles' Creed by enumeration of a series of
facts to be believed caused _pistis_ to degenerate into
faith in facts, so by its failure to mention the act
of reconciliation it favoured the wrong development
of dogma along speculative lines.[10]

The solidification of the early Church's oral tradition and

rule of faith into the canonical Scriptures and the partic-

ular creeds would represent to Brunner a dangerous direction

for religious truth. The truth becomes an object to be

grasped and mastered, rather than a personal address to the

individual. A living truth to be proclaimed becomes a fact

to be believed.

Unfortunately, the Greek intellectualism which so
early dominated the ecclesiastical view of revelation
obscured this truth from the very outset. The Church
regarded preaching from the point of view of doctrine,
instead of _vice versa_. Hence the proclamation of the
Gospel--as was the case also with the revelation--
was regarded as the communication of doctrine, and
thus as "applied doctrine," in which the personal
address and the "Thou-form" were merely a matter of
form.[11]

This exchange of the formulated confession, the "some-

thing true," for the living Word of God is a "blight which

lies over the entire history of the Church."[12] The Reforma-

tion period, limited to the sixteenth century, represented

the one return within the history of the Church to the

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[10]Emil Brunner, _The Christian Doctrine of the Church,
Faith, and the Consummation_. Vol. III of _Dogmatics_,
translated by David Cairns in collaboration with T. H. L.
Parker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 231.

[11]Brunner, _Revelation and Reason_, p. 149.

[12]Brunner, _The Divine-Human Encounter_, p. 119.

Biblical view of faith and truth.[13] Brunner cannot speak

highly enough of Luther, and throughout his writings he urges

a return to a more "Lutheran" position in these matters. But

the age of Orthodoxy consequently lost the ground gained by

the Reformers and lapsed once more into a rigid system of

guaranteed doctrines to be accepted. The period of Orthodoxy

receives such a brunt of invective in the writings of Brunner

that this period is treated separately and more fully elsewhere

in this section.

As Brunner sees it, the next great historical perversion

in the area of religious truth and epistemology presented

itself in Rationalism and the Enlightenment. Whereas previously

the Church had tried to solve the problem of the irrational

character of faith by a "mistaken heteronomy," based, in the

case of Roman Catholicism, on the guarantee for truth offered

from the Vatican, or, in the case of Orthodoxy, on the guarantee

of a doctrine of verbal inspiration, now Rationalism attempted

the solution by a "mistaken autonomy," a false dependence

on the efforts of the human reason.[14] Rationalism denied

that absolute divine truth could be found either in the

Scriptures or the Church, saying that only the "eternal

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[13] Emil Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion from the
Standpoint of Protestant Theology, translated by A. J. A.
Farrer and Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1937), p. 22.

[14] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 166.

truths of reason" are valid.[15]   Here the content of religion

can be ascertained independently of any historical phenomena.

Revelation is simply the "last stage of an immanent recollec-

tion, an emergence into clear consciousness of what was always

there."[16]   In agreement with Descartes' Cogito, ergo sum, the

Rationalistic conception of truth was that of autonomous truth,

"the identity of the Ego with itself, self-certainty in the

sense of independence of everything which is not myself."[17]

Idealism, with its theory that truth was "mind, reason,

spirit, subject,"[18] attempted vainly to achieve a synthesis

between Christianity and Rationalism and led instead, by way

of reaction, into a naturalistic materialism.

> In the earlier period of the Enlightenment the attempt
> was made to represent the Biblical revelation as that
> which is essentially rational; in the real period of
> rationalism, on the contrary, revelation no longer had
> any meaning; reason was all. Romantic Idealism made a
> great effort to deepen the concept of reason to such an
> extent that it might include within the historical reve-
> lation. But the realistic-naturalistic reaction against
> Idealism caused this supposed synthesis of Christianity
> and rational philosophy, great as it was an intellectual
> achievement, to break down; theology confronted--
> nothing![19]

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[15]Brunner, Philosophy of Religion, p. 36.

[16]Ibid., p. 39.

[17]Emil Brunner, The Word and the World (New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), p. 68.

[18]Emil Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation. First
Part: Foundations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948),
p. 33.

[19]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 11.

In this shift from an idealistic subjectivism to a barren
materialism Brunner sees the main epistemological problem
for today.

> modern spiritual evolution has been taking unam-
> biguously the line of a more or less materialistic
> objectivism. . . . In the sphere of material being
> the quantum is the only differentiating factor.
> Material being is merely quantitative being. An
> objectivist understanding of truth expresses itself,
> therefore, not merely in terms of practical materialism,
> but also in a general quantification of all life. . . .[20]

According to Brunner, each of these systems--whether
heteronomous Orthodoxy or autonomous Rationalism or subjec-
tivistic Idealism or objectivistic Materialism--have as a
common malady the subject-object antithesis. Either the
emphasis is placed to a mistaken extreme degree on the
object in the faith-knowledge relationship as in Orthodoxy
or Materialism, or on the subject as in Rationalism and
Idealism. Brunner says it was left for the newest form of
philosophy, the existential, to question the validity of
the antithesis itself.[21] In 1947 he said:

> Within the last generation we have seen springing up
> more or less spontaneously in different areas, and
> moving on parallel lines, a series of attempts to
> tackle the problem of truth in a new fashion, namely
> in such a way that the old opposition of objectivism
> and subjectivism no longer plays the dominating
> roles.[22]

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[20] Christianity and Civilisation. First Part, p. 31.

[21] The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 82.

[22] Christianity and Civilisation. First Part, p. 34.

Finding his basis in Martin Luther and in Soren
Kierkegaard (whom Brunner calls "the greatest Christian
thinker of modern times"[23]), and profiting from the personal-
istic theologies of Ferdinand Ebner and Martin Buber,[24]
Brunner spends a great deal of effort in many of his writings
presenting his own version of theological epistemology. More
will be said of this below. But first, Brunner's chief
"whipping boy" and the subject of his most frequent disparage-
ment, Orthodoxy, must be investigated.

Emil Brunner's position on theological epistemology can
best be understood in the light of the antitheses which he
opposes in this connection. The antithesis most often attacked
is that of Protestant Orthodoxy with its narrow, impersonal
objectivism and biblicism.

In the centuries immediately following the Reformation,
the recovered Scriptural insights into the personalistic
nature of faith and revelation all but vanished, says
Brunner.

> Whilst the Reformation in its centre was the redis-
> covery of the non-intellectualist conception of faith,
> this new discovery was lost all too soon in the fight
> against the Roman heresy. The Reformation Churches
> became orthodox.[25]

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[23]Moody, op. cit., p. 313.

[24]Paul King Jewett, "Ebnerian Personalism and its
Influence upon Brunner's Theology," The Westminster Theological
Review, XIV (May, 1952), 133-34.

[25]Emil Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation. Second
Part: Specific Problems (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons,
1949), p. 49.

As characteristics of the period of Orthodoxy Brunner would include an aprioristic and legalistic view as to the inspired and infallible nature of the Bible, an attempt at providing man-made securities for an otherwise faith-based relation to God, and a displacement of a living interest in the personal and ethical by an insistence on the precise and dogmatic.

Jewett notes that Brunner's all but universal procedure is "to trace the curse of Orthodoxy back to one fountainhead, a belief in the verbal inspiration of the Scripture. . . ."[26] Apparently without valid internal or external warrant, the Orthodox fathers had foisted onto the Bible a false and misleading qualification, according to Brunner.

> In orthodox Protestantism an (aprioristic) faith in the Bible corresponds to this faith in dogma. The Biblical concept of faith which the Reformers had rediscovered was replaced by an equally formal authority, namely the authority of the Holy Book whose divine inspiration has to be believed "from the first."[27]

In so doing, according to Brunner, Orthodoxy had made of the Bible's "living present voice of God" an "independent divine thing, which just as such, as a corpus mortuum, is stamped with divine authority."[28] This imposition of an infallible standard onto Scripture has inevitably resulted in a double concept of faith: faith in the first place in the Bible's

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[26]Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, p. 118.

[27]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 189.

[28]Word and the World, p. 92.

Christ, and secondly, faith in the Bible as the inerrant
Word of God. Brunner calls the sola scriptura principle
an indefensible supplement to the sola fide principle and a
stipulation added by post-Reformation theology.[29] He says
that this principle, together with an attempted equation of
the Word of God with the word of the Bible, is a product of
the views of late Judaism.[30] In thus regarding Scripture as
true in itself and as revelation in itself, Orthodoxy has
changed its meaning from "an address made by an act of God"
to a universal truth having the force of law.[31] Orthodoxy
has changed a paradoxical and indirect unity between the
word of the Spirit and the word of the Scriptures into a
causal and direct one, an unspiritual one.[32] Thus the
material principle of Orthodoxy is ultimately a denial of
its formal principle.

> For Orthodox faith justification is something to
> believe, a truth pronounced by God Himself, a judicial
> sentence which at once absolves me and imparts to me
> the righteousness of Christ, a correct transaction
> before God's court of justice.[33]

The attempt to convert the historical revelation into a
timeless system of truth has resulted in a docetic approach

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[29] The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 238.

[30] Revelation and Reason, p. 127.

[31] The Philosophy of Religion, p. 34.

[32] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[33] Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 155.

to Scripture,[34] an approach where men attempt to "have" the
Word of God.[35]

Brunner sees as one of the principal instigations toward
this kind of an objectivistic, legalistic view of God's truth
man's inherent struggle for indigenous securities and
assurances. He writes:

> In the controversy against the Catholic principle of
> tradition on the one side, and on the other the
> principle of the Spirit of the individualistic
> enthusiast together with the newly arising rational-
> istic principle, the temptation could not be with-
> stood to create a system of assurance including the
> confessional dogma, the notion of verbal inspiration,
> and the Bible understood as a book of revealed doctrine.[36]

At another place he says:

> for the second time in her history the Church, in her
> anxiety to establish security, took a wrong turning.
> . . . they returned to the Catholic idea of revelation,
> according to which the revelation guaranteed the infall-
> ible doctrine contained in Scripture, and the Scripture
> guaranteed the divine revelation. . . .[37]

In this respect Orthodoxy stood together with even the
most extreme subjectivistic of all systems, mysticism.
". . . in both man wants to be the master of truth, he
wants to possess it."[38] Brunner insists that religious
truth cannot be "possessed" by man; man can never be its
master. Man can never "get God in a box." Religious truth

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[34]Ibid., pp. 172, 174.

[35]Ibid., p. 31.

[36]Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[37]Revelation and Reason, p. 10.

[38]Brunner, Word and the World, p. 76.

can only be "known" in the existential Divine-human encounter.
God is never to be subjected to a guaranteed system, but is
always Subject.

Schrotenboer says that Brunner's chief complaint against
Orthodoxy is that it is blind to the "dimensional distinction."[39]
That is, it treats in the subject-object dimension what belongs
in the personal dimension. Brunner himself writes:

> The significant factor in Orthodoxy is that personal
> correspondence was crowded out by a conception of
> truth orientated about the Object-Subject antithesis.
> Orthodoxy thought of God as the teacher who delivered
> supernatural, revealed truth and proffered faith to
> man. In this way the Word of God was identified with
> doctrine, and faith was assent to this doctrine. Pre-
> cisely that which is the concern of Biblical faith was
> consequently no longer understood: that is, overcoming
> the Object-Subject relation and having the real Person
> of God present in His Word. . . .[40]

More will be said below regarding the subject-object anti-
thesis and Brunner's suggested personalistic, relational
answer to it. Suffice it to say here that Brunner sees
Orthodoxy as having forfeited the entire personalistic emphasis
of the Reformers for the sake of a more rationalistic, doctrinal
approach.

The ethics-minded Brunner furthermore observes a close
relationship between extreme involvement with precision and
flawlessness in doctrinal formulation and a neglect of the
sanctified life and ethics. "How often does a perfectly

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[39] Op. cit., p. 42

[40] The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 102-03.

faultless orthodoxy go with a moral sterility," he warns.[41]

> Interest in doctrine more and more arrogates to itself every other interest; the urge for an ever-nicer precision in the formulation of conceptions—the absence of which in the whole Bible is so characteristic—becomes dominant in Church life and leads to endless, even more subtle, doctrinal controversies. Christian love, practical discipleship atrophies. Once let faith and recognition of a system of revealed doctrines become identical, and Christian piety, described in the Bible as "faith which proves efficacious in love," is seen in contra-distinction to doctrine in the clearest and most definite way. Catechetical instruction becomes the preferred and practically the sole means of educating the younger generation to become Christians. The thoroughly trained theologian becomes the pattern around which the fellowship is supposed to orientate itself as regards the meaning of being a Christian.[42]

These are the fruits of Protestant Orthodoxy according to Brunner, fruits which still hamper and even threaten the life of faith in the Church today. But these over-emphases on intellectualism and objectivism, these tendencies toward the concept rather than the act or the relation, are only part of a much broader problem—the radical difference between the Greek and the Biblical concepts of truth and knowledge.

Greek versus Biblical Concepts of Knowledge

It would not be inaccurate to say that Emil Brunner centers his theological epistemology in the antithesis found between Greek and Biblical concepts of knowledge. Greek thought and meaning is characterized by an immanent, rational,

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[41] The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), p. 69.

[42] Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 32.

abstract principle while Biblical is transcendant, revelatory

and personalistic.[43] While Greek knowledge is designated by

the general or universal, the timeless and the impersonal,

Brunner says Christian knowledge is just the opposite:

particularistic, historical and personal.[44] Greek philo-

sophical thought is built up around the concept; Biblical

around the story or the event. Brunner writes:

> The Church has had to pay dearly for the fact that it
> substituted the Christian catechism for the Biblical
> history, and that it permitted the Greek concept of
> knowledge and of truth to take such a dominant place
> in its theology. The revelation of God must be told,
> not taught; the doctrine only has validity as a means
> of serving the "telling" of the Good News. Where
> narrative is replaced by doctrine, Greek thought triumphs
> over the thought of the Bible.[45]

To present this antithesis in as bold a relief as possi-

ble this section will be arranged in antithetical form: the

Greek over against the Biblical. Whereas Greek thought is

known by logic and consistency, by the system, Biblical

thought is seen to be paradoxical and a-rational. The Greek

tradition centers in the idea and abstraction, in reasoning,

while the Biblical tradition has its basis in the concrete

event, in the historical, in the encounter. Greek knowledge

is substantialistic; it is interested in the "it," in the

thing. Biblical knowledge is personalistic; it is interested

in the "Thou," in the person. While Greek thought emphasizes

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[43]Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation. First Part, p. 65.

[44]Word and the World, p. 18.

[45]Revelation and Reason, p. 201. (The emphases in this
quotation, as well as all other emphases in this study, are
those of the author being quoted.)

continuity and immanence, Biblical knowledge manifests discon-
tinuity and separation. In Greek thought man is the disposer,
the autonomy and security seeker; in Biblical thought God is
the Disposer, and in Him alone is security found.

Paradox is one of the distinguishing features of Biblical
thought according to Brunner:

> The Christian Church has known from the very first
> that what she believes is a stumbling-block and fool-
> ishness from the point of view of rational thought.
> The object of faith is something which is absurd to
> reason, i.e., paradox; the hall-mark of logical
> inconsistency clings to all genuine pronouncements
> of faith.[46]

There can be no knowledge of God but paradoxical knowledge,
says Brunner.[47] ". . . the assertions of faith are one and
all paradoxes."[48] Jewett understands Brunner's use of the
term "paradox" as having a largely symbolic meaning:

> the paradoxical form of words whereby faith expresses
> itself constitutes a pointer (Hinweis). The paradoxes
> will, "by means of conceptual representation, point
> to something which lies outside the realm of the con-
> ceptual."[49]

Related to the above thought, Brunner speaks of a "poetic"
quality inherent in religious language and thought.[50] The
paradox has a fluidity which, like poetry, suggests a variety
of meanings, and a framework of multiple levels of truth.

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[46]The Philosophy of Religion, p. 55.

[47]Ibid., p. 95.   [48]Ibid., p. 96.

[49]Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, p. 109.

[50]The Christian Doctrine of God, Vol. I of Dogmatics,
translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster
Press, 1950), p. 62.

To Brunner, like Soren Kierkegaard, the paradox, with all
its contrasts to the sharp and hard edges of academic
theological definition and the neatly hewn and faultlessly
fitted arguments of the theological system, is the language
and the epistemological structure of faith-knowledge.

Brunner claims that the whole endeavor of the reason to
unite everything in an all-inclusive system, even if this
system is effected by means of antitheses which are tolerated
for the sake of a synthesis, is futile.[51]

> Revelation cannot be summed up in a system, not even
> in a dialectical one. A system always implies that
> the reason has forced ideas into a certain mould: it
> is the "imperialism" of an idea, even when this idea
> claims to be "Biblical."[52]

Theological deliberation is not meant to be solidified and
finalized by locking it once and for all into a compact,
unified system. Theological thought has one purpose: to
be referent to truth existing in another dimension.

> The soundness of theological doctrine and ideas
> depends upon their direction, upon the single-
> mindedness with which they point to Him. There
> is no closed theological system. . . .[53]

Theological formulation, therefore, is not to be an object
of faith, but an index, a director toward an encounter with
God, where faith first becomes possible.

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[51]The Mediator; A Study of the Central Doctrine of the
Christian Faith, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia:
The Westminster Press, c. 1947), p. 107.

[52]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 72.

[53]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 157.

Greek speculative thought seeks after the abstract, the static and the conceptual; Biblical thought is immersed in the historical and in the truth which happens.

> An idea can be detached from its original source. It is timeless, universally and always true. Christian faith on the other hand is concerned with the truth which we perceive as true for us, not in itself, in virtue of the bare idea, but only because God actually utters it: we are concerned with revelation where everything depends on its having happened.[54]

Brunner sees as a key to Scriptural truth the passage from the Gospel according to St. John, "But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."[55] Truth came into being; it happened. God did it. This is diametrically opposed to the Greek notion that truth is that which is timeless, changeless, and subject to the eternal.[56]

> The truth of which the Bible speaks is always a happening, and indeed the happening of the meeting between God and man, an act of God which must be received by an act of man. The truth acting--this is the characteristic unphilosophical, non-Greek way in which the Bible speaks of truth.[57]

The above quotation presents the very center of Brunner's position on the nature of religious truth: truth is found only in the concrete happening (the existential

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[54] Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 152-53.

[55] John 1:17.

[56] Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 140.

[57] Ibid., pp. 201-02.

encounter[58]); it is a personal meeting between the God who reveals Himself and man who responds with personal decision; it is characteristically non-Greek in essence.

Brunner further notes:

Biblical "truth" is as different from what otherwise is called truth as this personal encounter and the double-sided self-giving and its resulting fellow-ship are different from the comprehension of facts by means of reasoning.[59]

It is the difference between kennen and wissen: they are knowledge in two different dimensions. One is dynamic and actualistic; the verb is its chief word. The other is substantialistic and impersonal; it centers around the noun. One is built upon a relation between subject and subject; the other is based on the subject-object split. One is achieved only in personal decision; the other is attained via the intellectualistic nod. Brunner calls it "the pre-judice of modern man" that he so naively presupposes that there is only one kind of truth, that is, the objective, impersonal truth which can be proved. This presupposition excludes from him all truth which "cannot and ought not to be proved, because it has to be appropriated in personal

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[58]The term "existential" is used throughout in this study simply to denote the intense inner awareness of a man existing coram Deo. There is no attempt to denote any of the precise philosophical or literary forms which the existentialist approach has engendered within the past years.

[59]Ibid., p. 75.

decision."[60]

While more will be said below concerning Brunner's personalism, it should be noted here that he considers every moving away from the personal "I-Thou" dimension to the impersonal "I-It" dimension as a move away from God's truth to the truth of the world. "Abstraction is secularization," says Brunner.[61]

> The distinction between world-knowledge and God-knowledge--leaving to scientific investigation the world of facts and reserving for divine revelation the disclosure of the mystery of God's being, will and purpose--is not the only revolution which the Christian faith produces within the concept of truth. There is a second, just as important. What kind of truth is it, then, which is revealed to faith? It is not truth in the sense of knowing something, but in the sense of a divine-human, personal encounter. God does not reveal this and that; He does not reveal a number of truths. He reveals Himself by communicating Himself.[62]

Theology's main concern, then, as over against science and philosophy, is for a truth which is not an "It," a state of affairs or a situation. It seeks a truth which cannot be known in cool detachment, but only in "the obedience and confidence of faith."[63]

> The Christian Faith itself is wholly directed towards Truth; but who would care to maintain that the true knowledge of faith is scientific knowledge! Science leads to truth of a quite different kind; the truth

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[60]Word and the World, p. 62.

[61]Revelation and Reason, p. 411.

[62]Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation. First Part, p. 37.

[63]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 63.

of faith is of a wholly different order. . . . The
truth of faith, in the sense in which the Bible uses
the term, is "truth as encounter," truth in the dimen-
sion of the person, "Thou-I," but not in the "thing"-
dimension. The truth which faith perceives and grasps
is a personal self-disclosure, the truth of revelation,
not the truth which can be discovered by research and
the use of the intellect.[64]

The difference between Biblical and worldly knowledge,

Brunner would say, is the difference between knowing a person

and knowing a fact. One involves sharing, communion, deci-

sion; the other stops with intellectual acquaintance and

acceptance. They are in contradistinct realms.

Greek thought presents a continuum between the human

and the divine. Although the one is far above the other,

still the _analogia entis_ holds true. The Greek and the

modern mind are united in this respect, says Brunner: the

Greek mind makes nature the Absolute, and the modern mind

makes the mind of man, history, and the dynamic element the

Absolute. Both of them assume, however, a natural means of

rapprochement between man and the Absolute.[65] "The rational

man assumes a closed universe, as it were, an unbroken

continuum of truth. . . ."[66] Man by his rational faculties

can achieve divine knowledge. There is a bridge, and that

bridge is the reason, the intellect. The real is as man

can conceive of it; there is natural, however difficult to

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[64]_Ibid._, p. 61.

[65]Brunner, _Mediator_, p. 116.

[66]Brunner, _The Theology of Crisis_, p. 15.

achieve, access to the divine. Man can ultimately base his confidence in himself.

Another way to express this Greek idea of continuity in theology is to speak of an "immanence theology." Here man finds God in the depth of nature and of his own soul. Here there is an unbroken unity between God and the natural existence of man.[67]

> religion of immediacy, be it of the mystical or the rationalistic or the idealistic type, means that the necessary presuppositions enabling us to establish the right relation to God, or to remove the obstacle between our present and the normal condition, lie in ourselves.[68]

Brunner claims that the farther this "process of refraction of immediacy" goes, the more impersonal and secular knowledge and truth become.[69] The more continuity and directness are emphasized the more coldly objective and remote does knowledge become. "An impersonal God and an impersonal man are the necessary and inevitable consequences of a religion of immanence."[70] There is no encounter. There is no communication with an Other.

But this autonomous self-confidence based on the conviction that man is continuous with God and that God can be known directly and immediately is shattered, says Brunner,

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[67]Ibid., p. 29.

[68]Emil Brunner, The Scandal of Christianity (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951), p. 22.

[69]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 62.

[70]Brunner, The Theology of Crisis, p. 31.

following an insight of Kierkegaard, by the claim of revelation. "Thus the stumbling-block of revelation is this: it denies that divine truth is a continuation of human thought. . . ."[71] God and God alone causes Himself to be known. There is no valid knowledge of Him apart from His revelation. The God of immediacy is never the true God-over-me. "A thought-of God is never Lord."[72] More will be said below concerning a natural knowledge of God; here it is enough to say that Christianity is based, according to Brunner, on a clear discontinuity and separation between God and the intellect of man.

The Greek tradition cannot tolerate a religion that denies man security within himself. It cannot allow a religion which throws man totally upon God for his existence. In fact, Brunner would say that "all religion" is a "last and highest attempt of man to find his own security."[73]

> Always and everywhere the same tendency to seek
> security rises out of man's sinful, anxious nature
> and therefore expresses itself wherever men have
> the Church.[74]

Brunner sees man's struggles for security, whether they be by way of theological systems or guaranteed dogmatic formulations or an infallible book, as man's basic sin: man wants

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[71]Mediator, p. 108.

[72]Word and the World, p. 25.

[73]The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 206.

[74]The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 26.

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to be autonomous. He wants to have his own assurances, and

these within his own management. And man's basic fault is

also the basic fault of the Church, says Brunner:

> It [the Church] would like to hold some assurances
> in its hand--who could not understand that! It would
> like to have in its power of disposal that in which
> lies its stability and its very life. It would like
> to be certain of God in a more direct way than is
> guaranteed through the promise as given to faith
> and in prayer.[75]

Brunner sees it as a "tendency of man's spirit and will"

to get truth into his power, to try to manipulate it like an

object at his disposal. This same tendency drives man to

try to make the Word of God a disposable object, to seize

the authority of the free divine Word and make it available

in an ecclesiastical system of authority.[76]

> Knowing, thinking, possessing something is thus, first
> of all, something over which I have disposal. . . .
> But if the Word of God meets me in faith, this is all
> reversed. Then I do not have something like property
> which is at my disposal, but I myself become property;
> then I myself become disposable.[77]

Whereas natural acquisition of knowledge makes man master over

that which he knows and superior to each object of his knowledge,

in revelation the opposite is the case. "God, through His

revelation, becomes Lord over me; He makes me His

property."[78]

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[75]Ibid., p. 25.

[76]Ibid., p. 24.

[77]Ibid., pp. 87-88.

[78]Revelation and Reason, p. 26.

The empirical, disposable type of knowledge furthermore leaves the knower untouched morally; it only adds to his sinful autonomy.

> When I perceive "something," this "something" is then within me; it becomes, so to say, my possession. I embrace it. In knowing it, I dispose of it. That which is perceived, that which is known, is at my disposal. The other side of this process is that I myself am not actually affected by it. My knowledge certainly enriches me; it may also have influence in my decisions, on my way of thinking; but it never penetrates to the core of my person--it does not transform "myself." I am, after all, the one embracing; I am the possessor.[79]

This, then, is the sharp antithesis which Brunner sees between the Greek intellectualist tendency of natural man and the Biblical obedience-in-trust stance of the man of faith. The antithesis is sharp and it is clear. It is the decisive element whereby the Christian faith is distinguished from all other religions and philosophical systems.

The Subject-Object Split and Beyond

The "Object-Subject Antithesis" is Brunner's most often used designation for that kind of epistemology which is in direct contrast to the Biblical. The antithesis between object and subject, between the objective truth and the subjective acceptance of truth, is the basis for an epistemology which has dominated all Western philosophy since its beginning.

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[79]The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 87.

> Being and thinking, truth and knowledge--this is
> the problem around which philosophical thought has
> turned at least since the Sophists and Socrates--
> a problem that emerges again in Kant's question
> about the relation between the "thing-in-itself"
> and experience.[80]

The subjective knower cooly and with disinterest "handles"

a set of facts. The "I" passes objective judgment on the

"it." The truth is this and that, a something to be observed,

a quantity to be counted, a datum to be disposed of. Modern

man, according to Brunner, is "possessed by the idea of

object-truth, thing credulous man, who cannot but think in

terms of quantity, whose eyes are blind to all that belongs

to the sphere of quality."[81]

In this "new knowledge," an integral part of Western

thought, but brought to the fore even in theology by modern

philosophy, the rationalization of science, and modern eco-

nomic and social life, what in the Bible is meant as expres-

sion of faith has come to be understood as the object of

faith.

> The Bible speaks about faith being the same as being
> in reality allied to Christ; the misunderstanding
> replaces the real alliance by the alliance with
> Christ as _object_ of faith, as a truth to be
> believed.[82]

This replacement of the personal understanding of faith by

the intellectual is "probably the most fatal occurrence

within the entire history of the Church," says Brunner.[83]

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[80]Brunner, _Ibid._, pp. 81-82.

[81]_Christianity and Civilisation_. _First Part_, p. 37.

[82]_The Divine-Human Encounter_, p. 154. [83]_Ibid_., p. 154.

A living relation to a Person has been displaced by an uncon-
cerned acceptance or rejection of a fact. The subject stands
removed from the object; the subject is in control; the subject
is untouched in his inner being. This is the difference between
the general, secular epistemology and the Biblical. In the one,
religious truth is an object of man's knowledge; it is part of
his rational world, of which he is the center.[84] In the other
man is confronted by a Person, another Subject, a Thou; truth
is experienced, and only in the personal relationship. Accord-
ing to Brunner, "The Biblical understanding of truth cannot be
grasped through the Object-Subject antithesis: on the contrary
it is falsified through it."[85] There lies an abyss between the
personal subject-Subject relation of faith and the subject-
object antithesis of Western thought. There is no continuity
between these two epistemologies; they exist in different
dimensions.

Brunner sees a hyper-concern for doctrine and theological
instruction as one of the most evident symptoms of this subject-
object antithesis within the Church.

> the Word alone is efficacious, but doctrine is not--
> not even Biblical or catechetical doctrine. When we
> consider the Biblical understanding of proclamation,
> we observe that it means an event entirely personal,
> in the nature of a personal meeting, which is far
> different from the catechetical homiletical traffic

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[83]Ibid., p. 154.

[84]Revelation and Reason, p. 366.

[85]The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 21.

in dogma which is determined by the Greek concept of truth.[86]

Although Brunner himself has written a three-volume dogmatics, he says this about doctrine:

> In doctrine man speaks no longer in the "Thou"-form to God--as in the original confession of faith--but he now speaks about God as "He." Doctrine is no longer a spontaneous, personal response, in the form of prayer, to the Word of God, but already, even in its simplest form, it is reflective speech about God. The process of leaving the sphere of personal encounter in order to enter into the impersonal sphere of reflection is the presupposition of all doctrine. God is now no longer the One who speaks, but the One who is spoken about.[87]

Brunner considers the true and primary purpose of doctrine to be the expression or confession of faith, not the object of faith.[88] Doctrine is to contain a "minimum of reflection,"[89] and is to serve the positive purpose of apologetics. It is to be the "situation" in and through which the personal encounter with God can take place.

Doctrine standing by itself, separated from the Word of God as the event of encounter, is seen by Brunner as the essence of legalism.

> Whatever the content of this doctrine may be--it may be even the doctrine of atonement through Jesus Christ and of justifying faith--so long as it is not God Himself who speaks with man and while speaking meets him in fellowship, so long as doctrine confronts him as some-

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[86]Ibid., p. 176.

[87]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 38.

[88]Revelation and Reason, p. 156.

[89]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 39.

thing taught by the Church or Bible "which one must
believe if he wants to be a Christian," his relation
to it remains legal and bears all the marks of Legalism.
Even Jesus and the grace of God is then law--gamma, the
letter.[90]

Church dogmatism is thus the natural man's legalistic and

ego-directed attempt to avoid the risk of the authentic

obedience-in-trust relation to God. Where faith or truth

is understood as an acceptance of doctrines instead of a

Divine-human encounter, says Brunner, self-centered legalism

is the controlling factor.[91]

There have always been two tendencies competing with

one another throughout the entire history of the Church:

subjectivism and objectivism.[92] Subjectivism, that urge for

freedom and spontaneity, that will to attain the highest

possible level of self-realization,[93] showed itself already

in the primitive Church, and then throughout the entire

course of church history, particularly since the sixteenth

century. The negation of objective doctrine and form; the

emphasis on conscious states or experience; the ultimate

criterion for the true and the right seen in individual

feeling and apprehension--all of these subjective tendencies

threatened to undermine the Church at its very foundations,

says Brunner. To defend itself against this subjectivity,

and in reaction to it, the early Church and the Church of

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[90]The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 118.

[91]Christianity and Civilisation. First Part, pp. 42-43.

[92]The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 21. [93]Ibid., p. 26.

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post-Reformation times built up a system of assurances made
up of objective doctrines. The timeless, the external, the
detached, the impersonal, the abstract: these were and are
characteristics of this objectivism in the Church. Of the
two, Brunner sees objectivism as the greater hazard:

> Objectivism has always been the real ecclesiastical
> danger within the Church--through all centuries and
> even now. From within the Church its danger is much
> more difficult to recognize, and the struggle against
> it was always the most dangerous. For the opponent
> will feel himself attacked in his most sacred precinct
> and will consider himself called to be guardian on
> the battlefield of the holy treasure entrusted by God
> to the Church.[94]

True religious knowledge and truth is to be found in
neither subjectivism or objectivism, says Brunner. Both of
them present only half-truths. Furthermore, a higher synthe-
sis of these two poles will not arrive at truth either:

> There is no right middle way between Objectivism and
> Subjectivism: there is no correct mean between two
> errors. In this instance too the truth is more
> paradoxical and harder to find.[95]

Both subjectivism and objectivism are based on the Greek
tradition: the subject-object split. The truth, however,
is not to be found in either subject alone or object alone
according to Brunner.

> since neither the subject nor the object is the
> ultimate truth, it is inevitable that man's mind
> shifts from one pole to the other in an incessant

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[93]Ibid., p. 26.

[94]Ibid., pp. 170-71.

[95]Ibid., p. 40.

pendulum movement. It cannot rest quietly with either of the alternatives, since neither of them carries real conviction. This veering from objectivism into subjectivism and back is unavoidable, because in the long run neither of these two answers to the question of truth is credible.[96]

Ultimate truth is thus not found in the "either/or of objectivism and subjectivism."[97] Whether the knowing subject posits itself as the truth, or whether it posits as truth its known object--in neither case will truth be revealed. "Thus truth is not to be found either in the object or in the subject, but beyond both. Truth, then, is God Himself in His self-communication to man."[98] The subject-object split, the antithesis between knowledge of "something truthful" and the truth itself, must give way to truth found in a "purely personal meeting between the accosting God and the answering man."[99] Religious truth is personal. Knowledge of religious truth is not found in a one-sided subjectivism or objectivism; it is found in relation with the personal God who discloses Himself to the total person of man. According to Schrotenboer, the best word to describe the gulf which exists between subject-object "it" truth and personal "Thou" truth is the term "incommensurability."[100] These two types of truth are as different as "the truth which I possess" and "the Truth

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[96]Christianity and Civilisation. First Part, p. 39.

[97]Ibid., p. 38.   [98]Ibid., p. 35.

[99]The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 89.   [100]Op. cit., p. 43.

which possesses me."[101] Within the field of human thought in

general, Brunner says, "The discovery of the 'I-Thou' truth

in philosophy by Ebner and Buber is indeed, as Heim has put

it, a 'Copernican turning-point' in the history of thought."[102]

"In the beginning is relation" is the byword of Martin Buber.[103]

"Truth as encounter" is Brunner's version of the same thought.[104]

Not that knowing which gives man "something," which enriches

his intellect or adds to his knowledge, but which leaves him

basically unaltered, but that knowing which changes man in

the very core of his person,[105] which transforms rather than

educates, which creates fellowship between God and man--this

is the Biblical concept of truth.

Personalism as the Key

The theology of Emil Brunner might appropriately be

called a personalistic theology.[106] In order to appreciate

the implications of this statement, a brief look at personal-

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101Brunner, *Christianity* *and* *Civilisation*. *First* *Part*,
p. 40.

102*The* *Christian* *Doctrine* *of* *Creation* *and* *Redemption*,
translated by Olive Wyon. Vol. II of *Dogmatics* (Philadelphia:
The Westminster Press, 1952), p. v.

103Martin Buber, *I* *and* *Thou*, translated by Ronald
Gregor Smith (Second edition; New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1958), p. 18.

104*The* *Divine-Human* *Encounter*, p. 7.

105Brunner, *Ibid*., p. 88.

106Schrotenboer, *op*. *cit*., p. 203.

ism as a philosophic theory will be helpful.

In philosophy the idea of personality as the founda-
tion of knowledge is developed by such men as Berkeley,
Leibniz, Kant, Hegel and Lotze.[107]   In America Bowne,
McConnell, Knudsen and Brightman are leaders in the
personalistic movement.[108]   These men are all agreed that the
"immediateness of self-consciousness" is the starting point
of philosophy.[109]   Bowne says, "We are in a personal world
from the start, and all our objects are connected with this
world in one indivisible system."[110]   Personality is seen by
these men as "the active ground of the world, and as contain-
ing in the mystery of its own unique being the key to all the
antinomies of metaphysics."[111]   The conscious personality is
both the "supreme value and the supreme reality in the
universe."[112]

This highly idealistic "world of persons" is given being
and meaning and held together by the "supreme person" at its
head.

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[107]R. T. Flewelling, "Personalism," in Encyclopaedia of
Religion and Ethics, edited by James Hastings (Edinburgh:
T. & T. Clark, 1956), IX, 771.

[108]Floyd Hiatt Ross, Personalism and the Problem of Evil
(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p. 1.

[109]Flewelling, op. cit., p. 771.

[110]Borden Parker Bowne, Personalism (Boston: Houghton,
Mifflin and Company, 1908), p. 25.

[111]Flewelling, op. cit., p. 772.

[112]Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Nature and Values (New
York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1945), p. 113.

> Metaphysically it [personalism] is idealistic in the
> sense that it claims the so-called physical world is
> a form of spirit having no independent reality, the
> direct utterance of God throughout, "the ceaseless
> product of the divine energizing," "a mode of the
> divine activity . . . without any proper thinghood,"
> things and events being simply "forms of activity"
> of the supreme person.[113]

This "supreme personality" is seen to exist "in and through
the concrete continuous exercise of his personality, think-
ing, willing and sustaining all things."[114] The world of
space objects which man calls nature has no substantial
existence in itself, but is merely "the flowing expression
and means of communication" of the supreme person and his
responsive personal beings.[115] In the mysteries of the vol-
untaristic, activistic, causational personality lies the key
to the nature of being, knowledge and truth.

The tendency in secular personalism is to think of
reality in concrete and personal terms rather than in abstract
and impersonal terms. "To the personalist knowledge exists
only in the concrete."[116] The practical reason takes prece-
dence over the theoretical: "Not to form abstract theories
but to formulate and understand this personal life of ours
is the first and last duty of philosophy."[117] To the person-
alist knowledge is gained through experience and through what

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[113]Ross, op. cit., p. 1. [114]Flewelling, op. cit., p. 771.

[115]Bowne, op. cit., p. 278.

[116]Flewelling, op. cit., p. 772.

[117]Bowne, op. cit., p. 318.

can be inferred from experience: ". . . experience is first
and basal in all living and thinking, and all theorizing must
go out from experience as its basis, and must return to it
for verification."[118]

The personalistic metaphysics is relational; it is based
on participation and interaction between purposeful, active
individuals.[119]

> Being is implied in the capacity for intelligent
> causal action, or in the capacity for being acted
> upon. All that exists is the result or manifestation
> of a supreme, active, purposive intelligence which creates
> and sustains the world of lesser intelligences and
> things.[120]

The personalist thinks in terms of cause rather than substance.
"We owe our being to the divine energy rather than to our
possession of a portion of the divine substance."[121]

It is difficult to determine exactly what influence this
secular personalism has had on Emil Brunner. That he agrees
with many of its tenets is obvious. Brunner does acknowledge
the influence of such personalistic philosophers as Martin
Buber and Ferdinand Ebner on his theology.[122] He is un-
doubtedly not thinking of these two men, but of the modern
socio-psychological school when he says:

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[118]Ibid., p. 303.   [119]Ross, op. cit., p. 5.

[120]Flewelling, op. cit., p. 772.

[121]Albert Cornelius Knudson, "A Personalistic Approach
to Theology," in Contemporary American Theology, edited by
Vergilius Ferm (New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1932),
I, 238.

[122]The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 159.

No doubt the idea of personality and personal life
plays a large part in the thought of modern thinkers,
but an analysis of this conception of personality
would show that modern man, when he speaks of person
and the personal, has in mind something which ultimately
is quite impersonal, namely, a function within society
and culture.[123]

Brunner, like the secular personalists, looks to personality

as the key to the enigmas of being and truth. He places

much theological stock in, for example, the relation between

man and wife, as an informative analogy for the relation

between God and man and the Word of God and faith.[124] The

knowledge of faith is directly related to a man's knowledge

of his wife. It is an experiential, relational, participa-

tive communion rather than an intellectual affirmation of

certain data.

Brunner views reality as divided into the impersonal

and personal, with a graded scale of being encompassing both

dimensions. Brunner would say, according to Schrotenboer,

that the whole complex of reality in all its parts partakes

of both elements, the personal and the impersonal: "Neither

the absolutely personal nor the fully impersonal exists any-

where or at any time."[125] Along with Heim, then, Brunner would

say that even inanimate nature is "personal" to a certain

extent. Only the Triune God, says Brunner, is genuinely

personal, for "He is within Himself self-related, willing,

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[123] Scandal, pp. 73-74.

[124] The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 90, 162.

[125] Op. cit., p. 195.

knowing, loving Himself."[126]

The most accurate and illuminating way for man to view

God, Brunner argues is as person:

> He [God] is the Other One, the mysterious and
> unknowable One, who has his own proper name and whom
> we do not know because he is person. Personality is a
> secret; a mystery is hidden in it. Knowledge of a per-
> son is possible only through revelation, and he reveals
> himself through his word.[127]

God is seen to be personal, then, in His revelation to man in

Jesus Christ. ". . . the 'Word' of God, the decisive self-

communication of God, is a Person, a human being, the man in

whom God Himself meets us."[128]

> The self-revelation of God is no object, but wholly
> the doing and self-giving of a subject--or, better
> expressed, a Person. A Person who is revealing Him-
> self, a Person who demands and offers Lordship and
> fellowship with Himself. . . .[129]

More will be said below with regard to God as Revealer; here

it is enough to say that Brunner uses the personalistic cate-

gory to present not only the nature of God's revelation but

also the mysteries of the very Godhead itself.

Brunner makes use of the personalistic categories because

he sees a definite relation of similarity between God's being

as person and the being of man as person, a relation which, he

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126Man in Revolt; A Christian Anthropology, translated
by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947),
p. 219.

127The Theology of Crisis, p. 32.

128The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 15.

129The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 75.

says, "makes the use of such human, parabolic language
legitimate."[130] Brunner operates with an activistic rather
than with a substantial concept of person, according to
Schrotenboer: "A person [to Brunner] does not refer to an
ontological substance, but is an existential designation."[131]

Brunner would consider it fallacious to view man in an
objective, substantial manner. Man is more than mere empiri-
cal matter; he is spirit.

> Man can be person because and in so far as he has
> spirit. Personal being is "founded" in the spirit;
> the spirit is, so to speak, the substratum, the
> element of personal being.[132]

This "other dimension" of the spirit is the realm of the
personal. Nothing can be known of this "spiritual," personal
world except one personal spirit disclose itself to another.

> We can ourselves find the clue to things; they are
> objects, which confront us not in their own self-
> activity--making themselves known--but as entities
> which, by processes of research and thought, we can
> learn to understand. But persons are not enigmas
> of this kind; a person is a mystery which can be
> disclosed only through self-manifestation. In this
> self-disclosure alone do we meet this person as
> person; previously he or she is an "object," a
> "something."[133]

Man cannot himself think of a person; a person cannot be a
mere object of his thought. "A person is that unique being
which discloses itself and therefore enters into my thought-
world, so to say, as a stranger, affirming itself as an I in

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[130]The Christian Doctrine of Creation, p. 24.

[131]Op. cit., p. 30.

[132]Brunner, Man in Revolt, p. 237.

its own right."[134] There is no continuity or immediacy of thought here. Knowledge of God who is personal comes only when He speaks to man.

Personality is built upon relatedness. "To be person is to be in relation to someone," says Brunner.[135] What personality is in the strict sense can be understood only in confrontation with the personal God. Because God "calls me into communion with him, I become in the true sense of the word a person."[136] At least among Christians, there is no such entity as a purely isolated person. ". . . the spirit is . . . above all, and first of all, relatedness to God, as He reveals Himself in His Word."[137]

Another term which Brunner uses to describe this relatedness is "personal correspondence." ". . . all truth is understood as the truth of a relationship, namely, the relation of personal correspondence between the Word of God and human obedience-in-trust."[138] This personal correspondence, just the opposite of the subject-object antithesis, is a matter of relationship in face-to-face encounter between two subjects, a divine "Thou" and a human "I." This rela-

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[133]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 24.

[134]Brunner, Scandal, p. 41.

[135]Man in Revolt, p. 221.   [136]Scandal, p. 75.

[137]Man in Revolt, p. 239.

[138]The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 201.

tionship is logically unsatisfying, incongruous, and annoying
to the desire for intellectual investigation,[139] but within
it, and within it alone, is real religious truth assimilated
by man. When man is accosted face-to-face by God who demands
a decisive answer to His revelation; when man accepts and ful-
fills his God-given gift of responsibility as a personal being;
when man answers God with obedience-in-trust--then man truly
becomes a person, a proper pole in the personal correspondence
between God and man.

> For decision is the essence of personality. Only
> when man comes to a crisis and is compelled to choose
> between life and death does he become a personality.
> At the very moment when God challenges him to make
> his decision man is given personality.[140]

In this relationship, then, of decisive responsibility over
against the revelation of God man discovers who he is and what
truth is and who God is. Emil Brunner's theological episte-
mology is built upon this personalistic premise.

God as Revealer

Jewett remarks, ". . . there can be no adequate under-
standing of what Brunner thinks about Christianity as a whole,
apart from an understanding of his concept of revelation in
particular."[141] Brunner himself says:

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[139]Ibid., p. 124. [140]The Theology of Crisis, pp. 30-31.

[141]Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, p. 1.

> Here [in <u>The Divine-Human Encounter</u>] I placed the
> biblical understanding of truth over and against the
> Greek understanding which is the foundation of our
> Western philosophy and science. Since then, all my
> work in dogmatics has been done in the light of this
> aspect: the God who communicates himself. As a result
> of this, the old concept of revelation was freed from
> its intellectual misunderstanding and the basic connec-
> tion between knowledge and communion came to have its
> rightful place. In this I see my most important contri-
> bution to the theological concept of knowledge.[142]

It would be impossible to understand Brunner's theological

epistemology without investigating his doctrine of revelation,

and for this reason: for Brunner, true knowledge of things

religious is only attained in communion with the God who

discloses Himself. God does not stand at the end of a long

line of deductions or abstract speculation. Man does not

know God unless and until He addresses him personally.

"Through God alone can God be known."[143]

Due to the fact that many studies have already been made

specifically on Brunner's concept of revelation,[144] and also,

because an adequate treatment of this matter would entail

more than a full-length thesis itself, the writer has chosen

to state Brunner's doctrine of revelation in somewhat cursory

form. Much has already been said above with regard to Brunner's

views on revelation; here only the high points of his position

will be presented.

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[142]<u>The Theology of Emil Brunner</u>, edited by Charles W.
Kegley, p. 12.

[143]Brunner, <u>Mediator</u>, p. 21.

[144]See, for example, Paul Jewett's excellent analysis,
<u>Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation</u>, which is quoted above.

A. God Himself is the absolute Subject of revelation. God is primary, creative and without presuppositions.[145] Even as He reveals Himself to man, His Word "never becomes our word, the word of _our_ soul, but remains the Word of God."[146] Brunner says that God as Subject interrupts the "monologue of our thought of God, of our mystical feeling for God"[147] and remains the Subject of the communication throughout. God never becomes an object of thought, but is always the Subject who shares Himself with subjects.

> But if it is true, as faith knows it to be true, that
> God's word is the truth, it means that truth--absolute,
> ultimate, final truth--is not "something" that I can
> know as an object opposite men, neither is it reason
> or spirit, my knowing mind, but it is the divine Thou
> who, in His own initiative, discloses Himself to me.
> True, God is over against me, yet He is no object,
> but spirit. True, He is spirit, but not my spirit;
> He is the absolute subject, which I am not.[148]

Even in His revelation and because of it,[149] God as absolute Subject remains unknowable and mysterious to man. "The better we know God, the more we know and feel that His Mystery is unfathomable."[150] Outside of His self-communication God as Person and Subject remains an absolute mystery;[151] within the context of His self-disclosure in Jesus Christ

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[145]Brunner, _The Divine-Human Encounter_, p. 49.

[146]Brunner, _Word and the World_, p. 80.   [147]_Ibid_., p. 23.

[148]Brunner, _Christianity and Civilisation_. _First Part_,
p. 39.

[149]Brunner, _The Christian Doctrine of God_, p. 118.

[150]_Ibid_., p. 117.   [151]Brunner, _Word and the World_, p. 24.

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this mystery is by no means resolved, but rather thereby first
comes into its own as mystery.[152] Here at least man catches
a glimpse of the full mystery of the nature and purpose of
God. All the while, however, God is absolute Subject of the
epistemological relationship.

B. God discloses Himself through a personal address
to the respondent. As in an encounter between two human
beings person-to-person, God makes Himself accessible to
the believer. He communicates Himself, not a "something,"
to faith. As a result, the believer no longer has an object
to be pondered and discussed as in purely rational effort,
but a "Person who Himself speaks and discloses Himself."[153]
To the question of what God reveals to man, Brunner answers,
"Not merely does He reveal His will-to-communion with us,
His creatures; He reveals Himself, His very essence as Love,
as self communicating Life."[154]

That Brunner's Christology is closely intertwined with
his concept of revelation is at once apparent. In His reve-
lation, God gives man Himself, and He gives man Himself in
the person of Jesus Christ. "Revelation here means the Word
of God as a human person."[155] In Jesus Christ God's revela-
tion becomes personal and it becomes direct.

152Schrotenboer, op. cit., p. 36.

153Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 85.

154Christianity and Civilisation. First Part, p. 38.

155Brunner, Word and the World, p. 21.

Since God's revelation is a disclosure, not of "something," but of Himself, it comes to man in the form of a direct encounter, a personal address.

> No longer is it a question of the insertion of something into the knowledge I possess, the expansion of the intellectual riches at my disposal; but it is answering personally when addressed. . . .[156]

It is one Person lovingly communicating His heart to another person.

C. Only through His revelation can God be known.

> The absolutely Mysterious is not only partially hidden from the natural knowledge of man; it is wholly inaccessible to man's natural faculties for research and discovery.[157]

The God who is conceived by thought is an "intellectual idol," says Brunner.[158]

> [God in His revelation] bursts through and destroys all the fundamental categories of thought: the absolutely antithetical character of the basic logical principles of contradiction and identity.[159]

This viewpoint that a knowledge of God exists only in so far as there is a self-disclosure or revelation has profound implications for Brunner's epistemological position. The knowledge of God and of His "things" is given to man. The self-centered circle of man's unbroken continuity is broken down. "The truth comes in its own way and in its own power, to you.

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[156]Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 89.

[157]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 23.

[158]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 136.

[159]Revelation and Reason, pp. 46-47.

[160]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 125.

You do not possess it, it is not in you, it is given to you."[160]
"God is known only where He Himself makes His Name known,"
says Brunner.[161] Not through thought, nor conclusions drawn
from the structure of the universe, nor meditation on the
nature of the Spirit;[162] but only as He speaks to a man
personally and reveals His Self can God be known and
experienced. This knowledge through revelation is always
a gift of the Self-giving God, and it is always unexpected.[163]
Man cannot know the things of God by his own efforts.

    D. The revelation of God is historical revelation.

> In the "higher" relation to God of speculation and
> mysticism, in the "religion of educated people,"
> revelation means rather the emergence of the eternal
> basis of all phenomena into consciousness, the per-
> ception of something which was always true, the growing
> consciousness of a Divine Presence, which might have
> been perceived before, since it was there all the
> time.[164]

In Christianity--and here lies the stumbling-block, says
Brunner--revelation is "connected with a fact that took
place once and for all. . . ."[165] Natural man wants a
religion of immediacy, of timelessness, on universality.
Natural man is scandalized by this insistence on the
historical, the given. ". . . to Reason there is no greater

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    [161]Ibid., p. 120.

    [162]Revelation and Reason, p. 44.

    [163]Ibid., p. 29.

    [164]Brunner, Mediator, p. 22.

    [165]Ibid., p. 42.

absurdity than to assert that for us the divine truth is an
isolated fact, that it is disclosed to us in one single event."[166]
But, as Brunner writes, "Christianity is either faith in the
revelation of God in Jesus Christ or it is nothing."[167] With
the unrepeatable, given, once-for-all, historical person of
Jesus Christ "all theological statements about the divine
revelation must begin. . . ."[168]

> The historical revelation is the ground of knowledge
> for God's personal Being and God's personal Being
> is the actual ground (Realgrund) of His revelation.[169]

In the incarnate Christ man knows God.

The exact connotation of the term "historical" as used
by Brunner has been the subject of debate. At one place he
can say:

> When we reflect on the rise of faith, it becomes clear
> to us that a real event which transforms existence can
> occur only on the place of real events, that is, of
> historical events. For apart from real history, from
> the events that impinge on my existence, there is no
> reality that in the strict sense transforms existence.[170]

But at another place, in almost Bultmannian tones, Brunner
writes:

> Hence by revelation we mean that historical event
> which is at the same time the end of history, that
> is, an event which, if it really did take place, by

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[166]Ibid., pp. 106-07.

[167]The Theology of Crisis, p. 2.

[168]The Christian Doctrine of Creation, p. 52.

[169]Revelation and Reason, p. 409.

[170]The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 143.

48

its very force shattered the framework of history;
in other words, that in fulfilling the purpose of
history it ends it.[171]

Some light can perhaps be shed on this problematic area of

Brunner's approach to the historicity of Biblical events

by looking at his dialectical answer to the question of

such historicity:

> Yes, for it is in history that this revealed secret
> encounters me as truth. No, for it is the eternal
> God who now speaks to me in this historical revelation.
> Thereby the historical event ceases to be historical
> and becomes living presence. It is by present inspira-
> tion that past incarnation becomes truth to me. It is
> by this historical revelation of the incarnate word
> that this present inspiration can take place.[172]

In so far as God's personal confrontation with man in Jesus

Christ occurs now in this existential moment, it is trans-

historical, and the question of historicity does not apply.

But this present encounter is based upon and finds its

content in a historical once-for-all event which actually

took place in Palestine almost two-thousand years ago.

Brunner says that it is God's Holy Spirit who "bears

witness to, and makes effectual, the historical Christ as

a living personal presence."[173]. To escape the dangers of

both objectivistic[174] and subjectivistic[175] views of revela-

tion, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit must be set forth, says

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[171]Mediator, p. 27.

[172]Christianity and Civilisation. First Part, p. 40.

[173]The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 12.

[174]Word and the World, pp. 60-61.

[175]The Philosophy of Religion, p. 113.

Brunner. "Scripture is only revelation when conjoined with God's spirit in the present."[176] The operation of the Holy Spirit in making historical events existential is the key to solving the historical problem stated above. God's self-communication and man's resultant obedience-in-trust come together in the work of the Spirit.

E. The Bible is the indispensable means of revelation. Jewett says, "It is an open secret by this time that in matters of Biblical criticism Brunner aligns himself with a rather liberal school of thought."[177] Brunner admits, ". . . I myself am an adherent of a rather radical school of Biblical criticism. . . ."[178] He can make such a statement as, "Faith in the infallible Bible is no longer possible for modern man. . . .";[179] he can carry on a vociferous polemic against verbal inspiration; and yet he does not lapse into a completely liberal position. Jewett catches the dialectic note of Brunner's doctrine of the Bible as he says:

> rather than getting above the alternative of theopneusty on the one hand and the abandonment of Scripture authority on the other, the pendulum of his thought simply swings between the two, now touching upon the one, now the other; now making assertions

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[176]The Philosophy of Religion, p. 151.

[177]Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, p. 117.

[178]The Theology of Crisis, p. 41.

[179]The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 189.

which involve the identification of the Word of God
and the words of men, now relativizing the function
of Scripture as a vehicle of revelation to the point
of losing its normative character altogether.[180]

It is, of course, understandable that Brunner, with his

existentialist and personalistic intentions, would differ

from the position of Protestant Orthodoxy on Scripture.

He sees Orthodoxy's insistence on the verbal inspiration

and infallibility of the Bible as aprioristic and the height

of objectivism. He labels these doctrines as evidences of

natural man's inherent drive for assurances and security.

Brunner makes such statements as the following about

the centrality of the Scriptures for the Christian faith:

> Christian faith is Bible faith. When a Christian
> speaks without qualification of God's revelation,
> what he means is Holy Scripture.[181]
>
> . . . .
>
> When the Christian speaks of the Word of God he means
> in the first place the Word of Holy Scripture.[182]
>
> . . . .
>
> The nature of faith is not to be understood by
> starting from the creed of the Church, but by starting
> with the Biblical witness.[183]
>
> [The main thesis of Christianity runs thus:] the
> knowledge of God is to be drawn from Scripture.[184]

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[180]Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, p. 158.

[181]The Philosophy of Religion, p. 150.

[182]Word and the World, p. 82.

[183]The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. x.

[184]The Philosophy of Religion, p. 150.

. . . .

The Bible is the pre-condition of all faith, that
which alone makes it possible. And the whole Bible
at that.[185]

. . . .

Christian faith is faith in the Bible in the sense
that the Bible alone is the place in which God speaks
to us, judges us as through His Word, acquits us
from condemnation, and imparts Himself to us as the
self-bestowing love in which He creates us anew.[186]

Brunner's concern, however, is that the Word of God not be

identified with the words of the Scriptures.[187] This would

be the legalistic error that impairs the actual face-to-face

encounter of Subject with subject in the present moment.

This would lead, not to communion, but to solitary, smug

intellectualism.

Brunner repeats over and over again the motto, "Christus

rex et dominus scripturae." For its purpose of "cradling

Christ" the Bible is absolute authority: ". . . the

Scriptures are the absolute authority, in so far as in them

the revelation, Jesus Christ Himself, is supreme."[188]

Christian faith is not founded on the letters of the Bible,

but on "our relation to the content of that which is proclaimed

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[185]The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 249.

[186]Ibid., p. 241.

[187]The Theology of Crisis, p. 19.

[188]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 49.

in the Scriptures, or rather to the Person Himself, God mani-
fest in the flesh, who speaks to me, personally, in the
Scriptures."[189]   Each clause of the above quotation is abso-
lutely fundamental to Brunner's approach to the Bible and
revelation.

F. Revelation is completed in faith's response.
Jewett defines Brunner's position here: "Revelation is . . .
incomplete apart from its subjective side. Revelation is
address and response, personal correspondence."[190] Brunner
says, "In faith itself God's self-communication finds its
completion."[191] God communicates Himself in love; when this
love is known in responding love, communication has been
consummated. God's revelation does not reach its goal apart
from the "knowledge and act, knowing and happening"[192] of
faith. Reception of God's self-disclosure only occurs in
faith, that is, in the "personal decision which in responsi-
bility answers God's challenge."[193] Revelation is thus a
two-sided act; to abortively attempt its enclosure in a
book is to miss God's Word entirely. According to Brunner,
there is no revelation in the strict sense apart from faith's

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189 Revelation and Reason, p. 169.

190 Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, p. 135.

191 The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 171.

192 The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 64.

193 Word and the World, p. 28.

response.

The aim of the divine revelation is at least twofold: communion with God and the brother, and self-realization.

> Since God makes Himself known to me, I am no longer solitary; the knowledge of God creates community, and indeed community is precisely the aim of the divine revelation.[194]

Not only does the divine knowledge given to faith in revelation supply the answer to the question of truth, but it creates fellowship between God and man as well. Revelation, says Brunner, is "never the mere communication of knowledge, but it is a life-giving and a life-renewing communion."[195]

> The man who, by revelation and faith, takes part in the divine truth, at the same time takes part in the divine love, and is therefore taken into communion. To be in truth is to be in the Love of God, and to be in the Love of God is to become a loving person, to be in communion with God and men.[196]

Men come to know and love each other as a result of God's self-disclosure of love; they also first come to know themselves thereby. "Man can only understand himself when he knows God in His Word."[197] The gift of true personality comes only through the Word of God. "Personal being in the full sense, in the nonlegalistic sense, hence the genuine sense, is no 'neat' entity which is an isolated phenomenon,

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[194]Revelation and Reason, p. 27.

[195]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 20.

[196]Christianity and Civilisation. First Part, p. 38.

[197]Brunner, Man in Revolt, p. 65.

but it is only *in actu Dei*. . . ."[198] Apart from revelation

and faith man's self-estimate is bound to be inaccurate.

> The judgement we form of ourselves is either realistic
> and cynical, or idealistic and illusionary. Apart
> from faith, even in the most serious exercise of our
> moral consciousness, we see ourselves in the artificial
> illumination of autonomy as free beings who can do the
> good because we ought.[199]

Only in the light of God's revelation, therefore, can man

identify himself and find his place in the world.

In summary, it might be said that if Brunner were asked

the question, "How does man know the things of God?" or, "How

does man get to know his brother?," the concept of God's self-

disclosure in His historic and existential revelation would

be absolutely crucial to his answer. Man "knows" the things

of God, not as he knows a fact, but in communion with God,

in person-to-person encounter with Him, an encounter

instigated and brought about solely by the God who reveals

Himself.

The Relation of Reason to Faith and Theology

Jewett says correctly, "Brunner is far too astute a

thinker to commit himself to an uncritical and naive irra-

tionalism."[200] Brunner would never say that man's rational

faculties play no part in faith or theology; he says repeat-

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[198]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 410.

[199]Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 77.

[200]Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, p. 86.

edly that reason is indispensable to both faith and theologiz-
ing. However, he becomes quite specific in defining the proper
sphere and limits of man's intellect. "The legitimate sphere
of reason is: the things of the world."[201]

> The intellect is the power of perceiving the finite,
> especially the world of things and the like, and,
> with the aid of this knowledge the power to live and
> act in this finite world in a practical way.[202]

In close agreement with Luther's distinction between "things
below" and "things above," Brunner says simply, "Reason is
not given us to know God, but to know the world."[203] Reason
is indeed given to man by God; but this does not mean that
God allows Himself to be known by reason. Brunner makes this
interesting observation about the "givenness" of all human
knowledge:

> God is the ground of all knowledge of truth. All
> truth that we perceive and discover we perceive and
> discover by virtue of the light that comes from God.
> Even the perception of the simplest mathematical
> truth is possible only through a ray from the light
> of God. God is the principle of all truth. But from
> this we have no right to infer that in all knowledge
> God may be known. Knowledge that comes from God is
> different from the knowledge of God.[204]

Brunner, furthermore, contends that reason is capable

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[201] The Christian Doctrine of Creation, p. 26.

[202] Man in Revolt, pp. 250-51.

[203] Word and the World, p. 33.

[204] Revelation and Reason, p. 318.

of marking out its own boundaries of competency.[205] The

reason can delimit itself to the things of this world, but

so often, due to man's sinful state, it fails to do so.

Thus this matter of drawing the line of competency becomes

the great problem for man and for faith.

> The question for Christian theology is not whether
> the reason has any rights, whether the reason has any
> authority to judge what is true and what is false . . .
> but where the line must be drawn which delimits the
> sphere in which reason has complete control. It is
> not the validity of the criteria of reason as such
> against which faith has to fight, but the fact that
> they are turned into absolutes, making absolute claims.
> The problem is one of defining the sphere of reason.[206]

Brunner says that it is not the reason itself which is

in opposition to faith, but the "self-sufficient reason."[207]

Faith does not imply a suicidal sacrifice of the intellect--

"Jesus Christ is not the enemy of reason"[208]--but it does

require the limitation and control of reason. It is this

limitation and this control which natural man cannot endure.[209]

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[205]The Philosophy of Religion, p. 73. (This writer
feels that this claim is perhaps one of the weakest points
in Brunner's presentation, a point that contradicts another
emphasis of Brunner himself: natural man's inherent striving
after autonomy. Natural man's reason does not know its
bounds and cannot draw the line where its natural, this-
worldly competence ceases. Cf. Smalcald Articles, Part
III:I:3; Epitome I:9.)

[206]Revelation and Reason, p. 380.

[207]Man in Revolt, p. 244.

[208]Revelation and Reason, p. 16.

[209]Mediator, p. 43.

"The reason considers itself entitled to dominate everything: to set up, and to dispose of, the criteria of all truth."[210] Once again, man's basic drive for autonomy is seen at the base of his epistemological problem.

Although God's revelation does not in any way contradict what can be known of man in and through reason and experience,[211] nevertheless the reason is utterly incapable of breaking through "that ring of immanence of the self-world"[212] into a true knowledge of God and His Word.

> Here all the methods of appropriation and verification which are usually so useful--the methods by which we are able to prove the actuality of something which is said to have happened, as well as all our methods of clarification through analogy, argument, and proof-- break down completely. For the Cross and its meaning-- as is explicitly stated--is unique, never to be repeated, and therefore far above all human analogies; it can never be understood along the lines of intellectual argument.[213]

Knowledge of the world as established by God in its given order is different from the knowledge of the Creator Himself, says Brunner.[214] Even though man, for example, the mystic, might suppose he is independently breaking through into the mysteries of the transcendent by the powers of his reason, there is no hope that this can actually be the case.

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[210] Revelation and Reason, p. 212.

[211] Brunner, Man in Revolt, p. 61.

[212] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 369.

[213] Ibid., p. 166.

[214] Ibid., p. 381.

Ruthlessly the reason spans the circle of immanence around me, even if the idea of transcendence belongs to this immanence. All the transcendence that I think out for myself is only transcendence within immanence; all that I describe as thou within this my world of immanence is only "thou-within-the-world-of-the-self." This world of immanence, in spite of all the variety that takes place within it, is at bottom a static system. No real communication takes place.[215]

What then of a natural knowledge of God, that point at which Brunner so notably differs with Karl Barth? Brunner says,

Even the man to whom God has not made His Name known is not without a certain knowledge of God; for a knowledge of the Creator forms part of the creaturely existence of man.[216]

At another place Brunner writes, "Apart from any special revelation, and indeed from a kind of inner necessity, the human spirit formulates the Idea of God, or something similar. . . ."[217] However, this knowledge is only a "confused and uncertain knowledge of God, a kind of twilight knowledge."[218] It does not create communion with the living God,[219] but ultimately must be called "an abstraction."[220] When Dale Moody makes the following judgment, this writer holds that he is over-simplifying the matter:

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[215]Ibid., p. 367.

[216]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 121.

[217]Man in Revolt, p. 241.

[218]Mediator, p. 151.

[219]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 121.

[220]Revelation and Reason, p. 315.

But Brunner is not willing to limit our knowledge of
God to special revelation. Where Barth rejects the
idea of the image as a formal potentiality for God
Brunner retains it; where Barth speaks of a special
revelation alone, Brunner affirms a general revela-
tion in nature and man. . . .[221]

Brunner does speak of an "_imago verbi_" existing within man's

rational capacities in the same way as the "_imago Dei_" exists

in his person,[222] but he is quick to declare its imperfection

and incompleteness. He does admit that the pagan can have

knowledge of God,[223] but he carefully states that this

knowledge is only an abstraction, a misconceived idea. There

can be no valid knowledge of God and certainly no personal

relationship with Him by man's rational efforts. As Brunner

says:

> through the revelation reason is placed in the
> wrong, namely, in all her attempts to comprehend
> and grasp the Divine which necessarily spring from
> reason.[224]

Brunner speaks often of the relationship between reason

or knowledge and faith. He says that knowledge of an objec-

tive kind is antecedent to the personal act of faith:

> It is true, of course, that the personal act of trust,
> obedience and love is preceded by certain elements of
> objective knowledge--as also they precede the act of

221
    Op. cit., p. 321.

222
    Revelation and Reason, p. 119.

223
    Mediator, p. 121.

224
    Ibid., p. 43.

faith--but they are not the personal act itself.[225]
At another place, however, Brunner says that although faith
is accomplished in a process of thought, it does not spring
from thought, but rather from metanoia, from rethinking and
redirection.[226] What he must mean by these two views is
that while faith is never without content, still it never
springs from man's unilateral "decision" to believe. Only
God's Word creates faith.

> The truth, conceived in an abstract way, separated
> from the Person of God who speaks, is not the ulti-
> mate, but the necessary pen-ultimate, which, however,
> is based upon and proceeds from the ultimate. Our
> nous therefore is the vessel but not the source of
> the Word of God. Where it receives the Word of God
> it is called: faith.[227]

Schrotenboer speaks correctly when he says that to
answer the question whether faith is knowledge or not to
Brunner would not be simple.[228] Faith is an act of
knowledge, according to Brunner,[229] but it is not knowledge
of disposable objects but of disposing subjects. Brunner
writes:

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[225]Revelation and Reason, p. 39. (Using Brunner's
analogy of the "knowledge relationship" within wedlock, it
might be said that this is the knowledge a man has of his
wife prior to his selfless trust and faith in her.)

[226]Ibid., pp. 216-17.

[227]Man in Revolt, p. 245.

[228]Op. cit., p. 51.

[229]Revelation and Reason, p. 34.

To the question: "Is faith knowledge?" our first
answer would have to be "No: it is not the same
thing as everything else that we mean by knowledge."
It arises only where all knowledge is at an end,
both objective knowledge, "explanation," and also
the subjective knowledge that we call understanding.

. . . .

And yet faith is knowledge, true self-knowledge, which
comes into existence only when what I already know
about myself--that I am responsible, that I am guilty--
is taken up into this knowledge, confirmed and
radicalized by it.[230]

Faith is itself a thinking process;[231] it is accomplished in

ideas;[232] but this thinking and these ideas are of a different

kind than regular, objective thought. These are thoughts and

ideas controlled by God; they are thoughts and ideas that

arise only within the personal relationship. They are

thoughts of personal correspondence, intimate communicative

thoughts instilled by the operation of God's Spirit.

faith does not become knowledge, after a process of
rational activity; it is, itself, knowledge. I myself
know, in my faith, that Jesus Christ is my Lord. . . .
It is not a knowledge that I have gained by my own
efforts, but it is that which I now have, which is
neither capable of proof nor, indeed requires proof.
It is knowledge in the dimension of personal encounter:
God Himself discloses Himself to me. It is
revelation.[233]

The knowledge of faith is thus knowledge in a dimension

other than the dimension of common subject-object knowledge:

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[230]The Christian Doctrine of the Church, pp. 260-61.

[231]The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 73.

[232]Ibid., p. 73.

[233]Revelation and Reason, pp. 178-79.

it is personal knowledge. It is the difference between knowing that a person is standing there and knowing that a person loves the knower.

> [Faith] is thus more like the acceptance of a communication than an act of knowing, for in it another communicates to me the mystery that only He knows--namely that He loves me--while we, when we speak of knowing, do not think of this word as having any relation to love. What we call knowledge and what we understand by fellowship or love lie on two quite different planes.[234]

Objective knowledge rests on logic, on the certainty of sense-perception, on the laws of identity and coherence and non-contradiction; faith-knowledge rests upon God and His shared love. Faith-knowledge, therefore, cannot be proven; it has nothing to do with rational certainty. "Faith is personal certainty."[235] Jewett is correct when he says:

> The Brunnerian concept of Paradox, which rests upon the dimensional difference between the Word of God and the word of man, [is] so crucial to an understanding of his solution of the problem of reason and faith.[236]

According to Brunner, faith not only rejects reason but also fulfills it. Reason not only leads away from faith, but also leads toward it.[237] While faith is "poles apart" from what

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[234]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 259.

[235]Brunner, Word and the World, p. 75.

[236]Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, p. 96.

[237]Schrotenboer, op. cit., p. 58.

is usually meant by objective knowledge,[238] yet it cannot
exist without this knowledge.[239] The rational element is
neither the source nor the content of faith, and yet it is
incorporated within faith.[240] Another way of saying this is
to say that even personal correspondence with a "Thou" is
commingled with objective knowledge, however imperfect, of
that "Thou."

Brunner says again and again that faith does not put
the reason out of action or annihilate it, but that it is
through faith that the Word of God takes reason into its
service.[241] As Jewett explains Brunner's thought, ". . .the
path of reason is curved by the gravitational centre of
faith."[242] Man essentially has been created not for thought,
but for loving, says Brunner.[243] Faith sets the reason free
to be an instrument and participant in love, in fellowship
with God and man.

> The unredeemed man has two centers, one of reason
> and the other of love. . . . faith consists precisely
> in the fact that the heart and the reason again become
> one, that the reason becomes warmed, and the heart
> becomes rational.[244]

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[238]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, p. 259.

[239]Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 420.

[240]Schrotenboer, op. cit., p. 52.

[241]Revelation and Reason, p. 429.

[242]Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, p. 105.

[243]Revelation and Reason, p. 428   [244]Ibid.

An abrupt antithesis between revelation and reason is foreign to the outlook of both the Bible[245] and the early theologians of the Church,[246] says Brunner. One does well to remember that Brunner sets up the problem in terms of "revelation and reason" and not "revelation or reason."

> Hence the question can never be _whether_, but to _what extent_ and _in what sense_, reason and revelation, faith and rational thinking can be combined with one another.[247]

It is precisely at this point, at this proposed inner penetration of the dimensions of reason and faith, that certain of Brunner's critics attack him.[248] Critical reason cannot attain to the knowledge of revelation--it only leads up to it--and yet there can be no revelation apart from reason. The problem that Brunner encounters with this "dimensional" differentiation between faith and reason can be made more clear if one sees just how he views the various dimensions of reality. The picture is one of concentric circles around a given center. The center is the dimension of the person, with the circles of scientific theology and then the formal sciences proceeding outward from it. There is a penetration of the lower, non-personal dimension by the higher, personal

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[245] _Ibid._, p. 309.

[246] _Ibid._, p. 310.

[247] _Ibid._, p. 311.

[248] Jewett, _Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation_, p. 99.

one, from the center out. The competency of reason in the
subject matter with which it is concerned is proportional to
its proximity to the personal center: the farther from the
center, the greater the competency. The relation between
faith and reason is thus proportional and not precise. The
personal and the rational interpenetrate all areas of human
activity, but proportionately.[249] It is this proportionate
interpenetration scheme which gives many critics, many of
whom are perhaps looking for a sharply defined scheme present-
ing the areas of competency of both faith and reason, a diffi-
cult time with Brunner's position.

Another helpful picture Brunner presents is that of
tangential and centripetal forces representing reason and
faith respectively:

> The purely rational element of thought, logic, has
> the tendency to go straight forward from each given
> point; but faith continually prevents this straight-
> forward movement by its pull towards the [evangelical]
> Centre. So instead of a movement in a straight line
> there arises a circular movement around the Centre--
> and that is a picture of real theological thinking.
> Theological thinking is a rational movement of thought,
> whose rational tendency at every point is being
> deflected, checked, or disturbed by faith. Where
> the rational element is not effective there is no move-
> ment of thought, no theology; where the rational ele-
> ment alone is at work, there arises a rational specula-
> tive theology, which leads away from the truth of
> revelation. Only where faith and rationality are
> rightly interlocked can we have true theology, good
> dogmatics.[250]

249Brunner, _Revelation_ _and_ _Reason_, p. 383.

250_The_ _Christian_ _Doctrine_ _of_ _God_, p. 76.

Brunner insists that man can never separate the abstract framework of reason and doctrine from the personal Presence contained in them.

> We know that we can never have the one without the other, and we know at the same time that the whole point is to have the personal contained within the abstract framework. . . . doctrine is indissolubly connected with the reality it represents.[251]

Whenever God speaks to us He "says something," says Brunner, and therefore "a certain amount of doctrine must be present before living faith can come into being."[252] The exact relation between the doctrine and the revelation is "incommensurable."[253] The difference between them is abysmal, and yet the connection between them is essential.

It is, after all, the purely human faculty of thought which qualifies the theologian for his work.[254] Reflection, concepts, thought-forms, logical processes of proof--these are all the proper activities of the theologian as well as the philosopher. Theological knowledge is in that second circle, once removed from the personal center, and this distinction must be carefully maintained.

> The difference between the knowledge of faith and theological knowledge, which is so difficult to

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[251]The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 111.

[252]Ibid., p. 120.

[253]Ibid.

[254]Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 75.

define, and yet so necessary, is not one of subject
or of content, but one of the form or dimension of
existence. Theological or dogmatic knowledge is, it is
true, the knowledge of faith in accordance with its
origin, but not with its form. One who thinks in
terms of theology must, so long as he does this, pass
from the attitude of the worshipper to that of the
thinker who is concerned with his subject. Greater
clearness and precision of theological concepts can
only be gained at the cost of directness of faith,
and that readiness for action which it contains.[255]

In face of doctrinal errors or heresies, in face of the

questions which necessarily arise in the believer's mind, in

face of the difficulties which accompany the original

Biblical doctrine,[256] and especially in face of the need of

every Christian man to know the meaning of "the Father in

Heaven, the forgiveness of sins, Atonement through the Son

of God, and the Work of the Holy Spirit,"[257] the Church must

ever be vitally concerned with doctrinal clarity and accuracy,

says Brunner. However, this more impersonal, objective con-

cern for sound doctrine "must always come second"[258] (and

between this "second" and "first" mission of the Church

yawns a dimensional divide) to the personal address of God's

Word, Jesus Christ who is the Truth, to the heart of every

man.

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[255] Ibid., p. 41.

[256] Ibid., p. 40.

[257] Ibid., p. 10.

[258] Revelation and Reason, p. 153.

CHAPTER II

HEINECKEN, KANTONEN AND SITTLER COMPARED WITH BRUNNER

Martin Heinecken

It has been shown that the theological epistemology of
Emil Brunner clusters around six major foci:

a. The particular bent of his position is evoked
largely in antithesis to objective intellectualism
within the Church, and especially within Protestant
Orthodoxy.

b. Biblical knowledge and truth is set over against
Greek knowledge and truth.

c. The subject-object split of philosophical, analytic
epistemology gives way to a Subject-subject rela-
tional framework of knowledge in Biblical epistemo-
logy.

d. Theological personalism is the key to Brunner's
epistemology.

e. God, in His self-disclosure, is the absolute
Subject of religious knowledge.

f. While reason is essential for both faith and
theology, it always serves a secondary function and
is never to be mistaken for the primary personalis-
tic means of "knowing" God.

In this second part of the study, the viewpoints on this
subject of Martin Heinecken, Taito Kantonen and Joseph Sittler
will be presented. The same six divisions or categories used
in Chapter I will serve as the basic framework for this chapter.
Thus Martin Heinecken's thoughts on the historical perspective
of this problem, the difference between the Greek and Biblical
traditions in the area of epistemology, the place of the
subjective and objective in theological epistemology, and so

on through the six divisions, will be presented. Heinecken
will then be followed by a similar study of Kantonen, and
Kantonen by Sittler.

None of these three American Lutheran theologians admit
to an excessive dependence upon Brunner for their thought in
the area of the nature and perception of religious truth.
Each of them refers to Brunner a number of times by way of
quotation or allusion,[1] but most cases of similarities in
position cannot be explained as prima-facie dependence of
the Lutherans upon Brunner. It is, of course, possible that
all four men are deriving their homogeneous portions from a
common source. Both Brunner[2] and Heinecken[3] are heavily
indebted to Soren Kierkegaard and to existentialist thought;
it is probable that Kantonen and Sittler profit from Kierke-
gaard also, even if not in such an outspoken manner. It
might be added that Kierkegaard's famed battle against sterile

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[1]Martin J. Heinecken, The Moment Before God (Philadelphia:
Muhlenberg Press, 1956), p. 111.
Martin J. Heinecken, "Currents in American Theology,"
Lutheran World, III (March, 1957), 368.
T. A. Kantonen, The Message of the Church to the World
of Today (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1941),
p. 141.
T. A. Kantonen, A Theology for Christian Stewardship
(Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), p. 73.
Joseph Sittler, The Doctrine of the Word (Philadelphia:
Muhlenberg Press, 1948), pp. 26, 36, 54, 61.

[2]Dale Moody, "An Introduction to Emil Brunner," The
Review and Expositor, XLIV (July, 1947), 313.

[3]"Currents," op. cit., p. 362.

intellectualism in the Church coincides quite nicely with the major emphasis of each of these four men. But this study does not have as its intention the tracing of dependencies in the thought of these four theologians; it only seeks to present and compare their respective positions within the framework of the six categories listed above.

The historical perspective

Although Martin Heinecken does not investigate the history of philosophy as thoroughly as does Brunner to pinpoint the foundations of a subject-object antithesis type of epistemology within theology, he does repeatedly refer to Protestant Orthodoxy in much the same vein as Brunner. He, too, sets up the period of seventeenth century Orthodoxy as the major antithesis to his own position. Heinecken says that Orthodoxy's concern for maintaining doctrinal purity was correct, but that its method of doing so was misguided and ill-founded. He writes:

> [Luther] returned to a biblical orientation completely
> foreign to the scholastic orientation, and yet it was
> precisely to that orientation that seventeenth-century
> orthodoxists returned and while they wrestled nobly
> to do justice to the dynamic of the gospel, they never-
> theless straitjacketed and imprisoned it. With ever
> finer and finer rational distinctions they tried their
> best to do justice to the mysteries of the faith and
> to safeguard them against heresy. But because the
> basic orientation of the philosophy with which they
> operated was wrong, it resulted in any number of the
> most fearful distortions.[4]

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[4]_Christ_ _Frees_ _and_ _Unites_ (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press,
1957), p. 68.

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Heinecken says the philosophical orientation upon which
Orthodoxy was structured was that of scholasticism. In such
doctrines as the communicatio idiomatum and the kenosis, says
Heinecken, this scholastic bent is especially prevalent.[5]
Also in the doctrine of God, the scholastic-Aristotelian
framework is obvious.

> So, for example, the doctrine of God followed the
> pattern of the definition of other terms, classifying
> God in the class of personal beings and then distinguish-
> ing him from other members of this class by various
> attributes, such as absoluteness, aseity, holiness, and
> so forth, arriving at these attributes via eminentiae,
> via negationis and via causalitatis. This is boxing God
> up very neatly and, even if the anthropomorphisms are
> recognized as inadequate, the whole procedure cannot
> do justice to the living God, who in the Bible is not
> ever defined in this way, but only described in his
> actions in the most lordly, quite arbitrary, irra-
> tional, offensive, contradictory fashion. Once having
> boxed up God in the definition, it is the very devil
> to liberate him again.[6]

This attempted "boxing up" of God in the definition, the idea
or the theological system is the very antithesis to true
knowledge of God, Heinecken would argue. It is just this
attempt at explaining religious truth in a nice, coherent
compendium of doctrines with which Luther had broken.

Not only did Orthodoxy revert to a previous scholastic
doctrinal framework, but American Lutheran theology, in its
close adherence to Orthodoxy and its methods, unwittingly
promulgated the same perversion.

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[5] Ibid., p. 70.

[6] Ibid., pp. 68-69.

American Lutheran theology . . . generally adherred to the seventeenth century orthodoxy with remarkable consistency. Practically all the textbooks on which Lutherans until very recently were trained follow the same pattern--a repristination of seventeenth century Lutheran orthodoxy as compiled in Schmid's Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Hollaz, Quenstedt, Chemnitz, Gerhard, etc.). . . . This theology had the great merit of being a bulwark against the confusion of philosophical speculation, but as recent research has shown, it clearly marks a departure from the theology of Luther and a relapse into the Aristotelian categories with which Luther had broken.[7]

Heinecken, like Brunner, sees in this type of theological endeavor the whole trend toward self-security. "In the objective sacraments and in a plain coherent system of doctrine based on an infallible Bible there is a refuge from the anxiety of the human situation."[8] But this refuge within man-made systems and assurances is a false refuge, says Heinecken, and one that can only lead away from Him who is the true Refuge. ". . . the living God is not apprehended in this way. When you grasp the idea, you clasp an idol to your bosom."[9]

Heinecken holds that existentialist categories and thought-forms hold the key to theological truth and that they can render the Church of this day a "much better service" than the scholastic-orthodox thought patterns of the seventeenth

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[7]Heinecken, "Currents," op. cit., pp. 361-62.

[8]Ibid., p. 363.

[9]Moment, p. 234.

century.[10]   Heinecken is tacitly agreeing with the movement

he is describing as he says:

> Common also to this whole group [neo-orthodoxy] is the
> emphasis upon event, encounter, crisis, paradox, and a
> differentiation of the Hebrew-Christian thought-forms
> from Greek and other alternatives. Revelation is
> personal encounter and not the making known of true
> propositions. Crisis replaces progress and evolutionary
> development. The human situation in existence is ana-
> lyzed with the help of Kierkegaard and existentialist
> theology.[11]

Heinecken uses the categories of existentialist theology

listed above almost without exception in his own presentation.

It is his involvement in existentialist thought primarily

which moves him to see in Protestant Orthodoxy a tangential

emphasis in the field of Biblical truth and epistemology.

Greek versus Biblical concepts of knowledge

Heinecken goes to some pains to distinguish between a

static, objective Greek approach to truth and theology and

a dynamic, existential, Biblical approach. The existentialist

themes,in particular, show through in his position. With

regard to the personal versus the abstract levels of truth,

he says, ". . . the particular must always take preference

over the universal,"[12] and ". . . this business of abstracting

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[10]Christ Frees and Unites, p. 72.

[11]"Currents," op. cit., p. 366.

[12]God in the Space Age (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston
Company, 1959), p. 70.

from the particular also involves a great loss."[13] The

here and now, the individual, the concrete, as contrasted

with the general and abstract is the important factor within

the epistemological God-man relationship.

In this relationship the "moment" is the decisive factor

and not a timeless, unalterable, static body of truths.

> Here in this moment when God encounters man, not in
> an instant of recollection, but in the begetting of
> the truth in him, there is compressed all eternity.
> . . . This moment is the _fullness of time_. It is quite
> different from that other ever-present possibility of
> realizing the eternal truth of the reason in which no
> encounter with the living God is involved, but only
> the awareness of certain "ideas."[14]

Because of this present, existential nature of the God-

man relationship, Heinecken holds that there can be no fixa-

tion of theology in a system adequate for all times. Theology,

in order to express the truth of the gospel, must remain in

constant flux. An absolute, once-for-all solidification of

doctrine attempting to set forth the truth of God and man in

their relationship is "a monstrosity,"[15] and ultimately a

rejection of the _sola fide_ principle.

> Such unity of faith is, however, not achieved once
> and for all by agreement upon one doctrinal system
> fixated for all times in precisely those terms.
> This would be confusing the word of man and the word

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[13]_Ibid._, p. 30.

[14]Heinecken, _Moment_, p. 104.

[15]_Ibid._, p. 8.

of God, a man-made theology with the actual divine self-impartation. This would make man the master, who has God boxed up in these formulations and would be a denial of justification by faith.[16]

Further to demonstrate the difference between Greek "I-It" and Biblical "I-Thou" truth Heinecken on several occasions uses the analogy of "wrist-watch time" (Greek) over against "alarm-clock time" (Biblical).[17] One type of truth emphasizes the timeless, the regulated, the systematic; the other stresses the punctiliar, the awakening, the present call to action. The one type of truth can be anticipated and controlled by man; the other catches man unexpectedly and demands a response.

Along with Brunner, Heinecken complains that objective thought in the Greek tradition tends to build up an autonomy and a smug self-sufficiency within the knower.[18] But not so with the Word of God. Here man is never in control; he never has a manipulable object at his disposal; there is no guaranteed authority either of infallible hierarchy or book--man lives by faith, and faith is always a risk.[19] The same

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[16]Heinecken, Christ Frees and Unites, p. 49.

[17]Heinecken, Space Age, p. 66. See also: Martin J. Heinecken, Beginning and End of the World (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 26.

[18]Moment, p. 226.

[19]Martin J. Heinecken, "The Tension between Love and Truth," The Lutheran Quarterly, XI (August, 1959), 206.

situation pertains in life in general, says Heinecken:

> In logic there are nothing but static relationships
> which eternally are what they are and cannot possibly
> change. . . . But in life, which is always in flux,
> always in process of becoming, there can be neither
> logical necessity nor absolute consistency nor abso-
> lute certainty.[20]

In the one type of relationship, man lives by guarantees

which he himself can manipulate; in the other he lives by

faith. In the one his knowledge of God is direct and deter-

minate; in the other it is always _in spe_.

Heinecken makes frequent use of the term "paradox" to

denote the sign of Biblical truth as opposed to the non-

contradictory nature of Greek truth. The religious paradox

is seen as "the absolute barrier which blocks the way to a

mere intellect appropriation of a God-idea and forces man to

be confronted with the living God in the 'hiddenness' of his

revelation."[21] Heinecken says that whenever a Christian

talks about the God-relationship he is confronted with some-

thing which he cannot understand and which is a mystery to

him, and thus he necessarily finds himself involved in para-

doxical language.[22] With somewhat Bultmannian overtones Hein-

ecken explains just what he means by labeling the Christian

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[20] _Moment_, p. 64.

[21] _Ibid._, p. 22.

[22] _Ibid._, p. 73.

faith "paradoxical":

> So it is misleading to say that a certain "fact" is
> paradoxical. The fact is "incomparable" and it is
> the language used in attempted description and
> attempted communication of this fact which is
> paradoxical.[23]

This is far different from the Greek intellectualist notion

that doctrines and systems can adequately enclose the mysteries

of God. Heinecken concludes that the paradox is one of the

very basic categories of systematic theology which must be

preserved for twentieth century theology.[24] "There is some-

thing about the Christian proclamation which makes a mere

intellectual acceptance impossible."[25] The paradox is in

the proclamation, however, and not in the fact itself. The

fact, for example, of the resurrection, is what it is and

like no other fact; it baffles description. Thus it cannot

be communicated directly or logically or objectively by

language; it can merely be pointed at. The fact must be

assimilated via an experiential involvement prompted and

maintained only by the Lord Himself.

Heinecken maintains that the gospel is in "a class by

itself."[26] The distinction between the truth and knowledge

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[23] Ibid., p. 57.   [24] Ibid., p. 382.

[25] Ibid., p. 6.

[26] "The Pre-theological Curriculum," The Lutheran
Quarterly, II (November, 1950), 428.

of the gospel and the truth and knowledge of, for example,
mathematics, is qualitative and not quantitative. And, as
Heinecken says, ". . . you can never through quantitative
changes leap over into a new quality."[27] Christianity and
Christian epistemology are "not merely a matter of the way
in which we ordinarily communicate ideas because we share the
referents of the world involved. . . . No knowledge is
imparted in the simple way. . . ."[28] In the following state-
ment Heinecken further explains the qualitative difference
between the two kinds of knowledge:

> To possess the truth of God is something other than
> a formal correspondence between words or thoughts in
> the head and something objective and outside of the
> mind to which these ideas correspond or with which
> they are identical. This is not what the Bible means
> by knowing God. God is not a reality corresponding
> to my idea of him in my mind, any more than my wife
> or any person is. We just have to rid ourselves of
> such Platonic notions. To know God is to be known of
> him, and this is a matter of right relationship, as
> has so often been pointed out after the analogy of the
> sexual relation. The God of the Bible does not
> correspond to any single idea in man's mind. He is not
> the archetype of an idea. He is the living God who
> confronts man, stands over against him, addresses him,
> face to face, eye to eye, even though this is in a
> medium or mask.[29]

Truth and the knowledge of the truth to Heinecken, as well
as to Brunner, is a relational process; it is found in the
encounter and not at the end of a syllogism.

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[27]Moment, p. 182.

[28]Ibid., p. 6.

[29]"Tension," op. cit., pp. 201-02.

The subject-object split and beyond

Brunner has been shown to overcome the subject-object antithesis with his "personal correspondence" formulation. Heinecken acknowledges perfect agreement with him on this point.[30] Heinecken says:

> He [man] cannot grasp God as the object of his thought--he can only encounter him person to person. God always remains the subject who continues to address man, to hold him responsible, to keep him in front of himself. Man can never reverse this relationship and make God the object.[31]

God is always the Subject, and, according to Heinecken, He is only known in subjectivity. "Though objectively present God is discerned only in inwardness."[32] Heinecken makes stronger statements than Brunner regarding truth as subjectivity. He writes:

> The reassuring presence of the atoning and victorious Lord is discernible only inwardly by the one who is not just a spectator but a participator. Hence truth is subjectivity.[33]

And furthermore, Heinecken writes:

> It is God himself who is encountered only subjectively and never objectively. All the resultant affirmations

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[30] "Bultmann's Theology and the Message of the Preacher," The Lutheran Quarterly, VI (1954), 294.

[31] Moment, p. 72.

[32] Ibid., p. 85.

[33] Ibid., p. 270.

of faith are made only by the one who has experienced
this encounter for himself.[34]

Properly understood, Heinecken and Brunner are agreed here.
They both say that God is known only through personal in-
volvement. Both say that God is indeed objectively present
in His revelation, but that this revelation can only be
appropriated by a decisive, inner correspondence. It is
not an instance of a subject grasping an object but of a
Subject coming face-to-face with a subject.

Personalism as the key

Once again, Heinecken is in close agreement with Brunner
in finding the person-to-person relationship the most apt
analogy in describing the God-man relationship. Heinecken
writes:

> Moreover, in the exigencies of life, the supposed
> certainty of knowledge forsakes man, thus indicating
> that in the God-relation a different kind of knowledge
> is required in the very nature of the personal rela-
> tionship. Here "knowledge" is a relation of"personal
> correspondence," a "knowledge" in the intimate sense
> of participating in the other as in the intimacy of
> the sexual union. It is a relationship of actual
> obedience-in-trust, a relationship of having the other
> impart, not ideas or gifts only, but actually himself.[35]

In this dimension of personal relationships, Heinecken warns
that the statistical, quantitative categories of the objec-

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[34] Ibid., p. 226.

[35] Ibid., pp. 142-43.

tive, natural sciences simply do not apply. This is also
true, to a certain extent, of theology as a scientific endea-
vor: the personalistic categories often do not apply.

> A method of prediction and control simply destroys
> the personal relation. It turns the I-Thou relation
> into an I-It relation. It turns the relation where
> two personal beings confront each other in personal
> address into a relation where the one uses a thing
> merely for his purposes, manipulating it and pushing
> it around. Another person dare never be used in this
> way.[36]

In a similar vein, Heinecken says elsewhere that the moment
one reduces the living person confronting one (whether man
or God) to a definition or an abstract thought, one loses
him.[37] "An individual person cannot be thought but only
encountered. Neither can God be thought but only encountered."[38]
The letter smothers the spirit.

The fact that God reveals Himself in a personal manner
necessarily sets certain limits on man's penetration into
God's mysteries. Just as with another person,[39] man can know
only as much as God discloses, and this, not in an objective,
tabulatable set of data, but only in a living obedience which
often must "trust that revelation in contradiction to the evi-
dence."[40]

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[36]Heinecken, Space Age, p. 67.

[37]Christ Frees and Unites, p. 69.

[38]Moment, p. 147.

[39]Heinecken, Space Age, pp. 107-08.

[40]Heinecken, Moment, p. 111.

It is idolatry to find a certainty other than that
of the personal relation of trust in the living God
who confronts one and calls one to decision. When this
confrontation ceases one communes in the chambers of
one's own mind with a logical essence instead of with
that living God who cannot be so reduced.[41]

Heinecken, along with Brunner, but not as extensively
as Brunner, points out that the decisive factor in God's
personal revelation and man's personal response is the Person,
Jesus Christ. The person of Jesus Himself is essentially
what makes the God-man relationship personal. "The Church
proclaims the personal Truth, with whom we must enter into
a personal relation of trust, confidence, and obedience."[42]
This fact that God revealed Himself in a person is only half
of both Brunner's and Heinecken's development of the personal-
istic theme, however. As far as epistemology is concerned,
the analogy which they both draw between the knowledge one
person has of another (particularly in the marriage relation-
ship) and the knowledge one has of God and of religious truth
is the point of chief importance. Their entire theological
epistemology is based on this analogy: man's knowledge of
God is like man's intimate knowledge of another person, with
all the implications and limitations this involves.

God as Revealer

Heinecken, like Brunner, not only sees the doctrine of

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[41]Ibid., pp. 57-58. [42]"Tension," op. cit., p. 205.

revelation as being closely intertwined within the area of epistemology, but he also comes to much the same conclusions in his elaborations of the doctrine of revelation as does Brunner. Several distinctly Lutheran aspects come through: an emphasis on the sacraments as a means of revelation, and the reference to "masks" as the framework of actual revelation. But for the most part there is close coincidence of thought.

Heinecken insists that God remains the Subject throughout the revelatory process. "God is absolutely other from the existing individual but he has revealed himself and therefore I 'know' him in this revelation. But he still remains the subject."[43] Heinecken says that "no one--no witness, no human teacher--can directly communicate the God-relationship," but that this is solely God's prerogative.[44]

> God reveals himself. It is God who is the initiator
> of the revelation. This is not an act of human discovery
> as when man discerns an indubitable truth with the power
> of his reason. Nor is it a human hypothesis set up
> by man in an effort to account for certain experienced
> phenomena. It is rather God on his own initiative
> encountering man in his existence at a time and
> place.[45]

God is always at the beginning as well as at the end of revelation. He discloses Himself.

Heinecken also speaks of the otherness of God even in

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[43]Moment, p. 80.

[44]Ibid., p. 258.

[45]Ibid., p. 102.

the midst of His revelation. As he says, "God has a secret which he does not share with us."[46] The difference between God and men is not only one of degree, but of kind as well. "The unseen and unseeable God is, quite simply, in a dimension different from that of space. . . ."[47] When man is confronted by God, says Heinecken, he is confronted "not only by a power and a knowledge and a goodness which are quantitatively beyond him. There is a qualitative difference."[48] All metaphysical speculation, all attempts to reduce God to a simple idea, all deductive assertions as to God's nature in itself are blocked by an absolute barrier.

> God in and for himself is still "unknown" as the
> absolutely, qualitatively different about whom
> nothing can be said, except by way of pointing
> out the difference and the mystery. . . . As for
> asserting his metaphysical essence and attributes,
> this is a presumptuous and vain endeavor.[49]

Heinecken makes an important distinction between the onto-logical and spiritual aspects of this problem when he says:

> So the absolute qualitative otherness of God, it is
> said, is not a metaphysical otherness at all. It is
> not a matter of some chasm between man and the God
> in whose image he is after all made and whom, in
> some sense, he must resemble. The difference, it
> is said, lies in the realm of the "religious" and not
> that of metaphysical speculation.[50]

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[46]*Beginning and End of the World*, p. 45.

[47]*Ibid.*, p. 25.

[48]*Moment*, p. 69.

[49]*Ibid.*, pp. 109-10.

[50]*Ibid.*, p. 117.

The above statement would seem to deny the validity of any kind of _analogia entis_. The question might be raised, however, as to what this position, if consistently held, would imply if applied to Heinecken's own personalistic analogy. Due to God's complete otherness, perhaps even this analogy cannot be pressed as far as both Heinecken and Brunner press it. What Heinecken is trying to say here, however, is that even the category of "completely other" can be construed as a metaphysical category. He wants to take God's transcendence out of the area of ontology and put it back into the area of the existential. God is completely, inestimably above a specific man as he confronts that man and demands an answer.

Thus, even in His revelation, God remains hidden and mysterious. Even in His revelation He is known in a different way than the truths of reason or even other historical persons are known. "Faith is never turned to sight," says Heinecken.[51] God always wears a mask in His revelation and confronts man in such a way that He is never directly discernible.[52] Heinecken repeats over and over again: God can be known only with the eyes of faith. ". . . God never did, does not now, and never will appear to man directly for all to see. . . . It is only to the eyes of faith that the

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[51] _Ibid._, p. 112.

[52] _Ibid._, p. 68.

living God is discernible."[53] Thus revelation and faith are always corollaries; there cannot be one without the other. It must be made clear at this point that faith, as Heinecken is using it here, is no mere acceptance of statements or assent to doctrines. "The revelatory events I must apprehend with my whole being, with the risk of my life and the transformation of my existence."[54] This is the involvement which faith entails.

God is known through the act of inner transformation of one's being, says Heinecken.[55] Thus sanctification is not considered as a result of the self-disclosure of God; it is in the very act of renewal that God's self-communication is truly realized. Repentance and renewal are thus prere- quisites for true knowledge of God. "The disciple . . . must in this moment of encounter be born a new creature."[56] Speaking of the Pentecost gift of the Spirit, Heinecken says:

> Not long years of study, not painstaking intellectual effort, but inner humility, openness, receptivity, the recognition of a common human need were the conditions of understanding this new language which the Holy Spirit taught.[57]

A summary statement might be this one of Heinecken's: "God

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[53]Space Age, p. 101.

[54]Moment, p. 138.

[55]Ibid., p. 68.

[56]Ibid., pp. 104-05.

[57]Basic Christian Teachings (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1949), p. 107.

is not meant to be understood, but to be <u>obeyed</u>."[58]

Heinecken speaks of the actual historical character of God's revelation. "God reveals himself through actions and not through the abstract thoughts of philosophers."[59] This historical element is indeed part of the hiddenness of the revelation. This is the very offense to man's reason.

> It [for example, the incarnation] is the revelatory or salvatory event in which, quite paradoxically and in a hidden, non-discernible way as far as the senses or the insights of reason are concerned, the unseen God enters into space and time and effects man's redemption by imparting himself. Such salvatory events are inseparable from historical events. They are "hidden" in them.[60]

This, of course, is good Lutheran sacramental theology. Neither to be identified with the medium (except, of course, in the case of Christ) nor removed from the medium, God reveals Himself and comes through the historical, present, concrete medium. As Heinecken states it, "This God of love can be encountered at any time and at any place <u>where the gospel is proclaimed and the sacraments are administered</u>."[61]

Ultimately Heinecken, like Brunner, explains Biblical epistemology by referring to the work of the Holy Spirit. ". . . any critic of the epistemology of the Christian

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[58] <u>Moment</u>, p. 128.

[59] <u>Basic Teachings</u>, p. 29.

[60] "Bultmann's Theology," <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 290.

[61] <u>Moment</u>, p. 116.

religion ought to be silenced by the fact of Pentecost," he says.[62]   To the basic question "How does one know God?," Heinecken gives his answer and the answer of the Christian tradition as he says:

> that God is "known" only through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son and whose coming is a part of the revelation of God in Christ, so that there is no revelation except as the sending of the Spirit is included as a part of the revelatory event.[63]

The knowledge which the Spirit gives will be received in a different manner than the knowledge that "two times two is four or that Caesar crossed the Rubicon," says Heinecken. But those who have celebrated Pentecost will know, and they will know they know.[64]

God reveals Himself as a personal being, says Heinecken, "a center of will and responsibility."[65]   He reveals His heart, His true disposition, "which is love," to men.[66]   Man is by nature "aware" of the "Other," but about His nature and disposition he knows nothing.

> His [man's] predicament is not his wrestling with the question as to whether or not there is "a god," but rather to know the name, the true nature of

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[62]Ibid., p. 79.

[63]Ibid., pp. 77-78.

[64]Ibid., p. 80.

[65]Basic Teachings, p. 25.

[66]Heinecken, Moment, p. 116.

that "unknown one," with whom he finds himself
wrestling. . . .[67]

Heinecken admits to a general revelation, a universal divine
confrontation of man in his existence giving rise to an unde-
fined "existential awareness of the 'other,'"[68] but he says
also that the gods of natural man "are one and all idols,
who must be supplanted by the true God, made 'known' only in
Jesus Christ."[69] The god arrived at by man's reasoning is
never "the Creator upon whose will of love all that is
depends absolutely" and "the One to whom he [man] owes
all."[70]

> God is not there at the fringes of man's knowledge
> simply to explain what still remains inexplicable
> and mysterious, but the living God confronts man
> at all times. . . .[71]

Heinecken is too much of an existentialist to deny any
degree of awareness of the transcendent within man's natural
inner experience. By an awareness of one's own limitations,
by a sensitivity to the absolute claim laid upon man, by the
feelings of insecurity and the threat of meaninglessness,[72]
man "knows" of the "Other," but Heinecken would say, with

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[67]M. J. Heinecken, "Man Today and the Message of
Justification," Lutheran World, IX (July, 1962), 197.

[68]Moment, p. 123.

[69]Ibid., p. 77.

[70]Ibid., pp. 126-27.

[71]Space Age, p. 73.

[72]Ibid., pp. 108-10.

Brunner, that this knowledge is confused and idolatrous.

The relation of reason to faith and theology

This statement by Heinecken could just as well have

been made by Brunner:

> While the formulation and acceptance of doctrine is
> not to be equated with the personal faith-relationship,
> it is most certainly inseparable from it. . . . While
> the biblical record is not just a compendium of doc-
> trines or truths but the witness to certain events, it
> is as such a witness replete with the doctrines which
> the transformed believers affirmed and which distinguished
> them from their pagan neighbors.[73]

Just as God's revelation in His actions is always "inseparable

from interpretive words,"[74] so man's affirmation of faith must

be "in the form of sentences."[75] In speaking of the necessity

for anthropomorphisms in the Bible, Heinecken says that in

order that man might know the living God, He had to reveal

Himself "within the realm of what man can conceive."[76] He

had to submit Himself also to man's rational faculties, or

no communication would take place. ". . . because men

believe in God they also believe certain things," says

Heinecken.[77] He insists, however, that these "things" about

God are not to be confused with God Himself. "There

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[73] Christ Frees and Unites, pp. 47-48.

[74] "Tension," op. cit., p. 202.

[75] Ibid., p. 203.

[76] Space Age, p. 87.

[77] Basic Teachings, p. 18.

is a distinction between 'believing in' and 'believing that.'
Only 'believing in' is <u>faith</u>. 'Believing that' accompanies
the 'believing in.'"[78] The <u>assentia</u> is a necessary but
explicitly secondary corollary to the <u>fiducia</u>. One can have
a "belief that" without a "belief in," but not <u>vice versa</u>.
Heinecken does say that a specified list of doctrine is not
necessary for faith:

> The acceptance of a doctrine of the atonement can save
> no one. Only actually being drawn into the right God-
> relationship matters, and that can happen even without
> the acceptance of some doctrine.[79]

Although it is not clear what the "some" of the above statement
includes, it can be said that Heinecken would not agree to the
possibility of faith with no objective knowledge whatsoever.

Just what is the difference, then, which Heinecken sees
between the knowledge of faith and analytic, objective
knowledge? First of all, the former is found only within the
existential relationship while the latter is achieved in a
detached, verifiable manner.

> By way of contrast with these [objective] propositions,
> the truth of which is determinable in spectator fashion
> either with apodictic certainty or with a degree of
> approximation only, there are "existential" proposi-
> tions. These cannot be either affirmed or denied
> except by an "existing" individual who is involved
> in the entirety of his existence.[80]

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[78] <u>Ibid</u>.

[79] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 87.

[80] <u>Moment</u>, p. 271.

One is built on the subject-object split; the other is based

on a Subject-subject relationship.

> Man cannot know him [God] in the sense in which we
> know other things, when the idea in our mind (subjec-
> tive) corresponds to some external referent (objec-
> tive). We can know him only by being in the right
> relationship of trust and obedience and love.[81]

For the certainty of faith's knowledge there can never

be substituted "some kind of external guarantee."[82] In fact,

as Heinecken says,

> the only way I can discern that I am confronted with
> the absolute miracle is if it does indeed conclusively
> confound my understanding no matter how often I may
> say that the total view is in harmony with what some
> call "the depth of reason."[83]

Even though a certain belief is contradictory for thought and,

humanly speaking, quite impossible, yet the man of faith,

on the basis of the personal confrontation with God, believes

and asserts that it "is."[84]

Objective propositions and knowledge present the alter-

natives of faith or doubt, says Heinecken, while faith-directed,

existential knowledge confronts a man with the decision of

faith or offense. ". . . in the former case the affirmation

or denial makes no difference in the way I live; in the latter

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[81] Ibid., p. 72.

[82] Ibid., p. 239.

[83] Ibid., pp. 346-47.

[84] Ibid., p. 51.

a risk is involved."[85] In this faith-offense ultimatum

presented by religious truth, one can sum up Heinecken's

views with regard to the nature and perception of religious

truth:

> Those who are confronted with this presence of God in
> Jesus as the Christ do not face the alternative of
> belief or unbelief--as they would in relation to an
> ordinary historical event of which they are mere spec-
> tators and which is established for them merely on the
> basis of probability and the accumulation of the
> weight of evidence. Rather they face the alternative
> of either "faith" or "offense"--surrendering in trust
> to the One who makes the absolute claim upon their
> lives, or "being offended" by the preposterousness of
> the claim. They cease from being mere spectators,
> because the demands of this One call for a decision
> either of giving up one's autonomy and self-will in
> "faith" or retaining them in "offense."[86]

This option between autonomy on the one hand or surrender-

ing in obedience to the divine claim laid upon one's life on

the other is precisely the option which Brunner sees confront-

ing man. Except for minor variations, therefore, it can be

concluded, on the basis of the evidence presented in this

section, that Heinecken and Brunner are in substantial

agreement on the question of the nature and perception of

religious truth.

Taito Kantonen

Neither Taito Kantonen nor Joseph Sittler have as much

to say in their published materials as does Martin Heinecken

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[85] Ibid., p. 272.

[86] Ibid., p. 55.

on the subject of this study. For this reason the treatment
of both these men will be of a more cursory fashion than
with Brunner and Heinecken. It will be shown, however,
that both the men, and Kantonen in particular, agree to a
great extent with Brunner on the question of religious truth
and its perception.

The historical perspective

Kantonen's viewpoints on religious epistemology, like
Brunner's and Heinecken's, can best be understood in the
light of the antithesis which he is opposing: the objective
rationalism of Protestant Orthodoxy.

Luther, Kantonen argues, had opened up the dimension of
the personal correspondence in the God-man relationship:

> He [Luther] stood "coram Deo," in the presence of God
> never merely speculating or talking about Him but
> responding to Him with his whole being as person to
> person. Nor did he petrify God's Word into a system
> of abstract concepts. The Word was God himself speaking
> to him personally and reaching beyond his intellect into
> the innermost depths of his conscience.[87]

But Orthodoxy, operating with the "static rationalism" of
traditional Protestant scholasticism,[88] soon removed this
living God-man relationship from the realm of personal
experience into the realm of conceptual analysis.[89]

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[87]Taito Almar Kantonen, Resurgence of the Gospel
(Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 36.

[88]Ibid., p. 137.

[89]Ibid., p. 58.

It was the misfortune of the Reformation that its great living truths received their systematic formulation in an age when the basic thought-forms were supplied by a decadent Aristotelian Scholasticism. Consequently the new wine of the rediscovered Gospel was poured into the old wineskins of static intellectualism.[90]

It might be made clear at this point that this writer is passing no judgment as to the strict accuracy of the above statement. Neither Brunner, Heinecken nor Kantonen go to any great length to supply primary evidence for their claims of Orthodoxy's so-called distortions of the epistemological relationship. It is more or less assumed that in Orthodoxy a rather sterile intellectualism did replace the more vibrant, existential approach of Luther. At any rate, it is this objectivism, this emphasis upon the precisely defined and the rational, which Kantonen suggests as one of the chief obstacles blocking the way to a valid theological epistemology.

Greek versus Biblical concepts of knowledge

"Truth is not decided by counting noses," says Kantonen.[91] It cannot be "pinned up and exhibited like dead butterflies."[92] It is dynamic, and its greatest foe is "static intellectualism."[93] Kantonen does not often refer to these objectivist

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[90]Ibid., p. 35.

[91]Taito Almar Kantonen, Life after Death (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), p. 21.

[92]T. A. Kantonen, The Theology of Evangelism (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954), p. 20.

[93]Kantonen, Resurgence, p. 33.

tendencies as being specifically "Greek," but it is clear that
the entire tradition of philosophical, speculative analysis
and reflection is being suggested.

The difference between this tradition and the Christian
or Biblical one is the difference between contemplation and
narration.

> Christianity is not just another theory of knowledge,
> another attempt to discover truth. It never stops
> with mystical feeling or philosophical reflection,
> in which a man indulges for his own satisfaction.
> It is essentially not contemplation at all, although
> contemplation may be used to clarify it, but narration,
> an account of what God has done and is doing and what
> happens to us when God does His work in us.[94]

Kantonen is possibly more involved in the practical
mission of the Church than either Brunner or Heinecken. A
number of the books he has written deal with practical subjects
such as stewardship and evangelism. Consequently, he often
carries the discussion of the difference between Greek and
Biblical thought into the applied situation within the life
of the Church. He says, "Vital theology, then, like vital
preaching, is never a mere juxtaposition of propositions,
no matter how important or true."[95] With reference to
preaching once more, he writes:

> When the Gospel is preached in its original purity
> and vigor as the wisdom of God and the power of God,
> not as a philosophy of some sort, it continues to
> bristle with paradoxes.[96]

Or, regarding educational principles in the Church's mission,

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[94]Kantonen, Theology of Evangelism, p. 10.

[95]Resurgence, p. 100.

[96]The Message of the Church to the World of Today
(Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1941), p. 61.

Kantonen observes:

> Religious life will continue to be at a low ebb in our
> congregations so long as we operate simply on the assump-
> tion that vital religion can be taught without stressing
> that it has to be caught. It is a fallacious idea,
> drawn from Greek philosophy, not from the Christian
> Gospel, that correct knowledge will automatically
> result in right action.[97]

Paradox, dynamic vitality, involvement--these character-
istics of Biblical thought are thus contrasted with the empha-
sis upon propositions, rationality and systematic catechiza-
tion in the more objective Greek tradition. Unlike the abstract
speculative nature of Greek thought, Biblical thought is con-
crete and personal, says Kantonen. "This fact [the incarnation]
give the Christian kerygma at the same time a living per-
sonal concreteness which distinguishes it from every form
of speculation. . . ."[98] The Church's message does not
consist of abstract principles, but of the specific and
concrete mighty acts of God in history and experience.[99]
"The burden of the apostolic witness was not 'God wrote a book'
but 'God sent forth his Son.'"[100] Kantonen, then, along with
Brunner and Heinecken, but not in as detailed a manner, would
claim a radical difference between the knowledge and import

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[97]Resurgence, pp. 218-19.

[98]T. A. Kantonen, "Christ--the Hope of Those Who are
Outside the Church," Lutheran World, I (Summer, 1954), 114.

[99]Kantonen, Message, p. 30.

[100]Kantonen, Resurgence, p. 107.

of philosophical, purely rational activity and the knowledge
and import of the Biblical tradition. Once more, the differ-
ence might be aptly summarized as that existing between kennen
and wissen as epistemological relationships.

The subject-object split and beyond

It need only be noted here that Kantonen does not use
the "subject-object" category to develop his position.

Personalism as the key

Kantonen, like Brunner and Heinecken, finds in the
personality construction the key to Biblical truth and its
perception.

> the central doctrine of Christianity is personality-
> construction. That doctrine--and it is inseparably
> connected with the person of Jesus--is the doctrine
> of the Kingdom of God. . . . When we try to express
> the Kingdom in terms of anything static, we get into
> paradoxes; the solution of these paradoxes lies in
> the living, growing, dynamic reality known as person-
> ality.[101]

Whether the personality-structure "solves" the paradoxes
of Biblical truth or whether it rather displays them for
what they really are--unfathomable mysteries in another
dimension from that of the fact and the thing--is a question
Kantonen would probably answer in favor of the latter alter-
native. But it is evident that he, too, sees a direct
analogy between personality and Biblical truth. The

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[101]Kantonen, Message, pp. 112-13.

knowledge of God and His ways is much the same as knowledge of another person. "It is a matter of the will," says Kantonen, "that is, of the whole personality."[102]

Once again, with Kantonen, as with Brunner and Heinecken, the personality-structure is not arbitrarily picked out as the most apt analogy of knowledge of the Divine. The most convincing reason for its use is the person of Christ. "Unlike any religion or philosophy, Christianity is inseparably bound up with the person of its Founder."[103] The living Christ is the basic determinant of the personal nature of Biblical truth. "It [faith] is a person-to-person relation with Christ, which dissolves into nothingness unless it is vitalized by recurrent encounters with its living object."[104]

Kantonen most often sets forth this personalistic scheme of Biblical truth in direct contrast and, this writer holds, in reaction to a more intellectualistic, objectivistic structure. Some examples are listed:

> The God of the Bible does not concern himself with imparting to men a body of facts, and principles for interpreting them, but with establishing personal fellowship with men.[105]

. . . .

[102]Theology of Evangelism, p. 8.

[103]Message, p. 52.

[104]Resurgence, p. 81.

[105]Theology of Evangelism, p. 18.

> The God who became man is not concerned with truths
> or principles but with persons. . . . His appeal
> therefore does not take the form "Believe my teachings,"
> "Follow my precepts," but "Believe in me," "Follow me,"
> "I am the truth."[106]

. . . .

> In the person-to-person encounter of faith the believer
> takes hold of the Lord himself, not just something said
> or written about Him.[107]

. . . .

> In the Christian message it is not an institution or
> a book or a body of doctrine that asks for our trust
> and obedience but a person who says, "I am the truth.
> . . ."[108]

. . . .

> [Jesus] came not to win assent to a set of proposi-
> tions but to seek and to save men.[109]

The note of reaction is clear; Kantonen is not only presenting

theological personalism as the key to understanding the Christian

faith, but is, in so doing, opposing a concurrent theological

thought-system which he feels is misleading and ultimately

false.

Kantonen claims that an appreciation of this personality

construction is first truly realized in a vital awareness of

sin. "A man becomes aware of God as a person only when he

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106"Christ--the Hope," op. cit., p. 114.

107Resurgence, pp. 109-10.

108A Theology for Christian Stewardship (Philadelphia:
Muhlenberg Press, 1956), pp. 12-13.

109Theology of Evangelism, p. 19.

has become aware that his will has crossed God's will."[110]
Only when man's secret sins have been exposed and his vain
pretensions shattered, can a personal relationship with God
become possible, says Kantonen.[111] This possibility of
relationship becomes a reality in the forgiveness of sins.
"A vital personal relationship between man and God thus
comes into existence, but its sole ground and constant pivot
is the forgiveness of sins."[112] Kantonen thus bases his
personalistic viewpoint on the thoroughly Lutheran sub-
structure of sin and grace.

God as Revealer

"Christian truth, the truth of the gospel, is, first of
all, _revealed_ truth. It is based on divine self-disclosure."[113]
Kantonen, too, insists that man's knowledge of God finds its
source and content in God's self-communication. God is
Subject of the epistemological relationship. ". . . man
cannot find God until God has found him."[114] "God himself
must precede our idea of God."[115] When speaking of such

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[110]_Resurgence_, p. 73.

[111]_Theology for Christian Stewardship_, p. 29.

[112]_Resurgence_, p. 74.

[113]Kantonen, _Theology of Evangelism_, p. 7.

[114]_Resurgence_, p. 97.

[115]_Theology of Evangelism_, p. 7.

divine secrets as the nature of life after death, man's own
surmises and arguments have no part, says Kantonen. "It
[the answer to such a question] is drawn entirely from God's
revelation of himself. . . ."[116] Revelation is the basis
of Biblical epistemology.

But this revelation is something much more than a body
of correct propositions or flawless words, Kantonen insists.

> The Word is not only the revealer of divine wisdom
> but also and primarily the vehicle of divine power,
> the power to give vital conviction, to break sinful
> habit, to redirect the will, to bridge the chasm be-
> tween God and man.[117]

Kantonen emphasizes the "power" inherent in God's self-
disclosure. God's revelation is so much more than truths
to be accepted; it is acting, saving, power-transmitting
truth.

> But Christian truth is not only revealed truth, in
> which God himself assumes the initiative. It is also
> redemptive truth, which shows God to be in saving
> action. It is not a mere communication of ideas but
> a transmission of power. Revelation is inseparable
> from salvation.[118]

Only when the Word of God is received as a personal address
to the individual does this power-instilling communication
take place. As long as it is received as information about
God or as codifiable material for doctrines it is powerless
and incomplete. Kantonen gives a forceful picture of the

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[116]Life after Death, p. 2.

[117]Resurgence, p. 143.

[118]Theology of Evangelism, p. 8.

living Word and its transforming workings, as opposed to

a lifeless word considered as objective fact, in the follow-

ing quotation:

> The Word is not a collection of ideas to be understood
> or a set of rules to be obeyed but the power of a new
> life to be received. Its primary appeal is neither to
> the intellect nor to the emotions but to the will and
> conscience, to man as man. It seeks to take hold of
> the total personality and to give not mere information
> about God but fellowship with God. It is not a general
> "to whom it may concern" but addresses itself, to use
> a good Quaker expression, "to our condition.". It meets,
> not men's idle curiosity, but their anxiety, guilt,
> despair. It confronts men at the point of their deepest
> need. It both discloses and meets our need for a Savior.
> It brings to us not only new insight and wisdom on matters
> which constitute our ultimate concern but an entirely
> new structure of life, the rule of God, the sovereignty
> of Christ. It not only acquaints us with the sacred
> Scriptures but transforms us into living epistles of
> Christ.[119]

The antithesis against which Kantonen is reacting with this

dynamic, personal approach to the Word is obvious: the

biblicistic tendency to over-objectivize and depersonalize

into cold abstractions the living voice of God.

> the divine truth does not endure as a static quantum,
> possessed and hoarded and handed down from one genera-
> tion to another, but as a series of personal encounters
> by which men of each successive generation face God
> himself, hear His voice and receive His life-changing
> power.[120]

Kantonen explains that this always contemporaneous

encounter is made effective only through the Spirit of God

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[119] *Theology for Christian Stewardship*, pp. 15-16.

[120] Kantonen, *Resurgence*, p. 126.

who alone makes known the true significance of the Word.[121]
Furthermore, Kantonen, together with Heinecken, adds the
Lutheran note that God can be known perhaps most explicitly
in the sacraments.[122]

The relation of reason to faith and theology

Kantonen calls "Lutheran"--and thus agrees with--
Brunner's position that man's spiritual nature, even in its
sin-perverted state, still affords a point of contact with
God."[123] Whether Kantonen would have Brunner include the
reason in "man's spiritual nature" is uncertain. Kantonen
does say this, however, about unregenerate reason: "Natural
unregenerate reason not only fails to find God; it also fails
to see in the Gospel anything but foolish nonsense."[124] At
another place he expands upon this thought:

> Human reason can give us an Aristotelian God who sits
> in solitary splendor contemplating his own perfection
> and refusing to contaminate himself with the imperfec-
> tions of the world. It cannot give us a God who runs
> down the road to embrace one whose associations have
> been with harlots and swine.[125]

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[121] Ibid., p. 124.

[122] Ibid., p. 109.

[123] Ibid., p. 16.

[124] Ibid., pp. 106-07.

[125] Theology of Christian Stewardship, p. 39.

Rationalistic theology applies only "high and glorious" terms to God, says Kantonen, whereas faith's theology grasps God even in His masks of weakness, disgrace and suffering.[126] No mere theological analysis will enable man to appreciate the true meaning of, for example, justification by faith; it is only when one embarks "on the same venture of personal faith"[127] that it is truly realized and experienced.

Kantonen does not speak explicitly about the necessity of reason in either the faith-relationship or in the task of theology. His main interest seems to lie in demonstrating the inadequacy of the reason to independently achieve a vital relationship with God. Man, in his perennial state of unwillingness to "acknowledge his dependence, to accept his finiteness, to admit his insecurity,"[128] seeks a man-made way of salvation, to be brought about according to the self-sufficient dictates of reason. Kantonen calls this autonomous attempt of man naive and impossible.

> If our difficulty were only a lack of knowledge or a weakness of the moral will, we would need only a teacher or an exemplar. But sin is such a radical dislocation of our basic relation to God that we need a Mediator and a Savior.[129]

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[126] *Resurgence*, p. 125.

[127] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[128] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[129] *Message*, pp. 54-55.

The discussion of Kantonen closes at this point, with the acknowledgment that his treatment of the epistemological question is perhaps the most purely theological of the men studied so far, at least from the Lutheran standpoint. His constant attention to such strictly theological issues as sin and justification and his avoidance of such constructs as "subject" and "object" in connection with the question of the perception of Biblical truth set him somewhat apart from the other two. It has been sufficiently noted, however, that he is in substantial agreement with them in every important emphasis regarding the question of theological epistemology.

Joseph Sittler

Of the three Lutheran theologians being considered, Joseph Sittler stands out for a number of reasons. His thought is possibly the most original of the three and the most poignantly phrased. While Heinecken concerns himself primarily with the existentialist approach and Kantonen with the purely Lutheran theological approach, Sittler's main interest lies in the area of ecumenics and a contemporary restatement of the Christian faith. Sittler has the least to say on the subject of this study. It can be seen, however, that what he does say agrees quite closely with the thought of the other three men above. This section will attempt to point out these areas of basic agreement.

The historical perspective

Sittler, like the others, sees the period of Orthodoxy
as the stultification of the dynamic, relational theology
of the Reformers. Orthodoxy's central tragedy, according
to Sittler, was that it "stultified the Reformer's doctrine
of the Word in definitions aimed at intellectual
acceptance. . . ."[130] Understanding revelation in a
"propositional, documentary, static, and thoroughly
intellectualized manner,"[131] Orthodoxy attempted, as had
medieval theology before it,[132] to give man religious
certainty. But in its search for certainty and safeguards,
it somehow lost track of the core of what it was trying to
protect.

> Seeking to enclose the living, orthodoxy stifled.
> Seeking to cherish by logically necessary formula-
> tions, it squeezed out of the doctrine the decision
> of faith. Seeking to tighten theologically, it
> reduced religiously. Seeking to protect a heritage
> by enclosing it in a box--it mummified.[133]

Whenever the living, personal truth is thus conceived of in
terms of right teaching, an explosive reaction is bound to
follow, argues Sittler. He points at Pietism as the

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[130] The Doctrine of The Word (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg
Press, 1948), p. 44.

[131] Ibid., p. 48.

[132] Ibid., p. 13.

[133] Ibid., p. 49.

"explosion" which followed Orthodoxy.

> when the object of faith has been theologically
> transmuted into a static identification with a
> historical document, then faith, which is always
> dynamic, will inevitably shift its attention to an
> area in which a dynamic need can be met by a dynamic
> object. In this instance [Pietism], to the
> believing individual.[134]

The dynamic of the authentic God-man relationship, once

released, "cannot permit theology ever again to operate

as if it had not been," says Sittler.[135] The Church always

must and will be on guard against the objectivization of the

address of the gospel.

Greek versus Biblical concepts of knowledge

"The gospel is not a holy box of divine propositions

ranging from simple to complex; it is nothing less than the

organic life of God confronting us now here, now there."[136]

With this differentiation between the proposition and the

living, confronting voice of God Sittler sets up the radical

dichotomy of Greek versus Biblical thought. On the surface,

Biblical truth may appear not dissimilar to philosophic truth;

134Ibid., pp. 45-46. (It is this writer's conviction
that this is the precise occasion of each of these four
men's emphasis on the personal, the relational and the non-
propositional; they, too, are reacting, in an almost in-
evitable direction, against an objectivism and intellectual-
ism within the Church of the nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries.)

135"A Christology of Function," The Lutheran Quarterly,
VI (1954), 124.

136Joseph Sittler, The Ecology of Faith (Philadelphia:
Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 65.

but underneath, the two reveal a radically diverse framework

of meaning. Objective truth can be spoken of in one-level,

undialectical statements; Biblical truth is of necessity

"multiple-level" in meaning and dialectical.

> For the central revelation of God in an Incarnation
> of grace in a world of nature inwardly requires that
> all discourse inclusive of these two magnitudes is
> of necessity dialectical.[137]

Sittler thus holds that every simple term of faith must be

set forth in such a way that the multiple dimensions of its

own content are exposed. This interpenetration of the Divine

and the human, of sin and grace, of the old and the new

within religious truth makes for a unique epistemology, an

epistemology which seeks the true and expresses itself within

the framework of the dialectical.

Sittler emphasizes the fact that the modern age calls

for an epistemology and an apologetic far different from

those of the classical period. He writes:

> It may well be that we are entering upon a period in
> the church's life wherein men's minds must be shocked
> open to entertain the suspicion that there are realms
> of meaning, promise, and judgment which ensconce God's
> incarnated action for their vague disquietudes.[138]

Speaking of God in terms of substance and ideal essence is

impossible for contemporary man, says Sittler. "The problem

of the knowledge of God must, with us, operate with the

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[137] Ibid., p. 47.

[138] "The Shape of the Church's Response in Worship,"
The Ecumenical Review, X (January, 1958), 146.

realities of energy, realizing will, purposive intention."[139]

Today man speaks in terms of force and function and not in

terms of objective substance.

> formulations enunciated in one age are deepeningly
> unintelligible in another. The terms of discourse
> evoked by and addressed to one historical situation
> are no longer declarative of what they sought to say--
> a grammar of substance is alien to a grammar of func-
> tion--and are therefore, for the contemporary church,
> neither adequate confession nor meaningful piety.[140]

Sittler sums up the contrast between classical Greek-

informed concepts of truth and knowledge and the concepts

operative among contemporary (and among the Biblical writers

and the Reformers as well, he would say) men in this pene-

trating statement:

> the classical Christology of the Greeks perpetuates
> formulations which operate with a way of speaking
> about God which is incongruent with our time and its
> ways of thinking.
>
> Classical terms were expressive of bodies; ours must
> be expressive of functions. Nicaea operated with the
> discourse of statics; contemporary discourse is per-
> meated through and through with a world view which
> is dynamic. For us, persons are not bodies, but units
> of force and will; all things are not bodies, but aims,
> means, and creations of these units. The classical
> relationship between bodies was positional; our under-
> standing of relationship is functional.[141]

Sittler thus adds this important concept of "functionalism"

to the list of differences between the Greek and the Biblical

concepts of truth. The difference is once more seen to be

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[139]"A Christology," op. cit., p. 127.

[140]Ibid., p. 131.

[141]Ibid., pp. 122-23.

one of kind and of dimension of meaning, rather than one of

gradation within a singular framework of truth.

The subject-object split and beyond

The paucity of Sittler's remarks with regard to the

inadequacy of the subject-object process in acquiring knowledge

about God does not diminish the impact of his thought in this

area. Subject-object epistemology must give way to faith's

own way of knowing when it comes to Biblical truth.

> This "common center" and "glowing core" of Luther's
> theology . . . is _faith_ as an independent form of the
> apprehension, reception, and actualization of the life
> of God. Whenever theology is informed by faith as its
> constituent principle an unmistakable dynamism pervades
> its every part and method. This is so because when
> God is known by faith, that very way of knowing bestows
> an immediacy of relationship not communicable in subject-
> object ways of knowledge.[142]

Sittler capsules what the other three men under discussion

had been saying, as he says,

> What is given in faith is not knowledge about God but
> God himself as life, grace, love, and forgiveness. The
> very totality-character of the act of faith transcends
> every epistemological analogy whereby a systemization
> of it may be attempted. Faith is an independent form
> of God-relationship, and its energies cannot be contained
> within categories which would deal with God as an object
> of knowledge. For it is the first thing I know about
> God when I know him in faith that I had not known him
> at all had he not in aggressive love known me into
> knowledge of himself.[143].

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[142]_Doctrine of the Word_, pp. 5-6.

[143]_Ibid._, p. 6.

This writer would be hard put to find a more apt summary of
the entire epistemological thrust of the four men being
considered than these two excerpts from Joseph Sittler.

Personalism as the key

Here also, what little Sittler has to say specifically
about the personalistic nature of revelation and divine
truth shows that he is in agreement with Brunner and his
two fellow Lutherans.

> Revelation is not a thing--but an action of God, an
> event involving two parties; it is a personal address.
> There is no such thing as revelation-in-itself,
> because revelation consists of the fact that something
> is revealed to me.[144]

Sittler seems to favor the term "dynamic" over "personal"
to convey his concept of a living, relational structure of
Biblical truth and knowledge. He uses the term "personal"
rarely, perhaps to avoid the pitfalls of secular personalism.
It is admitted that the connotations of "dynamic" and
"personal" are quite diverse. However, from such statements
as above,[145] it is clear that his intention is not to contra-
dict but to rephrase the personalistic constructs of the other
three.

God as Revealer

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[144]Ibid., p. 33.

[145]See also: Sittler's Doctrine of the Word, p. 48.

self."[150] The masks of revelations, those indirect means

which defy rational apprehension, are thus part and parcel

of the God-man epistemological relationship. God comes,

not in idea, but in cloaked fact. He can be known, not by

ordinary rational endeavor, but only in the response of

faith. Sittler adds this thought:

> When God makes the requirement that who would know
> him must know him in faith, he but requires, in the
> area of religious knowledge, what is necessary in
> accordance with his nature as Agape. That is to
> say that the revelation of God, interpreted in terms
> of Eros, may be so received as to require no such
> radical faith. But God as Agape stands over against
> me in so sharp a discontinuity that a lesser personal
> coalescence of the whole being than faith as trust is
> improper to the nature of the revelation.[151]

God's revelation is unique and the reception of this revela-

tion is unique because God as Agape is unique. Brunner might

have phrased this same thought: God's revelation is personal

and its reception is personal because God is personal.

The relation of reason to faith and theology

Sittler provides no excursus on this specific subject.

He does say, however, that clarity of doctrine "without the

love of the brother who is luminously before us precisely

as the brother is the clarity of damnation."[152] He would thus

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[150] Ibid., p. 66.

[151] Ibid., p. 64.

[152] "Called to Unity," The Ecumenical Review, XIV
(January, 1962), 185.

second Brunner's frequent observation that doctrine for doctrine's sake breeds lovelessness.[153] Doctrines are indeed necessary, says Sittler, to meet the exigent challenges of definite historical threats,[154] but the moment these doctrines become the object rather than the expression of faith, they have ceased to serve their function and have become a decided distortion of the dynamic, faith-engendered and sustained God-man relationship.

With these remarks Chapter II comes to a close. The evidence supplied in this section is sufficient to support a claim that Martin Heinecken, Taito Kantonen and Joseph Sittler, although varying on several matters of emphasis and adding several specifically Lutheran notes to the discussion, substantially agree with the epistemological position of Emil Brunner presented in Chapter I.

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[153] Emil Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, translated by Amandus W. Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 103.

[154] "Called to Unity," op. cit., p. 185.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

The six foci around which Emil Brunner structures his
theological epistemology have, by this time, been oft repeated.

A. His position can best be understood by investigating
the historical perspective and noting that he is consciously
and intentionally countering what he calls a false objecti-
vism within Protestant Orthodoxy.

B. The fallacy of so much of the Orthodox approach is
that it follows Greek rather than Biblical thought-patterns,
says Brunner. The Greek tradition's approach to truth empha-
sizes the abstract, the timeless and universal, the objective,
the fact and the systematizable; the Biblical approach, on
the other hand, emphasizes the concrete, the historical and
the existential, the personal, the act and the paradoxical.
The key to the Greek pattern is rationality; the key to the
Biblical is personal faith in response to a personal encounter.

C. Inherent in the Greek epistemology is the subject-
object way of knowing. Brunner insists that this process is
untrue to Biblical truth, and that only a Subject-subject
pattern renders genuine knowledge of God and the God-man
relationship.

D. The key to theological epistemology is the personal-
istic framework of knowing. A man knows God as he knows
another person. All of the abiding mysteries of personality,

all the relatedness and intimacy of communion, all the non-objectifiable qualities existing within the close person-to-person relationship, all of the knowledge gained only through trust and sharing--these enigmatical elements which make up the epistemological relation between one person and another hold true in man's epistemological relationship with God who is personal and who became a Person in history for man.

E. God is evermore Subject of this personal epistemological relationship. By His historical and existential revelation and by it alone can man come to know God. The Bible is the means to this self-disclosure.

F. Human reason, while essential in both the activity of faith and in theologizing, remains ancillary and subservient to faith's own way of knowing. The knowledge of faith (kennen) and the knowledge of reason (wissen) operate in two different dimensions of truth. While there are necessarily objective elements to be known in the God-man epistemological relationship, yet these objective facts merely inform the really primary activity: the trusting and obedient response of faith to the address of the self-disclosing God.

While several differences in emphasis are noticeable and while the distinctively Lutheran approach shows up in diverse ways and places in their positions, yet it has been shown by considerable documentation that the three American Lutheran theologians, Martin Heinecken, Taito Kantonen and Joseph Sittler, are in substantial agreement with Brunner in every one of the six categories listed above. There is little

obvious dependency upon Brunner,[1] but the similarities in
viewpoint do exist, whether derived from Brunner, or from a
possible common source such as Soren Kierkegaard or Martin
Buber, or from independent or semi-independent study and
discovery. These four men are opposing the same antitheses
and are proposing much the same answer to the God-man epistemo-
logical question.

While the stated purpose of this study is to "present"
Brunner's theological epistemology and that of the three
Lutherans in comparison to it, and not to evaluate or criti-
cize it, still it might be helpful to include at this point
some of the more telling of the criticisms contemporary
theologians are leveling against Brunner's position.

A.   Schrader claims that Brunner is guilty of both "bad
theology and bad metaphysics" in his insistence that God is
pure subject.

> But when Brunner claims that a subject can never be
> known as an object, he is, I think, guilty of a confu-
> sion. It does not follow from the fact that a subject
> cannot _qua subject_ be known as object, that a subject
> cannot be known as an object. Only if a being were
> _pure subject_ would this inference be justified. In
> the case of God, of course, this is precisely what
> Brunner and others have maintained. And Brunner makes
> a similar claim with respect to human subjects.
> . . . The fact is that I am both subject and object
> and the unity of the two. I can be known _objectively_

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[1] There are a few direct references to his writings,
however, and several sufficiently acknowledged appropria-
tions of identical terminology. See Martin J. Heinecken,
The Moment Before God (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press,
1956), p. 240.

even though my inwardness can be revealed only insofar as I choose to reveal it through communication. It would be, I think, just as wrong to be treated as a pure subject as a mere object.[2]

Brunner would probably answer this, as is shown in the section entitled "Relation of Reason to Faith and Theology,"[3] that there are indeed objective, rational elements in man's knowledge of God. But to place the primary emphasis upon God as object in the epistemological relationship is to miss the really valid way of knowing Him.

B. With regard to Brunner's personalistic emphasis, Paul Jewett maintains that Brunner's claim to personal correspondence as the basic thought-form of the Bible "cannot be sustained."[4] William Wolf, too, puts the question as to whether Brunner is not "subjecting the biblical material to a large amount of a priori personalistic metaphysic."[5] Paul Tillich says that this personalistic category is not exclusive enough to really be contributing significant information about the Divine-human encounter. He writes:

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[2]George A. Schrader, "Brunner's Conception of Philosophy," in The Theology of Emil Brunner, edited by Charles W. Kegley (New York: Macmillan Company, 1962), pp. 123-24.

[3]Supra, pp. 56ff.

[4]"Ebnerian Personalism and its Influence upon Brunner's Theology," The Westminster Theological Journal, XIV (May, 1952), 147.

[5]"An Outline of Brunner's Theology," Anglican Theological Review, XXX (April, 1948), 132.

Life in all its dimensions cannot be grasped without
an encounter of the knowing and the known beyond the
subject-object scheme. If this is the case, the
question may arise whether the person-to-person
encounter is the only valid analogy to the Divine-
human encounter and whether, therefore, in the
description of the way of knowing God, the person-
alistic categories should be used exclusively.[6]

Robert Bertram claims that if non-theological science would

ever succeed in clearing up some of the difficulties of

interpersonal knowledge, this would, according to Brunner's

approach, endanger or at least lessen God's transcendence.

He [Brunner] has fixed upon the general epistemological
distinction between personal and non-personal knowledge;
and noting the technical difficulties which philosophy
has had in accounting for the former, he concludes that
this philosophically inexplicable knowledge of persons
is peculiar to divine revelation and is the proper
subject matter of Christian theology and ethics. And
from this he has gone on to say, in effect, that the
transcendent God is transcendent, at least partly,
because He is a person. (This is certainly different
from saying that God transcends our knowledge some-
what like persons do.)[7]

This writer would be interested in hearing Brunner's reply

to this charge that he has started with a general personal-

istic epistemology and then foisted it upon Christian theology.

Concerning the last two sentences of Bertram's charge, Brunner

would no doubt say that he does both: he sees God as personal

or as a Person (specifically in Jesus Christ) and he knows

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[6] "Some Questions on Brunner's Epistemology," in The
Theology of Emil Brunner, edited by Charles W. Kegley (New
York: Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 100.

[7] "Brunner on Revelation," Concordia Theological
Monthly, XXII (September, 1951), 639.

thesis of personal correspondence as the fundamental category of Biblical truth.[13] This writer would have to agree that Brunner's use of Scripture is sketchy, to say the least, in most of his writings. By what standards one is to judge adequate Scriptural substantiation for a certain viewpoint is another question, however.

D. Schrotenboer furthermore claims that Brunner places too much stock in human reason.

> Brunner requires a subordination of reason, but no reformation of reason. According to his presentation, reason as the power of ideation spells autonomy for man. Such autonomy is not wrong in itself, but becomes sin only when it oversteps its bounds.[14]

Brunner only speaks of the reason as "autonomous" as it sets itself up as an absolute authority over against God, however.[15] Autonomous reason is always sin to Brunner. Would not Lutherans agree with him that reason is indeed capable in the things below and that it errs only when it oversteps its earthly bounds and attempts to plumb the things above?

Some of the criticisms against Brunner's epistemology are justifiable; others are of questionable weight. This writer would add only two questions to the general discussion concerning Brunner's position:

Is he correct, partially correct or incorrect in his

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[13] Jewett, "Ebnerian Personalism," op. cit., p. 134.

[14] Op. cit., p. 194.

[15] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 208.

disparagement of the presuppositions, methods and conclusions of Orthodoxy? If his charges of a distorted theology coming from this period are valid, does the fault lie with Orthodoxy itself, or principally with those two centuries between the period of Orthodoxy and today? At any rate, if his accusations of a false and misleading objectivity and a static intellectualism leading toward an invalid theological epistemology within Orthodoxy are correct or partially correct, then it must be remembered, with all that this implies, that Lutheran Orthodoxy and its twentieth century descendents are included in this accusation.

What part, if any, of Brunner's theological epistemology can be accepted by the Lutheran theologian? Heinecken, Kantonen and Sittler agree with most of his major emphases in this area. Is the proper stance over against Brunner's personalistic position a judicious and balanced incorporation of his perceptive contribution to the discussion of the nature and perception of Biblical truth into a theology already well-founded, by God's grace, in the objective truths of the Christian faith?

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