

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis..... Sin and Human Responsibility in the Theology of Emil Brunner.....

Brunner's theology is one of reaction and reformulation; reaction against the "objectivism" of Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, and against the "subjectivism" of liberal theology, and a reformulation of the basic tenets of the Christian faith in accordance with the sola gratia perspective of the Reformers. The reformulation contrasts the competing tendencies in philosophy, psychology and ethics, and relates these to the basic contradiction of human life, which the Christian faith calls 'sin', with the aid of Kantian criticism, and particularly Kantian moral theory, the Kierkegaardian dialectic of time and eternity, and the I-Thou framework developed by Ebner and Buber. Within this comprehensive formulation, our concern is the question of sin and human responsibility.

Theologically, the issue is the seriousness of sin, and has been answered traditionally by contrasting man's creation in the image of God with the loss of that image through sin. Brunner's contention that Scripture presents two concepts of the image is most plausible, but his designation of these as a formal and a material concept of the image seems to set the distinction within man himself, whereas the Scriptural distinction seems to be between an Old Testament image which is predicated of man and a New Testament image which is Christ. We must also question his contention that Irenaeus distinguished between imago and similitudo in a manner similar to the mediaeval natural-supernatural distinction, but his summation of the Reformers' predicament, that their equation of the image with the justitia originalis and corresponding doctrine of total depravity renders their concept of a 'relic' of the image illegitimate, is essentially plausible. Brunner's solution to this predicament is not greatly clarified in the controversy with Barth, although Barth's subsequent charge, that Brunner teaches a neutral freedom, is instructive. Brunner's insistence on a concept of an analogia entis involving an analogy of proportionality, likeness in basic unlikeness, is understandable, but his relational interpretation of this suggests that his distinction between a formal and a material sense of the image is facilitated by an ambiguity in the term 'responsibility'.

The term 'responsibility' seems to have at least three basic meanings in Brunner's theology - responsiveness, accountability, and ability to respond. Behind this is the more basic question of the distinction between moral and religious responsibility. His enthusiasm for Kant's development of the concept suggests that he overlooks the basically rational nature of the Kantian Imperative, and his contention that Kant was torn between autonomy and theonomy suggests that he minimizes the rational perspective from which Kant viewed Christianity. Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical, with its inseparability of command and commanded, reveals the difficulty in the formal Kantian Imperative which Brunner applauds. Further, Brunner's contention that Kant's concept of 'radical evil' is rationally discerned, and his appreciation for Schelling's treatment of evil, cast doubt on the seriousness of his affirmation of the irrationality of sin, and also illuminate the ambiguity in the moral and religious uses of the term 'responsibility' in his writings. There seem to be two strands in Brunner's presentation - a basic allegiance to the Reformers, and a certain sympathy with moral idealism.

The conflict is climaxed in Brunner's treatment of the Fall and Original Sin. His rejection of a literal interpretation of Genesis III is understandable, but his contention that there is no real conflict here with modern science indicates an oversimplification of the problem. His rejection of a causal explanation of sin is understandable, but his rejection of every temporal explanation suggests a confusion between causal and temporal. His late admission that he taught a Platonic doctrine of the Fall suggests that he never really came to grips with the basic problems of the doctrine. His concern has been with the fallenness of man, in which he attempts to correct the one-sidedness of the Augustinian doctrine with an emphasis on responsibility. Here the conflict between the two strands in Brunner's theology is pronounced. His reversal of Kierkegaard's formula for the relation between individuals and humanity, whereby the

special term 'Individual' is subordinated to an individualistic concept of 'each of us', conflicts with his concern for solidarity and his appreciation for the I-Thou framework, but agrees with his emphasis on responsibility and his refusal to consider a temporal origin of sin. Ultimately it is the universality of sin, and not solidarity in sin, which prevails in Brunner's theology. As this fails to provide an adequate statement of the totality of sin in terms of the race, so his emphasis on sin as 'act' fails to give adequate account of the totality of sin in terms of the individual. The concern to emphasize responsibility for sin suggests that this is a total responsibility which is predicated of men in general, and thus indicates a violation of the Reformation perspective.

In his basic allegiance to the Reformation perspective, Brunner's development of the sola gratia principle involves an opposition to synergism in Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and liberal theology, and to passivism in the Reformers themselves. His defence of the personal over against the rational, in terms of the I-Thou framework, raises questions as to the significance of the 'It' dimension of life and the nature of the relation between I and Thou. The two questions are answered in Brunner's presentation of the respective roles of the imperative and the indicative in the relation. The former reveals a basic divergence between Brunner and Luther on 'Law' in that Brunner divests Luther's Law of all content and reintroduces it as the formal Imperative, thus indicating that Law is an 'It' which has no integral place in the I-Thou framework. The indicative of the once-for-all act of God in Christ is equally embarrassing to the I-Thou, although it represents a constant emphasis in Brunner's theology. Luther's concern for the man who stands between the demand of the Law and the comfort of the Gospel becomes, in Brunner, the concern to relate this dialectic to the self-understanding of natural man. He accomplishes this with the relatively modern word 'responsibility' which can refer both to man as an independent moral agent and to man's ultimate obligation to God. In so far as man is addressed as a moral agent, and called to account prior to the proclamation of grace, the Reformation perspective is violated. It is strange that Brunner has not applied his recognition of the profound gulf separating modern man from former ages to this relatively modern concept of 'responsibility'.

SIN AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY IN THE THEOLOGY
OF EMIL BRUNNER

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Preface

Emil Brunner is a preacher's theologian. His writings display a perennial concern for the problem of communicating the Gospel. This thesis represents an attempt to understand and to evaluate Brunner's answer to that problem in terms of an analysis of the background and use of that concept which constitutes the kernel of his formulation, the concept of responsibility. Theologically, the question which concerns us is that of the seriousness of sin. In the broader context of the problem of presenting the Gospel in the modern world, the question which concerns us is that of the adequacy of the concept of responsibility for this task.

Quotations from Brunner's major writings follow the English translations, for the most part.

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Summary

Brunner's theology is one of reaction and reformulation; reaction against the "objectivism" of Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, and against the "subjectivism" of liberal theology, and a reformulation of the basic tenets of the Christian faith in accordance with the sola gratia perspective of the Reformers. The method which is employed consists in contrasting the competing tendencies in philosophy, psychology and ethics, and affirming that these crises of the human predicament are manifestations of the underlying contradiction which the Christian faith calls sin. This comprehensive reformulation is accomplished with the aid of Kantian criticism, and particularly the Kantian moral theory, the Kierkegaardian dialectic of time and eternity, and the I-Thou framework developed by Ebner and Buber. Within this comprehensive formulation, our particular concern is the question of sin and human responsibility.

The question of sin and human responsibility is essentially the question of the seriousness of sin. This question was answered traditionally in theology in terms of a contrast between man's creation in the image of God and the loss of that image through sin. Brunner's contention that Scripture presents two concepts of the image is well attested, but his designation of these as a formal and a material concept of the image seems to set the distinction within man himself, whereas the Scriptural distinction seems to be between an Old Testament image which is predicated of man and a New Testament image which is Christ. We must also question Brunner's contention that Irenaeus distinguished between imago and similitudo in a manner similar to the mediaeval natural-supernatural distinction, but his summation of the

Reformers' predicament, that their equation of the image with the justitia originalis and corresponding doctrine of total depravity renders their concept of a 'relic' of the image illegitimate, is essentially credible. Brunner's solution to this predicament is not greatly clarified in the controversy with Barth, although Barth's subsequent charge, that Brunner teaches a neutral freedom, is instructive. Brunner understandably insists on a concept of an analogia entis involving an analogy of proportionality, likeness in basic unlikeness, and seems to interpret this analogia entis relationally. The difficulty in this equation of being and relation suggests a more fundamental ambiguity in the term 'responsibility'. For it is in terms of responsibility that Brunner distinguishes between a formal and a material sense of the image.

The term 'responsibility' seems to have at least three basic meanings in Brunner's theology. First, it is used in a purely formal sense to designate man's essential nature as being one of responding. Secondly, it is used in the negative sense of culpability to indicate man's answerability for his response. Thirdly, it is used in the positive sense of ability to respond. Behind this diversity in meaning, there is a more fundamental difficulty in the form of a lack of clarity as to the context of responsibility. The basic difficulty is that responsibility can be both a moral and a religious term. In his enthusiasm for Kant's development of the concept, particularly in the Critique of Practical Reason where it is given a definite religious setting, Brunner seems to overlook the basically rational nature of the Kantian Imperative. His contention that Kant's Opus Postumum reveals a struggle between autonomy and theonomy minimizes the basically rational perspective from which Kant viewed Christianity. Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical, with its inseparability of the command and that which is

commanded, reveals the difficulty in the Kantian concept of the formal Imperative. Yet it is this formal Imperative which plays the major role in Brunner's formulation. This suggests that Brunner's sympathies lie with moral idealism. His contention that Kant's concept of 'radical evil' is rationally discerned, and his appreciation of Schelling's treatment of evil, cast doubt on the seriousness of his affirmation of the irrationality of sin, and also help to explain the confusion between moral and religious responsibility in his writings. In fact, there seem to be two strands running throughout Brunner's presentation, one which indicates a basic allegiance to the Reformers, and another which indicates a certain sympathy with moral idealism.

The two strands in Brunner's presentation come into conflict in his treatment of the Fall and Original Sin. His rejection of a literal interpretation of Genesis III is understandable in terms of modern scientific knowledge, but his confidence in the separability of the form of the narrative from the matter which it contains indicates an oversimplification of the problem. Similarly, his rejection of a causal explanation of sin is understandable in so far as sin must be seen within the context of freedom, but his apparent assumption that this must also involve the rejection of every temporal indication of the origin of sin suggests a confusion of the causal with the temporal. His late admission that he taught a Platonic doctrine of the Fall suggests that Brunner never really came to grips with the basic problems of the Fall doctrine. His concern has been the fallenness of man, rather than the origin of that fallenness. In this question, his dissatisfaction with the Augustinian doctrine is expressed in an emphasis on responsibility for sin rather than on the inevitability of sin. While this is an important

emphasis, it also has its dangers. Brunner's reversal of Kierkegaard's formula for the relation between individuals and humanity, whereby the special term 'Individual' is subordinated to an individualistic concept of 'each of us', represents one of the riddles of Brunner's theology. This reversal does not accord with his concern for solidarity and his appreciation for the I-Thou framework. Yet it does accord well with his emphasis on responsibility, and also with his refusal to consider a temporal origin of sin. Ultimately it is the universality of sin, and not the solidarity in sin, which prevails in Brunner's theology. This difficulty is equally significant with regard to the other aspect of the totality of sin, the totality in terms of the individual. Brunner's emphasis on sin as act creates problems in accounting for the state of sin, but it also facilitates his emphasis on responsibility. The difficulty is that this responsibility for sin seems to be predicated of men generally, and not simply within the Christian revelation, so that the responsibility involved may even be responsibility for guilt. At this point, we reach a definite divergence from the Reformation perspective.

Brunner's basic allegiance is to the sola gratia principle of the Reformers. He seeks to interpret this so as to avoid the errors of synergism and passivism. In the former, he opposes liberal theology, Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. In the latter, he comes into conflict with the Reformers themselves, for he charges that they succumbed to a concept of passivity in describing man's reaction to grace. His reformulation is made in the context of a polemic against rationalism, whereby he defends the personal over against the rational. His use of the I-Thou framework for this purpose raises the questions posed by the formulations of its originators, the question of the 'It' dimension of life posed by Buber's treatment, and the question of the

nature of the I-Thou relation raised by Ebner's contention that the medium of the relation is the 'word'. The two questions are intimately related, as an examination of the two basic types of relation between the I and the Thou, that which is based on the Imperative and that which is based on the Indicative, shows. Brunner's development of the relation based on the Imperative reveals that the similarity between his concept of 'Law' and that of Luther is more apparent than real in that he divests Luther's material Law of all content and reintroduces it as the formal Imperative. In the I-Thou framework, Law is an 'It' which does not really belong. This centrality of the Imperative creates problems for Brunner in giving an adequate account of the Indicative. Although the once-for-all act of God in Christ is central for Brunner, it too is an 'It', and is much less at home in the I-Thou framework than the idea of the present Christ who enters into relations with men. The divergence between this setting of the I-Thou framework and the Law-Gospel dialectic of Luther is climaxed in the concept of repentance. Although Brunner claims to be following Luther, his concern, in fact, is very different. Luther's concern for the man who stands between the demand of the Law and the comfort of the Gospel becomes in Brunner the concern to relate this situation to the self-understanding of natural man. He does this by the use of this relatively modern word 'responsibility'. With this concept he can move from moral obligation to obligation to God without acknowledging the differences between moral and religious responsibility. In so far as he does this, he violates the sola gratia principle in that man is addressed on his own terms as a moral agent prior to the knowledge of grace. It is strange that Brunner has not applied his recognition of the profound gulf which separates modern man from former ages to this relatively modern concept of 'responsibility'.

Abbreviations

Ab.	Abbott's edition of Kant's Ethical Writings
C.R.	<u>Corpus Reformatorum</u>
DI	<u>Dogmatik Vol. I</u>
DII	<u>Dogmatik Vol. II</u>
DIII	<u>Dogmatik Vol. III</u>
E.T.	English Translation
Fr n Anknpkt	" <u>Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie</u> "
GPHKK	" <u>Das Grundproblem der Philosophie bei Kant und Kierkegaard</u> "
GuM	<u>Gott und Mensch</u>
GuO	<u>Das Gebot und die Ordnungen</u>
Inst.	Calvin's <u>Institutes</u>
Mitt.	<u>Der Mittler</u>
MiW	<u>Der Mensch im Widerspruch</u>
MuW	<u>Die Mystik und das Wort</u>
NSR	<u>Neue Schweizer Rundschau</u>
NuG	<u>Natur und Gnade</u>
RPh	<u>Religionsphilosophie evangelischer Theologie</u>
R&R	<u>Revelation and Reason</u>
SJofTh	<u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>
TofC	<u>The Theology of Crisis</u>
W.A.	Weimar Edition of Luther's Works
WaB	<u>Wahrheit als Begegnung</u>
WGMM	<u>The Word of God and Modern Man</u>

W&W	<u>The Word and the World</u>
ZdZ	<u>Zwischen den Zeiten</u>
ZsyTh	<u>Zeitschrift für systematisch Theologie</u>

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN, METHOD AND SOURCES OF BRUNNER'S "CRISIS" THEOLOGY

The so-called "Crisis" or "Dialectical" Theology is a theology of reaction and reformulation. It has its origin in a reaction against the previous trend in theology to blur the distinction between God and man, against which it attempts to reformulate the basic affirmations of the Christian faith in accordance with the sola gratia perspective of the Reformation.

Since Emil Brunner's theology has emerged from the crisis of the theology in which he was trained, any significant appreciation of his concern and success as a theologian must begin with an appreciation of his estimation of that theology, and of his exposition of what he considers to be its underlying principles. Further, since Brunner's complaint against this theology is that it conformed to the Zeitgeist produced in the last century by rationalism and German Idealism, an appreciation of his position also involves the wider orientation of philosophical perspectives. Thus we must seek to appreciate Brunner's position in the historic context which dictates the forms of reaction in terms of which his formulation is developed, before we consider that aspect of Brunner's theology which is of particular concern here, the questions of sin and responsibility. Not only is this essential for an understanding of the basic orientation of Brunner's theology, but it is especially significant for our purpose because his reformulation is contrasted with the perspective from which he seeks to escape precisely by his claim to affirm the Christian doctrine of sin with a seriousness which he denies of his predecessors' formulations.

It is customary to distinguish different periods in Brunner's

authorship in terms of the changes in perspective and emphases which his theology evidences. For example, one student of Brunner's theology distinguishes a pre-critical, a critical or dialectical, and a systematic, period.¹ For our purposes, the crucial period is the critical or dialectical one, for it is here that Brunner's basic position is formulated. Thus in this introductory orientation we shall concentrate on Brunner's early formulation of his position as a critical or dialectical theologian in the latter part of the second and early part of the third decades of this century. To facilitate this examination we shall concentrate on four works of this period which are particularly concerned with the development of this theological position - Der Mittler (1927), The Theology of Crisis (1929), Gott und Mensch (1930), and The Word and the World (1931).

A. ORIGIN: THE NEED FOR REFORMULATION

a. Modern Thought: Autonomy

The increasing trend in modern thought, beginning in the Renaissance in its abandonment of the Christian perspective in the interest of an adaptation of the thought forms of classical antiquity, through the Enlightenment, and the Enlightenment in the narrower sense, Rationalism, through German Idealism to the present century, involves a progressive emancipation of man from all external limitation and authority. The uncritical assumption of modern thought is that man is totally independent and complete in himself by virtue of his powers of reason. Such is Brunner's summation of the general²

¹ Roman Roessler, Person und Glaube: Der Personalismus der Gottesbeziehung bei Emil Brunner (München, 1965), pp. 19ff.

² Der Mittler (Tübingen, 1927), p. 81. E.T. The Mediator, tr. Olive Wyon (London, 1963), p. 105.

The Theology of Crisis (New York, 1929), p. 3.

The Word and the World (London, 1931), p. 113.

predicament of modern man. Further, the comprehensive scope of Brunner's theology is due in no small measure to his equation of this situation with the Christian concept of sin. The source of this predicament, asserts Brunner, is the pride of reason¹ which will not be humbled by admitting the existence of any authority above itself.² Reason claims for itself unbridled autonomy, and "autonomy is equivalent to sin."³

Not only so, but this autonomy, because it is a false autonomy, rests on a corresponding self-deification.⁴ Confidence in the ability of human thought to comprehend the unity of existence is rooted in the more fundamental confidence that this unity is already present in human thought.⁵ It is on the basis of the ancient lie, "Ye shall be as gods", that man assumes his reason is capable of absolute authority. In short, modern philosophy's uncritical confidence in reason is but a variation of the fundamental and original sin of man,⁶ his usurpation of divine authority, his confusion of himself with his Creator.

The development of this thesis is best illustrated in Brunner's treatment of that phenomenon which he regards as both closest and most opposed to the Christian faith,⁷ the ethical formulation of Immanuel Kant. The Kantian ethic stands closely related to the Christian faith in its notion of "radical evil", the recognition of the seriousness of evil in its determination of the whole personality, and the corresponding responsibility of the whole personality for evil.⁸ Kant's concept of radical evil was arrived at by analysing the Good Will, and the conditions under which we will in reality.⁹ In the first part of his Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone he was forced to the affirmation

1 Brunner repeatedly affirms that he uses "reason" in the broadest sense to include all man's natural capacities, qua man. Mitt. p. 81. E.T. 105.

2 Mitt. p. 23. E.T. p. 43; TofC pp. 42-3.

3 W&W p. 71.

4 Ibid. pp. 113-4.

5 Gott und Mensch (Tübingen, 1930), p. 7. E.T. God and Man, tr. David Cairns (London, 1936), pp. 46-7.

6 TofC p. 44; W&W p. 68. 7 Mitt. p. 88n. E.T. p. 112n. 8 Ibid. p.103. E.T. p.127.

9 Ibid. p. 111. E.T. pp. 135-6.

of the concept because he attributed responsibility for evil to the moral will of the individual.¹ However, this admission left him with only two possibilities;² either he must proceed from this point to embrace the Christian faith, leaving philosophical speculation behind, or he must renounce this insight in the interest of his own position as a philosopher of autonomy. In the second part of the book he chose the latter alternative.³ The unity of the moral will which he affirmed in the first part of the book is dissolved in the bifurcation of man into an Intelligible Self and an Empirical Self, and thereby the ethical dualism between "is" and "ought" is converted into a metaphysical dualism.⁴ This is the case because the Intelligible Self is accredited with the power to fulfil the "ought", and is described as the true self. Because the moral will is responsible for evil,⁵ evil could have been avoided. This is a blatant return to the autonomy so radically threatened in the momentary flirtation with the concept of radical evil, the attribution of divinity to man by the concept of the Intelligible Self.

... in Kant ... it is the moral idea in especial which is identified with the ground of things, with God, then it is just the idea, the immanent presupposition of the reason as such, which is termed God; it is the intelligible self which, as the deepest ground of myself, is at the same time God. ... The Platonic thought of the immanence of the divine logos in human reason is here specially applied to the ethical or practical reason; and by this means idealism receives, it is true, a special tone, but by no means another structure. 6

Thus the autonomous reason is once again affirmed. The Intelligible Self is blameless because it is divine; the empirical self is blameless because it is mechanical.⁷

The fatal result of this rational ethic is that the autonomy which

1 Mitt. p. 104. E.T. p. 129.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 GuM p. 27. E.T. p. 74.

5 TofC p. 53.

6 GuM p. 5. E.T. pp. 43-4.

7 Ibid. p. 27. E.T. p. 74.

is its key feature not only represents an isolation from God, but also from our fellow man. Not only is man good, and therefore exhorted to a Pelagian work-righteousness, but this work-righteousness is of necessity an individual matter. The final motive of the Stoical Kantian ethic is self-respect.¹ This is the inherent feature of all rationalism; it involves atomistic isolation. "Individualism is the necessary consequence of rational autonomy ..."² If I have the possibility of realizing the good in and by myself, and if I am thoroughly competent to deal with life in my own resources, then I have no need of any external assistance, nor is my assistance required by anyone else.

Nor is the situation improved by transposing this naive optimism from the individual to humanity in general. For the Christian faith the important philosophical difference between eighteenth century Rationalism with its lack of historical sense and nineteenth century Idealism with its philosophy of history is of no significance.³ The latter no more recognizes the reality of history than does the former because the philosophy of history transposes the "singular", which is the essence of history, into the timeless truths of reason. History therefore reveals no more than what the philosopher already knows in principle.⁴ The individualism of rational autonomy is therefore not overcome. On the contrary, the confidence in progress, involved in the generalization of optimistic rationalistic autonomy to encompass the whole of humanity, merely serves to weaken the force of the "ought" for the individual.⁵

b. Liberal Theology: Subjectivism

The optimistic perspectives of Rationalism and Idealism permeated the

1 GuM p. 27. E.T. p. 74.

2 W&W p. 69.

3 Mitt. p. 27. E.T. p. 48.

4 GuM p. 11. E.T. p. 52.

5 Mitt. pp. 91-2. E.T. pp. 115-6.

thought of the most influential theologians of the nineteenth century. According to Brunner, liberal theology "is in part the continuation of the old popular Rationalism, but far more a theology based on German speculative Idealism."¹ The idealistic subsumption of history under the category of the Idea, and its corresponding confidence in progress, when applied to theology meant that revelation was interpreted as an immanent process by which the truth, latent in man, was brought to actuality. The basic tenet of liberal theology is the idealistic assumption of continuity.²

But if revelation is no more than the unfolding of the latent truth in man, then sin is not serious.³ Brunner's development of this thesis may be illustrated from his treatment of the two leading liberal theologians of the nineteenth century, Schleiermacher and Ritschl. Brunner charges that although he did not realize it himself "Schleiermacher's theology is dominated by his philosophy of identity and the corresponding mystical conception of religion."⁴ Man is essentially spirit, essentially continuous with the divine; hence he is enjoined to cultivate this inherent divinity in what Brunner classes as a mystical manner. Such a theology could be formulated only by reinterpreting the Christian doctrine of sin along similar lines. Schleiermacher is frank and outspoken, says Brunner, in describing sin as a purely negative factor in the Greek-Idealistic manner of a bondage to the sense-life.⁵ Sin is the degradation of that lower element in man which impedes the development of spirit, which is man's essential nature. On this basis, original sin is what might be termed an evolutionary lag. It is an expression for the natural fact that "sin arose out of the animal nature as a collective entity."⁶ Thus says

1 Mitt. p. 76. E.T. p. 100.
 2 ToFC p. 12.
 3 Mitt. p. 108. E.T. p. 132.
 4 GuM p. 1. E.T. p. 38
 5 Mitt. p. 108. E.T. p. 132.
 6 Ibid. p. 109. E.T. p. 133.

Brunner, "Original Sin is ... thoroughly explained, and thus denied."¹

In contrast to Schleiermacher, "Ritschl's whole conception of the Gospel is dominated by the ethical idealism which he took over from Kant."²

Because he starts from the Kantian notion of the moral will, his doctrine of sin is more profound than that of Schleiermacher.³ However, he fares little

better than Schleiermacher in Brunner's assessment because he defined the subject of the moral will in terms of the idealistic philosophy of history, broadening it from the individual, as in Kant, to encompass humanity as a

whole.⁴ Consequently his doctrine is but a variation of the idealistic confidence in progress expounded by Schleiermacher.⁵

On this basis, Ritschl replaced the traditional Christian doctrine of Original Sin by his "kingdom of sin" which is, in Brunner's estimation, no more than a recognition of the occasion for temptation involved in social life.

Sin remains an isolated act of will, and therefore one which can be avoided.⁶

In this context Ritschl is forced to define sin as ignorance. This is the case because "he rejects the Law and the Primitive State as points of reference."⁷

Thus the failure of liberal theology rests on its uncritical acceptance of the autonomy of reason, evidenced in its confidence in the goodness of man, and on its affirmation of the idealistic confidence in progress, evidenced in its confidence in the evolutionary growth of the kingdom. In short, "modern theology rests upon blindness to the fact of sin."⁸ Brunner's charge against

modern theology and modern thought in general is that of Anselm to Boso -

"Nondum considerasti, quanti ponderis sit peccatum."

1 Mitt. p. 109. E.T. p. 133.
2 GuM p. 1. E.T. p. 38.
3 Mitt. p. 110. E.T. p. 134.
4 Ibid.
5 ToFC p. 111.
6 Mitt. p. 112. E.T. p. 136.
7 Ibid.
8 ToFC p. 17.

c. Orthodoxy: Objectivism

If liberal theology's failure to take sin seriously, and its corresponding deification of man along the lines of the idealistic concept of continuity, may be characterized as subjectivism, then the traditional rigidity of orthodoxy may be characterized as objectivism. The reason for this is that "orthodoxy has placed the Bible itself, as a book, in the place which should have been reserved for the fact of revelation."¹ It identifies the words of the Bible with the Word of God in its doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. It fails to take the Incarnation seriously because it fails to recognize that true revelation must be at the same time a veiling,² protecting revelation from the acquisitiveness of man so that it can never become his possession, but can only be perceived through faith.³ Similarly, Scripture must be veiled if it is to be a real revelation of God Himself, and not a product of man's vain imaginings. In the end, orthodoxy fares little better than liberalism, for its position is characterized by its desire for possession and control of the Word of God, and hence it is guilty of overlooking the seriousness of sin in its over-estimation of man's capacity for direct communication of ultimate truth.

In any event, since the advent of modern science, orthodoxy has ceased to be a live option.⁴ That Adam, Eve, and the serpent never existed in a paradise on earth, that the Old Testament "pre-history" is largely mythology, and the striking differences between the Synoptic, Johannine, and Pauline traditions, are inconvertible facts⁵ established by the modern critical scholarship which was instigated by the embarrassment and opportunity created by modern science. Yet science, far from destroying faith, has merely destroyed that which had to be

1 Mitt. p. 15. E.T. p. 34.

2 TofC p. 18.

3 Ibid. p. 19.

4 W&W p. 101.

5 Ibid. p. 99.

destroyed in the interest of pure faith, namely, "the divine authority of what was really human."¹ We must recognize once for all that we have the treasure of the divine Word in frail and error-prone human vessels.

Having recognized this, we still have the problem of recognizing the divine Word in the human words. But we can find no solution in orthodoxy's rigid tenacity in maintaining the outmoded forms which it regards as essential to the Biblical message.² Nor can we find the solution in liberalism's desertion of the Biblical message in its flight to a stable realm of timeless truth above the relative plane of history.³ To appreciate where the solution is to be found, and the success of that solution, is to appreciate the fundamental basis and method of Brunner's theology, and the success of that method.

B. METHOD: THE REFORMULATION - CRISES AND THE CONTRADICTION

a. The Crises of the Human Predicament

The charge which we have witnessed against the rationalistic-idealistic tradition is one which applies to all philosophical speculation. The three principal "systems" which have recurred throughout the history of thought, idealism, realism, and the philosophy of identity, usually misleadingly termed pantheism, bear within themselves the scars of futility in the parasitic dependence of each upon the others, and the impossibility of any one gaining victory over the others.⁴ These three major philosophical tendencies - idealism, which approaches knowledge subject-ively, realism, which approaches knowledge object-ively, and the philosophy of identity which affirms a hidden unity behind the antithesis of subject and object intuited somehow by man - all have one

1 W&W p. 101.

2 TofC p. 18.

3 W&W p. 100.

4 GuM p. 5. E.T. p. 44.

presupposition in common: their faith in the possibility of reaching a unified¹ grasp of reality by means of thought, their optimistic tendency to systematize. This confidence betrays the more fundamental confidence in the integrity and capability of man, that this unity is present in his own thinking.² Thus every speculative philosophy meets the same fate as idealism, it overestimates man in its disregard of what the Christian faith includes under its doctrine of sin, the refusal to acknowledge any authority above itself.

... it is precisely this, this freedom from the necessity of having the word said to one, power to say it oneself, which is the essence of reason, with which all philosophy operates. ³

This crisis in philosophy is necessarily reflected in the practical sphere, in the corresponding "systems" of ethics. There are basically two ethical "systems": eudaemonistic ethics which takes the realistic approach, starting, and, if true to itself, ending, with the concept of immediate life-preserving actions; and idealistic ethics which starts, and, if true to itself, ends, with the abstract moral law.⁴ As in philosophy, each thrives on the other, and therefore neither can achieve an ultimate victory. They resemble their respective philosophical backgrounds also in their anthropocentric orientation reflected in their assumption of the goodness of man characteristic of all⁵ natural ethics.

Thirdly, the crisis also permeates the field of psychology. Corresponding to the three philosophical systems are three leading tendencies in psychology - naturalistic psychology which treats the psychological as an object, idealistic psychology which treats the psychological as a subject, a unity which comprehends meaning, and what for want of a better term may be called romantic psychology

1 GuM p. 7. E.T. p. 46.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. p. 8. E.T. p. 47.

4 Ibid. p. 26. E.T. p. 73.

5 Ibid. p. 27. E.T. p. 75.

which treats the psychological as the unity behind the surface antithesis between subject and object, the sphere of feeling.¹ The value of each approach is at the same time its limitation. Naturalistic psychology is valid in so far as man can be subjected to the methods of empirical observation; the more our approach concerns the personal centre, on the other hand, the less useful such a method becomes. Idealistic psychology is valid in its understanding of man as a rational self, but because this is its concern it lacks the concreteness of naturalistic psychology, and can only define individuality negatively. Romantic psychology is valid in its sphere of the unconscious, but as such it never really comes to grips with real man.

b. The Crises are Manifestations of the Contradiction

This recurrent theme, the crisis of the human predicament in man's efforts to understand reality, in his practical efforts to live successfully, and in his efforts to understand himself, may be, Brunner suggests, an expression of the fundamental contradiction in human existence which the Christian faith terms sin.² This is the irrational element in existence which defies inclusion in any system. By its very nature, sin, if it is really serious, cannot be known by us from within the sinful predicament, but can be brought to our attention only by an external act of revelation.³ Because this is the case, it may well be that the natural systems of philosophy, ethics, and psychology are inevitably doomed to crisis because they do not, and by their very nature cannot, take this fundamental contradiction in existence into account. Their aim at a comprehensive and systematic account of reality - metaphysical, practical, or

1 GuM pp. 73-6. E.T. pp. 140-4.

2 Ibid. p. 77. E.T. p. 147. Brunner here suggests this interpretation of the contradiction specifically with reference to the crisis of psychology, but there can be no doubt from his preceding presentation that he includes philosophy and natural ethics in the same contradiction.

3 Mitt. p. 115. E.T.p. 139.

human -> must initially presuppose a contradiction-free formulator, capable of constructing such a system. From the perspective of the Christian faith, which begins with a recognition of the contradiction, this systematic approach is inherently theoretical because it ignores this basic fact about man as he is, that he is man in contradiction.

It follows that Christian theology is not immune from such a crisis in so far as it purports to present a "system" which includes the doctrine of sin as one element among others.¹ Sin is only really taken seriously in theology when it is seen in the ideas of the Fall and Original Sin, not as an explanation² of the cause of sin, but as a fundamental affirmation of its inescapable reality. Only in terms of these complementary ideas is sin seen as a truly personal act for which the individual is absolutely responsible, and at the same time a "fate" which is the inevitable setting of human life.³

It is Brunner's contention that acknowledgement of this situation, the seriousness of sin both in personal responsibility and in its inevitability, exposes the crises of human life because it acknowledges the fundamental contradiction on which these crises rest. It exposes the crisis of philosophy because the knowledge of sin is only given in revelation which involves "knowledge of God from beyond all human possibilities."⁴ Thus the ground is cut from under the autonomous reason; reason, that is, man, is taken captive by the revelation of God.

Acknowledgement of the depth of the contradiction also exposes the crisis of ethics because it involves a recognition of the futility of all human effort, on which all natural ethics is based. Brunner states his alternative -

1 GuM p.81. E.T. p. 151.

2 Mitt. pp. 115-6. E.T. pp. 140-1.

3 Ibid.

4 W&W p. 16.

"my own thesis: the sola gratia, sola fide, solī deo gloria of the Christian faith, that is, the Pauline view of faith, is the only solid foundation for ethics."¹ Only when man's ethical action is based on what God has done, and not on what he himself must do, is it possible to find fruitful release from the legalistic captivity to self in the real contrary to sin, faith, not moral virtue. The contradictions which compose the crisis of natural ethics are thereby overcome - the contradictions between reality and the ideal, individualism and collectivism, activity and passivity, and between optimism and pessimism² in the ethical outlook.

Finally, and this is the heart of Brunner's thesis, acknowledgement of the depth of the contradiction exposes the crisis in psychology. The crisis of psychology "lies in the nature of the case itself, in man himself, whether it be the investigator or the investigated."³ But here again Christianity cannot offer any theoretical solution; for this is precisely the message of Christianity, that every theoretical solution is as such man-made, and therefore a product of the contradiction itself.

... since knowledge of sin at the same time removes the contradiction and teaches that it is irremovable, removes it on God's side, and teaches that it is irremovable on man's side, it is able to indicate the place where the crisis of man and also the crisis of psychology has its roots, but it is unable to offer an idea or a system in which the antitheses are resolved. The solution of this contradiction cannot be an idea, but can be only the redemption. 4

c. The Solution to the Contradiction Solves the Crises

God's act is the only real solution of the crises of human life because it is the only real solution of the contradiction which is the essence of human life as we know it. Yet this contradiction is not the proper essence

1 TofC pp. 68-9.

2 Ibid. pp. 80-6.

3 GuM p. 77. E.T. p. 146.

4 Ibid. p. 81. E.T. p. 151.

of man. Sin must never be regarded as a primary affirmation, in spite of its unavoidable seriousness. The primary article of faith is not sin, but creation. That sin is a contradiction means that it is contra a more fundamental reality, man's creation in the image of God. The two qualifications, "image" and "fallen" must be affirmed constantly, if we are to know the depth of the contradiction as it can be known only through revelation.¹ But it is only possible to affirm both qualifications, "image" and "fallen", if we realize that "the essential being of man as man ... is identical with his relation to God. So when his relation to God is changed, it is not some accidental quality in him, but his essential being, which is changed."² Idealism is right in regarding selfhood as the essence of man, but it fails to realize that this selfhood is not of an independent autonomous nature, but rather a relation to its origin, God.³ Man is not intelligible in himself, but only in his relation to God, which is his essence.

But this description hardly improves upon the abstractness of the descriptions of the natural psychologies. Man is still an isolated individual. The realistic side of the Christian message consists in the fact that precisely at that point where I am bound to God, I am also bound to my fellow man.⁴ The atomistic autonomy of all natural rationalistic psychology is destroyed by the knowledge of the concrete inter-dependence of creation. Personality is not an isolated phenomenon, an independent possession, but rather a reality of fellowship.⁵ Just as my being is entirely dependent upon God, so too I exist only in relations with my fellow man. It is this inter-dependent existence which is the concrete expression of the image of God in man. As God condescends to man

1 GuM p. 82. E.T. p. 153.

2 Ibid. p. 85. E.T. p. 157.

3 Ibid. p. 91. E.T. p. 165.

4 Ibid. p. 88. E.T. p. 161.

5 Ibid. p. 88. E.T. p. 162.

in absolute love, so an answering love is solicited of man, an answering love which finds expression in the out-going acknowledgement of one's inter-dependence with one's fellows. In this the contradiction, which natural psychology tries in vain to ignore or bridge, finds its solution, in the love which is the essence of man, the image Dei. Here, and only here, is man really a unity. For love, Brunner claims, is "the single source of all the psychological functions of man. Love is knowing, willing and feeling - and only love is that."¹ It is this perspective, the recognition of man as the "thou" related to God in an "I-thou" relation which is the essence of his being, that Brunner proposes as a vantage point for psychological investigation. This description, Brunner contends, overcomes the partial descriptions of each of the competing tendencies in psychology by seeing man as created in the image of God, created in and for love.

The unity of the human person is thus not, as idealism believes, the self of reason, nor, as the romantic psychology would have it, the individuality, nor yet, as naturalism claims, the body, but the love which includes all. ²

Not that this is meant as a rival theory opposing the systems of natural psychology, for a system of any kind is excluded for the Christian theologian. Christian psychology is not constitutive, but regulative.³ As such, it points to the contradiction in man as the source of the crisis in psychology, and it suggests that a new start may be made by seeing the contradiction in terms of that which it contradicts, the creation of man in and for love.

The three principal manifestations of the crisis of the human predicament all derive from a failure to recognize the fundamental contradiction which is the essence of fallen man. Because this contradiction is not recognized, the procedures adopted in philosophy, ethics, and psychology, are inevitably

¹ GuM p. 91. E.T. p. 165.

² Ibid. p. 92. E.T. pp. 166-7.

³ Ibid. p. 81. E.T. p. 152.

theoretical, and the solutions thereby proposed are inevitably fragmentary. The only real solution is one which comes from beyond the contradiction, the act of God Himself. The Judgment which reveals the depth of the contradiction also reveals the futility of every theoretical approach to life. This applies to the Christian theologian no less than to the philosopher, the moralist, or the psychologist. The solution is not theoretical, but practical. It is not ideas with which the theologian ultimately reckons, but the living God. Hence his method must be appropriate.

It is only by means of the contradiction between two ideas - God and man, grace and responsibility, holiness and love - that we can apprehend the contradictory truth that the eternal God enters time, or that the sinful man is declared just. Dialectical Theology is the mode of thinking which defends this paradoxical character, belonging to faith-knowledge, from the non-paradoxical speculation of reason, and vindicates it as against the other. 1

C. SOURCES OF THE REFORMULATION

Such a comprehensive and avowedly revolutionary reformulation of the basic issues of human life demands an investigation of its sources. We shall consider three primary sources of the reformulation in its thought-background, and one practical source which accounts in large measure for the impetus to reformulation.

a. Kant's Critical Method

The first source must be the philosopher whose formulations Brunner both admires and corrects, Immanuel Kant. In a recent "Intellectual Autobiography" Brunner affirms, "I have generally held to the critical standards of Kant up to this day."² Our consideration of Kant's ethics has suggested

1 W&W pp. 6-7.

2 "Intellectual Autobiography of Emil Brunner", The Theology of Emil Brunner, ed. Charles W. Kegley, The Library of Living Theology, Vol. III (New York, 1962), p. 5.

that Brunner affirms Kant's procedure up to a certain point, to the point of his reaffirmation of the notion of autonomy in the concept of the Intelligible Self. If the autonomy is simply "conceived in a purely formal way as the Idea of the good will, then it is just as Christian as it is Idealistic."¹ But if this good will, and its subject, the Intelligible Self, is equated with man as he really is, "then it becomes opposed to the Christian knowledge of Evil."² Kant, in his analysis of the Categorical Imperative, showed that it is "the principle by which I come to know my formal freedom, i.e. my responsibility."³ But it also reveals my lack of real freedom, and this no philosopher has ever seen.⁴ Thus what distinguishes Brunner's formulation from that of Kant would appear to be not so much its basic method, as its estimate of man.

Brunner is by no means an irrationalist. He goes so far as to suggest that "even the Christian acknowledges reason as the greatest gift of the Creator."⁵ Brunner's objection is not to reason, but to the pride of reason, to that arrogant assumption that by his own capacities man is the measure of all things. His objection to Kant is not that he employed reason in his formulation, but that, in spite of his critical method, he did not employ it critically enough. Instead of following the insight represented by his notion of radical evil, he reverted to a position commensurable with his basic notion of autonomy. In view of this, and of his own admission to the effect that he has generally employed the critical standards of Kant, we may venture to suggest his debt to Kant in terms of the latter's attempt to avoid the rational speculation of idealism, on the one hand, and the empirical limitation of realism, on the other. It would seem that Kant's basic method, by which he seeks to incorporate the best of

1 Mitt. p. 88n. E.T. p. 112n.

2 Ibid.

3 GuM p. 30. E.T. p. 78.

4 Ibid.

5 W&W p. 33.

both positions, and thereby check the rational by the empirical and the empirical by the rational, because percepts without concepts are blind, and concepts without percepts are empty, is basically approved by Brunner.

Brunner's rejection of philosophy involves a rejection of "the possibility of a knowledge of God by means of the reason. The other possible way of philosophy, which regards the purely formal critical testing of concepts as the business of philosophy, has always been described by me as criticism, and regarded as the inevitable accompaniment of theological study."¹ The balance of the concepts of reason by the percepts of experience provides a reliable epistemological basis, even for the theologian. Brunner ventures to suggest that this critical approach may also prove fruitful in the field of ethics.

Kant's ethic has admittedly two sides. It is perhaps possible to treat the critical line of thought in it as a pure methodology of all ethics, and so to separate it from his moral teaching and his speculative idealistic notion of autonomy that it might perform the necessary service of purification of concepts even for a really Christian ethic.²

Although Brunner goes on to say that "this new revision remains up to now a mere postulate",³ it is surely more than a postulate in his own writings. His affirmation of Kant's success in his ethical formulations, up to the point of his reversion to the notion of autonomy, is sufficient indication of his respect for Kant's method.

Yet criticism as such cannot arrive at the truth of revelation. It can, if it is truly critical, raise the question as to the possibility of some avenue of truth outside the immanental possibilities of human reason.⁴ But the answer to that question must come from revelation itself, if it is to come at all. We now approach the sphere of the theologian. He affirms that revelation

¹ GuM p. 3n. E.T. p. 4ln.

² Ibid. p. 27n. E.T. p. 74n.

³ Ibid.

⁴ ToFC pp. 15-6.

has come. Yet in so doing he does not nullify the principles of criticism. Criticism is not merely a preliminary stage which is transcended by revelation. In fact, "only a Christian can be truly critical, and only he who is truly critical can be a Christian. The principles of true Christianity and of true criticism are identical."¹ We may now venture a wider interpretation of Kant's critical method as a further indication of Brunner's debt to him. We suggest that as a Christian theologian Brunner includes revelation under the category of "percepts", while retaining the meaning of concepts as the possible affirmations of human reason. Thus the insights of reason (concepts) are brought to the bar of judgment of revelation (percepts). By means of this approach Brunner attempts to avoid the "subjectivism" of liberalism, and the "objectivism" of orthodoxy.

Modernism and fundamentalism are born of the same mother, that is, of the fear of sound critical thinking. But, let me add, this fear belongs to all of us. It is essentially a part of the "old man"; nay it is his very essence. It is the pride of the man who will not stand in the judgment of God, who will not concede that he is, really and wholly, a sinner, whose only salvation is the grace of God. 2

In so far as man is not critical he affirms his autonomy, and in so far as he affirms his autonomy he is not critical. To be critical is to recognize the judgment of grace upon our vain search for truth and life, in philosophical speculation or ethical striving. It is to abandon theoretical reason, and to see oneself not as the master in thought, but as the subject of grace. Herein we reach what, for our purposes, is the crucial element in the Kantian background. For the question of the transition from the theoretical to the practical is the question of the "Imperative". It is his appreciation for Kant's "Categorical Imperative", moreso than epistemological questions, which

1 ToFC p. 14.
2 Ibid. p. 21.

must constitute the major area of investigation in terms of Brunner's relation to Kant. For it is Brunner's contention that Kant, in his concept of the Categorical Imperative, approximated a Christian position in so far as "in the Kantian philosophy ... the absolute Good becomes the challenge of the present moment to the individual ..."¹

b. Kierkegaard's Dialectic

The transition from the theoretical to the practical approach to life is also the theme of another thinker who has dominated twentieth century thought perhaps as profoundly as has Kant. Søren Kierkegaard is the great opponent of the System. Brunner asserts that he alone, among modern thinkers, recognized the inherent autonomy in every speculative approach to life, which "he expressed ... in the striking statement that every system, whatever its content may be, is, as such, pantheistic, and consequently irreconcilable with the Christian notion of God."² Here the critical approach is immersed in the dialectical outlook of the Kierkegaardian infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity. The continuity which is seen as the basis of liberal theology, and of modern thought in general, is firmly opposed by the emphasis on radical discontinuity, both in creation and sin.

It was Kierkegaard who first gave more definite direction to our doubt as to the scientific accuracy or the Christian content of the theology in which we had been bred, and who also equipped us with the new means of thought and a new courage to think as Christians. ³

This is Brunner's estimate of the significance of Søren Kierkegaard, and it is surely not guilty of over-statement. One might venture to suggest that Brunner's whole thesis, which we have been considering, is in its essential form a development of the thought of the Philosophical Fragments where

1 Mitt. p. 91n. E.T. p. 115n.

2 GuM p. 3. E.T. p. 40.

3 "Continental European Theology", The Church Through Half A Century, Essays in honor of William Adams Brown by former students, ed. Samuel McCrea Cavert and Henry P. VanDusen (New York, 1936), p. 141.

Kierkegaard contrasts the immanentism of the Socratic approach with the Christian doctrine of sin.

Nor is Kierkegaard's influence confined to the structure of Brunner's theology, important as this is. Many of the concepts, and indeed of the actual phrases, which Brunner employs in developing this structure are directly Kierkegaardian. His critical Christology attempts to avoid liberalism's rejection of the real historical nature of the Incarnation and orthodoxy's identification of the historical aspect with the Incarnation itself by the use of Kierkegaard's concept of the incognito. By this concept he hopes to avoid any possibility of reducing the Incarnation to an expendable human commodity. The human personality is a disguise which can only be pierced by faith.¹ Thus only God Himself can assure us of the reality of His presence in the Incarnation. This involves another Kierkegaardian concept, that of indirect communication - "spirit-communication itself is indirect ... and indirect communication is communication through the word."² Of more immediate concern for our purposes is Brunner's employment of the Kierkegaardian concept of the Individual. The renunciation of speculation involves a basic alteration in the attitude of life, the change from spectator to participant. The man who sees himself as a participant, one who takes life with ultimate seriousness, one who stands "before God", is the Individual. Nor is this a concept of isolation. For "in the belief in creation the individual as an individual is always at the same time the representative of the species. Man is never a mere individual, but he is also at the same time humanity, and yet as an individual he is absolutely responsible."³ It is this Kierkegaardian formulation which plays such a

1 ToFC p. 35.

2 Ibid. pp. 34-5.

3 Mitt. p. 120. E.T. p. 144.

decisive role in Brunner's understanding of the Fall and Original Sin.

c. The I-Thou of Ebner and Buber

The concerns behind Kierkegaard's definition of the Individual, and his concept of the inter-relatedness of human life, are developed by Brunner in terms of the I-Thou framework sketched by Ferdinand Ebner and Martin Buber. Søren Kierkegaard's Individual who stands before God becomes the individual whose being is identical with this relation - "the person ... is the same thing as the relationship to God."¹ It is Brunner's contention that this I-Thou philosophy is really not a philosophy, but a formulation of the basic category of the Biblical message. In a recent reply to criticism by Anders Nygren, Brunner states his confidence in the Biblical origin of the I-Thou framework.

His objection to me, in spite of all better intentions, that I, too, make theology dependent on a philosophy, namely the I-Thou philosophy of Ebner and Buber, rests on an obvious misunderstanding. What he calls I-Thou philosophy is no philosophy at all, but the center of Biblical revelation, made evident as such and formulated theologically: the name of God. This is nothing else than what Nygren himself did when he wrote Eros and Agape: he made clear as a criterion of Biblical thinking a central concept of the Bible which does not appear there in this sharp antithesis to the other and placed it in contrast with the idealistic Greek thought world. There can hardly be any doubt that the divine "I" and the address "thou" characterize the Biblical kerygma just as much as they are unknown to the ontological thought of the Greeks. 2

Thus the I-Thou framework represents the final significant qualification in the development of Brunner's theology from the standards of criticism through the Kierkegaardian dialectic. It may well have its origins in the distinctiveness of the Biblical approach as contrasted with Greek ontological thought, but whether it can bear the weight of the whole Biblical message is another

1 GuM p. 46. E.T. p. 101.

2 "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism", The Theology of Emil Brunner, op. cit., p. 341.

question.

Although our primary concern is the thought background which provided the method and concepts for Brunner's reformulation, we should be guilty of a great oversight were we to neglect the practical source of insight into the need for, and the possibility of, such a reformulation.

The real origin of the Dialectical Theology is to be traced ... not to Kierkegaard, but to a more unexpected source, to a place still farther removed from the main theological thoroughfare - to the ... two Blumhardts. ... They were not theologians but they could make theologians think.

Although some of us from our youth had had contact with this source of insight we still needed a mediator ... he ... was Hermann Kutter. ... From him we all learned - at least we Swiss Dialectikers - what it means to reckon with the living God as a reality and to let this reality be the starting point for thinking. 1

Thus essentially through the mediation of Hermann Kutter the reality of the living God so powerfully witnessed to by the Blumhardts, father and son, awakened a glimpse of hope beyond the immanentism of the contemporary theology and the sterility of orthodoxy; a hope which was formulated in the theology of Emil Brunner with the aid of the Kantian standards of criticism, qualified by the Kierkegaardian dialectic, and further qualified by the personalism sketched by Ebner and Buber.

D. THE QUESTIONS OF SIN AND RESPONSIBILITY

The comprehensive character of Brunner's theology involves the fields of philosophy, psychology, and morality, as well as the divergent approaches within theology itself. Consequently the foregoing presentation of Brunner's basic position raises many issues which must be excluded from

1 "Continental European Theology", The Church Through Half A Century, op. cit., pp. 141-2.

our consideration. Broadly considered, Brunner's position raises questions as to the adequacy of his classification of philosophy in terms of idealism, realism, and romanticism, of psychology in terms of a similar scheme, and of ethics in terms of an idealistic and a naturalistic perspective. In terms of theology, it raises questions as to the adequacy of his assessments of liberalism and orthodoxy. Both the question as to the adequacy of Brunner's broad classifications of philosophy, psychology, and ethics, and the question as to the adequacy of his assessments of liberalism and orthodoxy, must be omitted from the main line of our investigation. They can be but peripheral issues in relation to our central concern, which is Brunner's development of the themes of sin and responsibility. An appreciation of the setting of Brunner's theology is an indispensable prerequisite for any attempt to understand his development of these themes, but having established Brunner's basic position, we must concentrate on the specific issues raised by the themes themselves.

The question of sin and responsibility in Christian theology is really the question of the seriousness of sin. Since theology traditionally has formulated the seriousness of sin in terms of the imago Dei concept, this concept provides the most appropriate starting-point for our inquiry into Brunner's treatment of sin and responsibility. The method of distinguishing between man as God's creation and man as fallen sinner in terms of the "loss" of the imago Dei represents a legacy of the Reformers which is one of their least satisfactory contributions to theological clarification. Their concept of total depravity, combined with the necessary recognition of the continuing humanity of man in terms of their concept of a "relic" of the image, sets the problem for Brunner. His novel solution to this problem claims to avoid the suggestion of a quantitative demarcation of the effects of sin conveyed by

the "relic" concept by means of a distinction between a persisting "formal" image and a destroyed "material" image. Thus it will be our first task to examine Brunner's doctrine of the imago Dei.

The doctrine of the imago Dei not only provides us with a vantage point for examining Brunner's treatment of the seriousness of sin, but it also leads us into the other aspect of our theme, the question of responsibility. For it is in terms of responsibility that Brunner distinguishes between the persisting formal image and the lost material image. Thus the question of the meaning of responsibility is set in that we must determine what is the "responsibility" of creation, and what is the "responsibility" of sin, and what is the common element which allows Brunner to predicate this term of both situations. This implies the question of the relation between moral and religious responsibility, and hence also involves Brunner's affinity with Kant whose emphasis on responsibility enjoys a prominent place in Brunner's writings.

Brunner's employment of the concept of "responsibility" as a means of relating man as God's creation and man as fallen sinner raises the whole question of Brunner's treatment of the Fall and the related doctrine of Original Sin. Here we are confronted by the question as to what is involved in the doctrine of the Fall itself as an "event" between the Good Creation and the humanity which stands in need of reconciliation, and the question as to the relation between this "event" and the present existence of man. At this point we encounter Kierkegaard's reformulation of the issues at stake in the doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin.

Finally, having examined Brunner's treatment of the themes of sin and responsibility, we shall attempt to evaluate this treatment in terms of

the central criterion of Brunner's theology, the sola gratia principle of the Reformers. For in spite of the contemporary character of Brunner's presentation, it is his respect for the central position of the Reformers which constitutes the basic allegiance of his theological programme. Here we encounter Brunner's employment of the I-Thou framework developed by Ebner and Buber. For it is in terms of this framework that Brunner co-ordinates his allegiance to the sola gratia principle of the Reformers and his concern for "responsibility".

CHAPTER II IMAGO DEIA. THE PROBLEM OF THE IMAGO DEI

The Imago Dei is the concept which the Church traditionally has employed to distinguish man as God's creation from man as fallen sinner. The assertion of the Creation narrative that man has been made in the image of God had to be qualified in terms of the Fall narrative. The usual procedure was to speak of the "loss" of the image. This, however, created problems as perplexing as those which it originally set out to solve. For if man as God's creation possessed the image, and now man as fallen sinner has lost the image, what is one to say about man's persisting humanity? Is this humanum external to the image, or is it indeed included in the image? If the latter is true, then one can hardly speak of a "total loss" of the image. Some qualification will be required, whereby man is described as retaining some "portion" or "remnant" of the original image. These are the problems to which Emil Brunner addresses himself in his historical survey of the doctrine, and in his proposed formulation of the reality which is here seeking expression.

a. The Distinction between "Zelem" and "Demuth"

The solution which dominated the Church from the earliest reflection on the problem until the time of the Reformation was, according to Brunner,¹ based on a false exegesis of Genesis 1:26. This solution distinguished between image (imago) and likeness (similitudo) on the basis of the dual

¹ Der Mensch im Widerspruch (Zürich, 1965), p. 96. E.T. Man in Revolt, tr. Olive Wyon (London, 1962), p. 93.

terminology "zelem" and "demuth", the former being regarded as the natural unalterable being of man in rationality, freedom, and all those characteristics which are peculiar to man as man, the latter being regarded as the supernatural gifts of conformity to the divine will and intention in creation. Brunner sets on this foundation the whole weight of the mediaeval two-storey structure of the natural and the supernatural.¹ The origin of this distinction, he claims, is to be found in the writings of Irenaeus.²

b. The Reformation Predicament: The "Relic"

This distinction between imago and similitudo presented an intolerable barrier to the Reformers in their desire to speak in total terms of man's being in both grace and sin. Such a division was to them untenable. Luther recognized that the distinction was a distortion of the Biblical text, which he saw to be an instance of the common structure of Hebrew parallelism.³ In this return to the Biblical meaning of the image of God, Calvin's position is essentially the same as that of Luther.⁴ The imago and the similitudo refer to the same reality, man's creation by and for God, the justitia originalis.⁵ But man is not only a unity in creation; he is also a unity in sin. Man has not lost the similitudo and retained the imago. Rather both similitudo and imago are lost, because man is no longer in the state of justitia originalis.⁶ Grace is total, therefore sin must be total. But this creates the problem of relating man's continuing humanity to the image in which man was created. The solution to this problem the Reformers provided in their concept of the

1 MiW p. 493. E.T. p. 505; Dogmatik (Zürich, 1950), II, 92. E.T. Dogmatics, tr. Olive Wyon (London, 1964), II, 77.

2 MiW p. 102. E.T. p. 100; The Word of God and Modern Man, tr. David Cairns (London, 1965), p. 43.

3 MiW p. 96. E.T. p. 94; DII p. 91. E.T. p. 76.

4 MiW p. 496. E.T. p. 509; "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie", ZdZ, 10, Heft 6 (1932), p. 523n.

5 MiW p. 114. E.T. pp. 111-12.

6 Ibid.

¹
 "relic". We cannot say that any part of man has remained untouched by the corrosive effects of sin, but we must say that man has remained man in spite of the total disorientation of his life involved in the Fall. Thus they took the inconsistent step of ascribing to man a "relic" of the original image which they had previously equated with the justitia originalis.

c. Brunner's Solution: The Formal and Material Images

Neither the distinction between imago and similitudo, which he attributes to Irenaeus, nor the Reformers' concept of the "relic", satisfies Brunner as a description of the relation of man as God's creation to man as fallen sinner. The distinction between imago and similitudo tends to compromise the totality of sin, and suggests an area of man's being immune from the effects of sin.² The concept of the "relic" is a more acceptable approach, but it too has the unfortunate feature of suggesting a quantitative definition of the effects of sin.³ Brunner affirms, with the Reformers, the total depravity of man's fallen state.⁴ But he affirms the continuity between creation and sin, not by the relic concept, but by a distinction between a "formal" and a "material" concept of the image, a distinction which he attributes to the Lutheran theologian of the last century, von Oettingen.⁵

It is Brunner's contention that there are two concepts of the image of God in Scripture, but the distinction lies not in the dual terms zelem and demuth, but rather in the variance between the Old Testament and the New Testament concepts of the image.⁶ The Old Testament, according to Brunner,

1 MiW p. 96. E.T. p. 94.
 2 Ibid. p. 499. E.T. p. 514.
 3 Ibid. p. 499. E.T. p. 514; Revelation and Reason, tr. Olive Wyon (London, 1947), p. 70.
 4 MiW pp. 151, 499. E.T. pp. 150, 514; Christianity and Civilisation (London, 1949), II, 55; Fr n Anknpt p. 523.
 5 MiW p. 497. E.T. p. 511.
 6 Ibid. p. 490. E.T. p. 501.

presents the image in the "formal" sense of man's derived responsible being, his existence as subject, the New Testament in the "material" sense of conformitas to the will of God which is the true content and destiny of man's being.¹ In this context, only the New Testament speaks of the "loss" of the image, or rather presupposes its loss, because its concern is the restoration of the image in Jesus Christ.² Thus, Brunner claims, the Old Testament formal image remains as the shell of man's being,³ his inherent responsibility,⁴ the inhuman persistence of inverted humanity,⁵ the impersonal persistence of inverted personality.⁶ On the other hand, the material image has been lost. Man does not live in the love of God by which and for which he has been created.⁷

B. THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

a. The Old Testament and New Testament Images

The Biblical foundation for Brunner's distinction between formal and material image rests on the contention that such a distinction is involved between the Old Testament and New Testament doctrines of the image. In Brunner's opinion, the Old Testament doctrine of the image is a purely formal one describing man as subject, that is, that transcendental quality inherent in the structure of human existence which permanently distinguishes man from the rest of creation.⁸ This characteristically Old Testament meaning of the image also appears in the New Testament, so that the Old and New Testament

1 R&R p. 54.

2 MiW p. 491. E.T. p. 501; Wahrheit als Begegnung (Berlin, 1938), pp. 98-9. E.T. Truth as Encounter, tr. David Cairns (London, 1964), p. 147.

3 MiW pp. 170, 226-7. E.T. pp. 170, 229.

4 Ibid. pp. 157, 178. E.T. pp. 156, 178; R&R p. 173.

5 MiW pp. 169, 446. E.T. pp. 169, 456; "Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie" ZdZ, 7, Heft 3 (1929), p. 264.

6 MiW pp. 137, 446. E.T. pp. 136, 456.

7 Ibid. p. 107. E.T. p. 105.

8 R&R p. 54.

contrast is also contained within the New Testament itself.¹ The passages which Brunner cites in support of this contention are: I Cor. 11:7 where it is stated that man "is the image and glory of God", and James 3:9 where men are said to be "made after the similitude of God". However, this is a secondary use of the concept in comparison to the characteristically dynamic New Testament use which describes the image in the material sense of conformitas, the fulfilment of the structure of humanity as God wills and destines it. The primary passages Brunner cites² in this connection are: Romans 8:29 which speaks of being "conformed to the image of His Son", II Cor. 3:18 which states that "we all openly beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord", Ephesians 4:24 which describes the putting-on of the new man "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness", and Col. 3:10 which describes the new man as "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."³

In this way Brunner expounds the formal-material distinction as a thoroughly Biblical one. The difficulty which he encounters consists in the fact that these two concepts of the image are simply acknowledged in the Bible, but nowhere is their relation to one another set forth.⁴ Therefore, to arrive at some statement of the relation between the formal structural image and the dynamic material image, Brunner concedes that he has to employ a process of "extrapolation".⁵ "The conception of the imago dei belongs, as others, such as that of history, to those elements of biblical doctrine which we have to understand more between the lines than in the lines themselves,

1 MIW p. 491. E.T. p. 502.

2 DII p. 91. E.T. p. 76.

3 Ibid.

4 MIW p. 491. E.T. p. 502; R&R p. 54.

5 WaB p. 99. E.T. p. 147.

that is to say, we have to get it out of the totality of biblical teaching."¹
 This "extrapolation" results in the affirmation that the loss of the image which the New Testament presupposes cannot be the loss of the image in the Old Testament sense.² The image which is lost can only be that image which is restored in Jesus Christ, or more accurately, that image to which man is being conformed through Jesus Christ. Hence the formal image remains as the God-given structure of man's existence, while the material image is lost through man's refusal to conform to the divine destiny for him, and is restored through Jesus Christ.³

b. Brunner's Biblical Insights

The first comment that must be made about Brunner's discussion of the Biblical references to the imago Dei is that he uncovers certain facts about the Biblical material which have not always been recognized in discussions on the topic. We may select three of these facts which Brunner presents. First, he affirms the Reformation recognition of the parallelism which is involved in the use of zelem and demuth in the Creation narrative. In the tradition of the Reformers, he rightly rejects the exegesis which distinguishes these terms in such a way as to solve the problem of the relation between the imago Dei and sin by asserting that the former, as man's natural endowment, is retained, while the latter, as the supernatural conformity to God, is lost. Secondly, he draws our attention to the fact that there is no unified concept of the imago Dei in Scripture. He is undoubtedly right in his contention that there is an Old Testament concept of the image and a New Testament concept; although he may not be so sound

1 The Scandal of Christianity (London, 1951), p. 58.

2 WaB p. 99. E.T. p. 147.

3 Ibid. p. 99. E.T. p. 148.

in his method of relating the two. Thirdly, Brunner also recognizes that Scripture makes no reference to the loss of the Old Testament image. On the contrary, there is good reason to conclude from the references to it that it is not lost. The killing of man is prohibited because he has been made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6). And, as Brunner notes, two references in the New Testament (I Cor. 11:7 and James 3:9) suggest that man, in spite of sin, is the image of God. And yet man must "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created Him." (Col. 3:10).

c. Problems of the Formal-Material Distinction

While Brunner recognizes two concepts of the image of God in Scripture, his contention that the Old Testament image is a formal image, the unalterable responsible structure of human existence, and that the New Testament image is a material image, the being in love which is the true fulfilment of human existence, raises many questions. On the one hand, it suggests that man is created in the formal image to which the material image is added.¹ On the other hand, Brunner insists that the material image is integral to the formal, that is, that God has given man his determination in Creation.² The immediate solution to this conflict consists in the recognition that the image of which the Creation narrative speaks is not the image of Creation. For the "imago, understood in the Old Testament sense, is merely a 'relic' of the original, total imago."³ But far from solving the ambiguity, this explanation makes the doctrine even more difficult.

The original image knows no distinction between formal and

1 DII pp. 66-7. E.T. pp. 56-7.

2 Ibid. pp. 71-2. E.T. p. 60.

3 R&R p. 70.

¹ material. Yet the image of which the Creation narrative speaks is merely a formal image. The material image, which together with the formal image constitutes an undifferentiated unity in Creation, is the New Testament image. The reasoning seems to be: man is created in the Word; the Word is the source of the New Testament image; therefore, man is created in the New Testament image. "It is not the Old Testament narrative as such, but its meaning fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which is the 'Word of God' in which alone we can understand ourselves."² One would hardly question this affirmation, but the line of reasoning which Brunner employs in implementing it raises serious doubts. For he seems to overlook one basic fact, namely, the distinction between the New Testament and Old Testament images. In the Old Testament the image is predicated of man, while in the New Testament the image is predicated of Christ. Consequently the New Testament image means something very different from the Old Testament image. "In the New Testament the original is always present in the image."³ The Old Testament image, on the other hand, implies a likeness in basic unlikeness. "By stating likeness, he also implies distance."⁴ Indeed, it is remarkable that the concept "image of God" should appear in a faith which was based upon "the sense of the greatest possible distance from God."⁵ Nevertheless, the concept does appear, and it appears as a predicate of man - man is made in the image of God. The New Testament affirms this in the two passages which Brunner notes, but the concern of the New Testament is not with this image as such. Between the Old Testament and the New Testament the concept

1 DII p. 71. E.T. p. 60.

2 MiW pp. 86-7. E.T. p. 84.

3 Gerhard Kittel, "εἰκών", Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, tr. & ed. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, 1964), II, 395.

4 N.W. Porteous, "Image of God", The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville, 1962), II, 684.

5 Gerhard von Rad, "εἰκών", Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, op. cit., p. 390.

of the image undergoes a transformation. It no longer means a creaturely reflection of God, but now signifies "what completely corresponds to the 'prototype'."¹

The difficulty which these two concepts of the image involve for the systematic theologian is that they are not related in Scripture. The indication is that the Old Testament image persists, and man is transformed from this image to the image of Christ. But there is no reference to a lost image. Brunner seems to assume that this New Testament image to which man is to be conformed was his at the first, and through sin was forfeited, leaving only the Old Testament image. One must question, therefore, whether he takes seriously the two concepts of the image which Scripture presents. It may be significant that in his survey² of the Biblical background for the doctrine of the image, Brunner refers to the passages in both Old and New Testaments which predicate the image of man, and to certain New Testament passages which define the image as the destiny of the believer in being conformed to Christ, but neglects to mention the passages, principally II Cor. 4:4 and Col. 1:15, which equate the concept of the image with Christ. In any event, we must hold certain reservations about the adequacy of Brunner's distinction between formal and material as a method of relating the Old Testament and the New Testament images. The distinction seems to be rather between man and Christ, between "the first man [who] is of the earth, earthy; [and] the second man [who] is the Lord from heaven" (I Cor. 15:47). And on this basis, the relation between the two images is set forth, "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. 15:49).

¹ Porteous, op. cit., p. 684.

² MIV p. 490. E.T. pp. 500-1.

C. IRENAEUS: THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN IMAGO AND SIMILITUDO

a. The Distinction in Irenaeus

It is Brunner's contention that the disastrous distinction between zelen and demuth is traceable to the writings of Irenaeus, where the anthropology presented is "Gnosticism purified by Scripture, with a strong element of general Greek philosophy."¹ Irenaeus' imago doctrine is seen as a variation of the Valentinian Gnosticism which he was opposing.² The justification for this view rests primarily on two passages in Irenaeus' Contra Haereses. In V. 16. 2. we are told that whereas man was made in the image of God (secundum imaginem Dei factum esse hominem), because the Word (Verbum) was still invisible after whose image (cuus secundum imaginem) man was made, man easily cast off the similitude to him (propter hoc autem et similitudinem facile amisit).³ Clearly, a distinction is here drawn between imago and similitudo. In a parallel passage the distinction is equally obvious. Speaking of the "animal man", who lacking the Spirit is characterized merely by the soul, Irenaeus describes such a man as "having indeed the image in his structure, but not assuming the similitude in fact by the Spirit" (imaginem quidem habens in plasmate, similitudinem vero non assumens per Spiritum).⁴ Not only are imago and similitudo here distinguished, but the very terms which Irenaeus employs lend credence to Brunner's contention that the natural-supernatural bifurcation can be traced to the imago-similitudo distinction in Irenaeus.

b. The Contexts in which "Image" is Used

It is rather striking that the two passages noted above (V. 16. 2.

1 MiW. p. 492. E.T. p. 504.

2 Ibid.

3 Irenaeus, Contra Omnes Haereses Libri Quinque (Lipsiae, 1853), tr. John Keble, Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons Against Heresies (London, 1872), V. 16. 2.

4 Ibid. V. 6. 1.

and V. 6. 1.) are the only places where Irenaeus posits a clear distinction between imago and similitudo. The terms are used elsewhere in a seemingly careless manner which does not conform to the distinction represented in these passages. The interpretation of Irenaeus' use of these terms is complicated by the fact that the original Greek words which stand behind the Latin imago and similitudo have been lost to us.¹ Consequently any interpretation is handicapped by the fact that it must depend on the adequacy of the Latin terms. In addition to this, commentators on Irenaeus are involved in the difficult task of determining the contexts in which the terms are used. Irenaeus applies the terms to Christ, to Adam, to fallen man, and to regenerate man. It may well be that the difficulty in the interpretation of Irenaeus has been increased needlessly through failure to distinguish the contexts in which the terms are used,² not that this is always an easy task.

Approaching Irenaeus with a realization of the hazards which must be encountered, we shall select several passages where the context in which the image is used is clear. With reference to Adam and to fallen man, he clearly states that we have lost both the imago and the similitudo in Adam, and that they are restored in Jesus Christ (quod peridideramus in Adam, id est secundum imaginem et similitudinem esse Dei, hoc in Christo Iesu recipemus).³ Of redeemed man, he says that by the will of the Father we shall be made like unto God and perfected, in that man will be made according to the image and likeness of God (Similes nos ei efficiet et perficiet voluntate Patris: efficiet enim hominem secundum imaginem et similitudinem

1 Arnold Strucker, Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen, quoted by David Cairns, The Image of God in Man (London, 1953), p. 74.

2 Klebba, Die anthropologie des heiligen Irenaeus, Cairns, op. cit., p. 74.

3 Irenaeus, III. 18. 1.

¹
Dei). Of the image in Creation, Irenaeus says that man was made **after** the image and likeness of God (factum esse hominem secundum imaginem et similitudinem Dei).² Thus no distinction is made between imago and similitudo in reference to fallen man, redeemed man, and original man. We are left, therefore, with the contradictory assertions that the imago is retained and the similitudo lost in sin, and that both the imago and similitudo are lost in sin and restored in Christ.

If the whole problem is not to be dismissed as insoluble, we must move on to ask in what contexts the terms are used in the two passages on which Brunner bases his interpretation of Irenaeus. Obviously the first passage (V. 16. 2.) is concerned with Adam, the original man who was made in the image of God. But since this involves the whole question of the Primitive State, we shall omit consideration of it for the moment. The second passage (V. 6. 1.) is less clear in its reference. The context will be assigned in terms of the definition of the "Animal Man" who is said to possess the image in his form, but to lack the likeness by the Spirit. It has been suggested that "the 'animal man' is essentially man as originally created by God."³ On this interpretation, the likeness by the Spirit may well be regarded as a supernatural addition to the natural image, so that something like the classical imago-similitudo distinction will be the inevitable outcome. It is extremely doubtful, however, whether the passage can bear this interpretation. A much more likely interpretation is suggested by the equation of the animal man with fallen man. "Clearly, the man 'of an animal nature' is here the natural man after the Fall, who has still the image, while a special gift of the Spirit is needed to

1 Irenaeus, V. 8. 1.

2 Ibid., V. 2. 1.

3 John Lawson, The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus (London, 1948), p. 207.

perfect him, and give him the likeness or similitude which was lost at the Fall."¹ This represents a much more plausible interpretation of the passage. Although it is perhaps unfortunate that the likeness by the Spirit is described as "a special gift of the Spirit". The passage as a whole is most intelligible if it is seen as a polemic against the Gnostic dualism between body and Spirit.

V. vi. 1 is an attempt to safeguard the whole man, body, soul and Spirit. He takes issue with the Gnostics who denied the salvation of the body. It is in this polemical situation that Irenaeus makes the distinction which he does, and we ought to notice that his opponents, whom he wanted to refute, made the same distinction between imago and similitudo as signifying at times body and at times Spirit. Irenaeus takes a weapon out of their own armoury by saying that if we let only the body be saved, then one has the imago without the similitudo, and if we let only the Spirit be saved, then one has the similitudo without the imago - but in neither case are we speaking about the whole and completed man. 2

The main contention of the passage, then, is precisely the reverse of the imago-similitudo distinction. Far from regarding the Spirit as a supernatural similitudo added to the natural image, the point is that man is incomplete without the Spirit. "The strange thing is that this passage, in which a distinction is made between imago and similitudo, is one of the clearest demonstrations of any in Irenaeus that the Spirit is not a supernatural addition to the purely human, but it is on the contrary humanity's own completion."³

The question of the relation between the image and sin remains. If we regard this passage as referring to fallen man, then the only answer is that the similitudo is lost while the imago remains. Yet if we are not to deny the thesis that Irenaeus is primarily concerned with man as a unity, we shall hesitate to equate this with the classical imago-similitudo

1 Cairns, p. 75.

2 Gustaf Wingren, Man and the Incarnation, tr. Ross MacKenzie (Edinburgh, 1959), p. 158.

3 Ibid.

distinction. The next stage in our analysis demands an examination of the other passage on which Brunner bases his interpretation of Irenaeus. With this we pass to the concept of the Primitive State.

c. The Concept of the Primitive State

The other passage (V. 16. 2.) on which Brunner bases his interpretation of Irenaeus states that since the Word was invisible after whose image man was made, man easily cast off the similitude to Him (Adhuc enim invisible erat Verbum, cuius secundum imaginem homo factus fuerat. Propter hoc autem et similitudinem facile amisit.). Brunner's interpretation, that this involves a distinction between imago and similitudo similar to the later distinction between the retained natural imago and the lost supernatural similitudo, rests on the identification of the imago with man's rational nature. It is Brunner's contention that Irenaeus' imago doctrine has its "starting-point ... in ... the Aristotelian distinction between man and the creatures which are not endowed with reason."¹ This distinctive rationality of man constitutes the imago which cannot be lost. To this communion with God is added as the similitudo.²

The passage which Brunner cites³ in support of this interpretation is one in which Irenaeus is concerned to lay the responsibility for sin at man's own feet. Irenaeus argues that because man is rational, and similar to God, possesses free will, he is responsible for the direction of his life (homo vero rationabilis, et secundum hoc similis Deo, liber in arbitrio factus et suae potestatis, ipse sibi causa est).⁴ But this passage makes it very clear that the rational man who possesses free will is the man of God's

1 MiW p. 493. E.T. p. 504.
2 Ibid. p. 103. E.T. p. 100.
3 Ibid. p. 493. E.T. p. 505.
4 Irenaeus, IV. 4. 3.

Creation. Here again we see how important it is to determine the context in which Irenaeus' references occur. For in this passage Irenaeus describes fallen man as having lost true reason by living irrationally, opposing the righteousness of God (rationabilis factus amisit veram rationem, et irrationabiliter vivens, adversatus est iustitiae Dei). Since true reason is lost, it is hardly plausible that the imago can be equated with the unalterable rational nature of man. This still does not solve the problem of the distinction which Irenaeus presents between imago and similitudo, but it does suggest that a facile equation of the distinction with the later imago-similitudo distinction is to be suspect.

Brunner concedes that it is difficult to tell just what Irenaeus regards as having been lost through the Fall of Adam. On Brunner's interpretation the imago could not be lost, and the similitudo was only present in germ.¹ This interpretation presupposes that the distinction between imago and similitudo is a feature of the Primitive State itself. Undoubtedly, Brunner is sound in his affirmation that for Irenaeus the Primitive State was one of child-like innocence. Yet he may not be so sound in his further affirmation to the effect that "Adam's advantage was innocence, not righteousness."² This divorce of innocence from righteousness suggests that righteousness is something which man must acquire for himself in addition to the innocence in which he was created. On this interpretation, something like the natural imago and dispensable supernatural similitudo is inevitable. But this distinction between innocence and righteousness is not evident in Irenaeus himself.

1 *MW* p. 493. *E.T.* p. 505.

2 *Ibid.* p. 87n. *E.T.* p. 84n.

It is ... hardly correct to speak, as Brunner does, of man, in the view of Irenaeus, as being sealed by his condition as a "child" in such a way that his distinctive mark is innocence, not righteousness. If we set innocence and righteousness over against one another, then we must necessarily think of righteousness as being the sum of a series of righteous works. But righteousness is rather the unbroken receiving of life from the "hands" of the Creator; it is man's acquiescence in his own creation and not his self-willed resistance to God. 1

We have yet to determine what is involved in the distinction which Irenaeus makes between imago and similitudo. Obviously, the distinction is clear enough in Irenaeus to give Brunner's interpretation some plausibility. However, we have reached the point where we must suspect the adequacy of Brunner's equation of the distinction in Irenaeus with the later two-storey doctrine of the image. We have also arrived at a possible explanation of the source of Brunner's interpretation, in that he seems to justify it by projecting back into Irenaeus' doctrine of the Primitive State a typically two-storey distinction between innocence and righteousness. One final stage remains before attempting a re-evaluation of Irenaeus' doctrine of the image. In order to determine the significance of the distinction between imago and similitudo in its relation to the Primitive State, we must examine Irenaeus' doctrine of the image in the light of his central concern, the doctrine of recapitulation.

d. The Image and Recapitulation

The doctrine of the imago Dei is distinctly a secondary and subordinate doctrine in the writings of Irenaeus. It is in the context of his central concern for the doctrine of recapitulation that Irenaeus demonstrates his concern for the doctrine of the image of God.² It is because of the New Testament image of God, Jesus Christ, that Irenaeus

1 Wingren, p. 31.

2 Cf. Cairns, p. 74.

is concerned with the fact that according to the Old Testament doctrine man is made in the image of God. It is this centrality of the doctrine of recapitulation which ultimately calls in question Brunner's contention that Irenaeus' doctrine of the image has its "starting-point ... [in] ... the Aristotelian distinction between man and the creatures which are not endowed with reason."¹

Whatever the connection between the rationality of man and his being made in the image of God, it is clear that Irenaeus does not simply equate the image with man's distinctive rationality. A much more prominent feature of his doctrine is the insistence on man's dependence on God. For example, he emphasizes that life is not at the disposal of man, nor is it a self-contained quality of his being, but wholly a gift of grace (Non enim ex nobis, neque ex nostra natura vita est, sed secundum gratiam Dei datur.)² Similarly, the soul is not an independent principle of life, but flourishes in the life it receives from God (sic et anima ipsa quidem non est vita, participatur autem a Deo sibi praestitam vitam)³ In reference to Adam, Irenaeus affirms that at no time did Adam escape from the hands (i.e. the Son and the Spirit) of God (Non enim effugit aliquando Adam manus Dei ...)⁴ In terms of this insistence on the dependence of man upon God, it is hardly plausible that the starting-point for his doctrine of the image could be the Aristotelian distinction between man and the lower creation in terms of rationality. This is not to say that the image of God does not involve the distinctive rationality of man.

The equation of the similitudo with a supernatural dispensable conformity to God is just as improbable as an adequate assessment of

1 MiW p. 493. E.T. p. 504.

2 Irenaeus, II. 34. 3.

3 Ibid. II. 34. 4.

4 Ibid. V. 1. 3.

Irenaeus' doctrine of the image as is the equation of the imago with rationality. The suggestion¹ that his designation of Adam's loss by the phrase "robe of holiness" (sanctitatis stola)² is susceptible to the donum superadditum interpretation can hardly command serious attention in terms of the context in which it occurs. Its use would seem to be dictated more by literary considerations than by a desire to describe Adam's loss in terms of a supernatural gift. For he speaks of the "girdle by which he displayed his penitence in practice" (Etenim per succinctorium in facto ostendit suam poenitentiam), which he also describes as "clothing suitable to disobedience" (condignum tamen inobedientiae amictum fecit), and specifically states that what Adam lost was "the character and thoughts of children" (quoniam indolem et puerilem amiserat sensum). Thus the "robe of holiness" would seem to be merely a figure of speech in the context of the similar concepts of the "girdle of penitence" and the "clothing suitable to disobedience".

These considerations lead us to the conclusion that in his doctrine of the image of God, Irenaeus is much more concerned with the whole man than with a concept of man which splits him into a natural rational being and a supernatural God-related being. This interpretation accords much better with the central doctrine of recapitulation, in reference to which the doctrine of the image of God is expounded. The image of God involves a destiny which man easily cast off in his child-like Primitive State, and which is restored in Jesus Christ. It is that pledge or assurance (pignus) which leads to the "perfecting and preparing of incorruption, practising by little how to receive and bear God" (ad perfectionem et preparationem

1 Lawson, p. 202.
 2 Irenaeus, III. 23. 5.

incorruptelae, paulatim assuescentes capere et portare Deum).¹ This pledge "will make us like Him, and perfect us by the will of the Father; for it will make man to be after the image and likeness of God" (Similes nos ei efficiet et perficiet voluntate Patris: efficiet enim hominem secundum imaginem et similitudinem Dei.)² Similarly, it is by "training" or "guidance" (ductus)³ that man comes to be in the image of God. This concept of the image is a corollary of his doctrine of the Incarnation as a recapitulation of Adam's loss. The Incarnation is not an intrusion, but because man was made after God's image and likeness, it is a righteous and merciful assumption by God of what belongs to Him (quod dictum est in principio factum esse hominem secundum imaginem et similitudinem Dei, non aliena in dolo diripiens, sed sua propria iusta et benigne assumens.)⁴

e. Re-evaluation of Irenaeus' Distinction

We are led, therefore, to two conclusions, which we shall summarize in the reverse order to that in which they have been achieved. First, we are compelled to interpret Irenaeus' doctrine of the image in terms of his central doctrine of recapitulation. This involves a concept of the image which regards man as a unity in which his destiny is to image God. Secondly, Brunner's detection of a natural-supernatural distinction in Irenaeus' distinction between the imago and the similitudo depends upon an unwarranted divorce between innocence and righteousness in Irenaeus' doctrine of the Primitive State. The key passage (V. 16. 2.) states that although man was made in the image of God, the Word was yet invisible after whose image man was made, so that he easily cast off the similitude to Him (Adhuc enim

1 Irenaeus, V. 8. 1.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. IV. 38. 3.

4 Ibid. V. 2. 1.

invisible erat Verbum, cuius secundum imaginem homo factus fuerat. Propter hoc autem et similitudinem facile amisit.). Now if this similitude is regarded as a righteousness which man made in the image of God failed to achieve, then it is inevitable that the passage will be interpreted as a precursor of the classical imago-similitudo distinction. The passage itself, however, is much more conducive to an interpretation which finds the original righteousness in the innocence of the first man. The fact that the Word, after whose image man was made, was still invisible facilitated the opposition to that righteousness in man's taking life into his own hands. Thus man, created in the image of God, cast off the similitude in that he ceased to reflect the goodness of God in his creaturely gratitude.

If this interpretation is accurate, and it seems to be the only one which will accord with Irenaeus' varied pronouncements on the doctrine of the imago Dei, then what we have in Irenaeus is not a precursor of the later imago-similitudo distinction, but an attempt to relate the Old Testament image which is predicated of man with the New Testament image, Christ, the express image of God, after whose image man was made. The development of this interpretation is beyond the scope of our concern. It is sufficient for our purposes to note that it represents a much more plausible account of Irenaeus' doctrine of the imago Dei than does the contention that his distinction between imago and similitudo represents a precursor of the classical natural-supernatural distinction. We are forced to conclude, therefore, that Brunner does Irenaeus a great injustice in making the rare passages in which a distinction is made between imago and similitudo a central interpretative principle for evaluating his presentation of the doctrine of the imago Dei. It would seem that Brunner

is too ready to accept the efforts of the Roman Catholic scholar, Klebba,¹ to find a justification for the later imago-similitudo distinction in the writings of such a respectable Father of the Early Church as Irenaeus. On the whole, Wingren's assessment,² that this procedure is anachronistic in that it seeks to discover what Irenaeus thought of a distinction which did not appear until long after his time, must be accepted.

D. THE REFORMATION PREDICAMENT: THE "RELIC"

Although the distinction between imago and similitudo in terms of natural and supernatural cannot be attributed justly to Irenaeus, it remains true that this distinction did appear in the history of theology. In spite of the fact that it may not always have been as crudely drawn as the natural-supernatural distinction, particularly in St. Thomas Aquinas and the Roman Catholic theology which has derived directly from him,³ some qualification of this compromising formulation constituted the basic issue which the Reformers were challenged to oppose in their anthropological considerations. Any suggestion that there was some aspect of man which did not need redemption mitigated against the Reformers' understanding of the Gospel as sola gratia. Because grace is total, sin must also be total. "Reformation is identical with the knowledge that this synthesis [i.e. of nature and grace] is not possible, because man is not only sinful, but a sinner..."⁴ There can be no compromise between the totality of grace and the totality of sin.

1 Cf. Brunner's appreciative comments on Klebba, MiW p. 492. E.T. p. 504.

2 Wingren, p. 157.

3 Karl Barth, Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner, Theologische Existenz heute, Heft 14 (1934), pp. 32ff. E.T. in Natural Theology, tr. Peter Fraenkel (London, 1946), pp. 95ff.

4 GuM p. 2. E.T. p. 40.

A. LUTHER

a. The Imago-Similitudo Distinction

Luther, says Brunner, was responsible for recovering the true Biblical doctrine of the image which had long been distorted by the imago-similitudo distinction, in his recognition that these two terms denote what is in fact an instance of Hebrew parallelism.¹ Brunner lays special emphasis on Luther's statement that if the imago is to be equated with natural powers of reason and will, then Satan is in the image of God, since he is certainly more gifted in this respect than any man (Si enim istae potentiae sunt imago Dei, sequetur etiam Satanam ad imaginem Dei conditum esse, qui profecto illa naturalia longe habet validiora, quam nos habemus, sicut est memoria et intellectus summus et voluntas obstinatissima.)²

With this the Augustinian trinity of memory, intellect and will is swept aside as unprofitable,³ and indeed extremely dangerous if it leads to a defence of man in terms of his rationality and freedom.

Yet the clear denial of the natural-supernatural distinction does not necessarily involve the equation of imago and similitudo. In at least one passage, Luther expressly notes the necessity for distinguishing the two concepts (quantum ego diligenti observatione potui deprehendere, est aliqua inter haec duo vocabula differentia).⁴ His contention is that similitudo is a qualification of imago. The term imago denotes a figure (figura) in the sense of a statue (statua). Similitudo, on the other hand, refers to a perfection of the image (perfectio imaginis). This distinction seems dangerously similar to that distinction whose destruction

1 MiW p. 495. E.T. p. 507; DII p. 91. E.T. p. 76.

2 Martin Luther, Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar, 1911), 42, 46.

3 Ibid. p. 45.

4 Ibid. pp. 247-8.

Brunner attributes to him. This similarity all but reaches the point of identity when Luther goes on to say that the term similitudo is used in the Genesis narrative as a qualification to show that man is not only like God in his ability to reason, or in his possession of intellect and will, but also in the fact that he has a will and intellect which understands God, and wills what God wills (non solum referat Deum in eo, quod rationem seu intellectum et voluntatem habet, sed etiam, quod habet similitudinem Dei, hoc est, voluntatem et intellectum talem, quod Deum intelligit, quo vult, quae Deus vult). One might well interpret this as evidence of the classic distinction between a natural, rational, indestructible imago and a supernatural, relational, destroyed similitudo. Indeed, it may be an indication that Luther was not as free from the traditional background of the doctrine as Brunner suggests.

Whatever the relation between Luther's doctrine of the image in Creation and the classic imago-similitudo distinction, it is abundantly clear that he did not employ this distinction in relating the image of God and sin. For in the next paragraph he makes the uncompromising declaration that through sin both the imago and the similitudo are lost (sed per peccatum tum similitudo tum imago amissa est). Thus we are led to the conclusion that while Luther does not equate imago and similitudo, but rather describes the latter as a qualification of the former, nevertheless, he does not distinguish them so far as the perversion of man's relation to God through sin is concerned. Consequently we must affirm Brunner's contention that Luther effected a basic transition from the classical imago-similitudo distinction to a unified conception of the image in which man is seen as a unity in grace, justitia originalis, and in sin, where both imago and

similitudo are lost.

b. The "Imago Publica" and the "Imago Privata"

Having established this unified conception of the image of God which equates it with the justitia originalis, Luther is faced with the problem of accounting for man's continuing humanity. Here Brunner notes two solutions proposed by Luther. The first is a distinction between the imago publica and the imago privata.¹ This is the Biblical foundation² for the second solution, the concept of the "relic". In commenting on Gen. 1:26,³ Luther suggests that the reference here is to a similitudo publica "in our likeness" which suggests the dominion which man is given over nature (textus videtur sonare de publica: 'similem nobis' i.e. scil. in gubernandis rebus); whereas Paul in I Cor. 15:49, speaking of bearing the image of the heavenly as we have borne the image of the earthly, refers to a similitudo privata (Paulus loquitur de similitudine privata).

This distinction between a public similitude and a private similitude seems to indicate an effort on Luther's part to account for the distinction which Scripture presents between the Old Testament image which is predicated of man and the New Testament image which is predicated of Christ. Indeed, it is very tempting to affirm, with Brunner, an interpretation of this passage which sees in it a distinction between a formal structural Old Testament image, the similitudo publica, and a material relational New Testament image, the similitudo privata. This is especially suggested by the further assertion that the similitudo publica remains in sin, undestroyed by the Fall of Adam (haec similitudo manet sub peccato

¹ DII p. 91. E.T. p. 76; R&R p. 69; Fr n Anknpt p. 523.

² DII p. 91. E.T. p. 76.

³ Luther, W.A. 42, 51.

abhuc, non abstulit eam similitudinem ad Adam), whereas the similitudo privata, referred to by Paul, was lost through sin in the loss of goodness and justice (sed Paulus geht hoher: eam similitudinem abstulit peccatum, scil. bonitatem, iusticiam). Yet caution is suggested by the fact that Luther uses the term similitudo. The suggestion would seem to be rather that the distinction between the similitudo publica and the similitudo privata is a secondary consideration in terms of the doctrine of the image of God. This is further confirmed by the basic fact that Luther's central affirmation is that man is a unity in grace and in sin. In terms of these considerations, we must hold some reservation about setting the whole weight of Luther's Biblical position on such a slender base. The fact that this distinction is not developed beyond the point of a sketchy definition of the terms similitudo publica and similitudo privata suggests that it is not crucial to Luther's position. To develop it into a distinction between the Old Testament and New Testament concepts of the image is perhaps a more advanced argument than the passage warrants.

c. The "Relic"

The more common method of relating man's continuing humanity in sin with the concept of the image is to be found in Luther's concept of the "relic". Brunner suggests that the identification of the imago with the justitia originalis, and the subsequent doctrine of the total loss of the image, always results in the qualification "down to a 'small relic' which remained."¹ This concept of the "relic" is necessary in order to maintain some continuity between the imago which is defined as totally lost and the humanitas which is involved in the obvious continuation of man's distinctive

¹ MiW p. 495. E.T. p. 508.



humanity.¹ There is good reason to conclude that this is an essentially accurate estimation of Luther's predicament. He shows some concern about the obvious difference between man, even as sinner, and the rest of the creaturely creation (Etsi igitur imago ista pene tota sit amissa, tamen maxima est differentia hominis et coeterorum animalium.)² It is striking that here, where Luther is concerned with the "maximum difference", he employs the qualification "almost totally" (pene tota) in describing the loss of the image.

How Luther can combine a doctrine of total depravity which describes the image, considered as justitia originalis, as totally lost with a concept of the image, with reference to man's distinctive humanity, which is described as "almost totally" lost is not easily discernible. One thing is clear, however, that is that he is not attempting to salvage any portion of man from the corrosive effects of sin. Consequently the "relic" of the image which remains is depreciated in no uncertain terms. In the paragraph, quoted by Brunner, in which Luther suggests that the equation of the image with reason and freedom would mean that Satan is in the image of God, his prior sentence indicates that while memory, will and mind have remained, they are most corrupt and gravely weakened, and indeed thoroughly leprous and unclean (Memoriam, voluntatem et mentem habemus quidem, sed corruptissima et gravissime debilitata, imo, ut clarius dicam, prorsus leprosa et immunda.)³ He goes on to assert that those who wish to equate these powers of memory, will and mind (the Augustinian formula) with the image, must qualify their definition with the admission that these powers are now thoroughly corrupt and leprous. Thus he admits that they may be

1 M^W p. 97. E.T. p. 95.

2 Luther, W.A. 42, 50.

3 Ibid. 42, 46.

regarded as the image in the same way as a leprous human being is still regarded as a human being.

d. The Unified Concept of the Image

Thus, in Luther, we are left with the contradictory assertions that man has lost both the imago and similitudo in sin, and that a "relic" of the image or the similitudo publica remains in sin. The distinction between the similitudo publica and the similitudo privata may represent an attempt to reconcile the two senses of the image presented in Scripture, the Old Testament creaturely image, and the New Testament image of exact correspondence, Jesus Christ. But this seems to be but a passing thought in Luther's writings. The position which he most consistently presents involves a unified view of the image in which it is equated with man's original righteousness, and therefore lost in sin, and restored in Christ. Not only does this fail to account for the distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament concepts of the image, but it must necessarily exclude any reference to the humanity of the sinner in the imago concept. In this interpretation, the concept of the "relic" represents an unwarranted intrusion.

The source of Luther's predicament is quite evident. It lies in his concern to speak in total terms of both grace and sin. His basic concern is to see man as a unity in grace and in sin. He emphasizes the totality of sin, so that the totality of grace may be known and desired. Otherwise, the more sin is minimized, the more grace declines in value (nisi recte cognoscatur magnitudo morbi, remedium quoque non cognoscitur nec desideratur. Quanto enim magis peccatum extenuaveris, tanto quoque gratia magis vilescet.)¹

¹ Luther, W.A. 42, 107.

Thus it would seem that Brunner's assessment of Luther's doctrine of the image is essentially a valid one, although we might hold some reservations about the importance Brunner attaches to his distinction between the similitudo publica and the similitudo privata. His break with the classical imago-similitudo distinction represents a significant return to a concept of the image which is much more compatible with the Biblical witness wherein man is seen as a unity in grace and in sin. His equation of the image with justitia originalis, however, represents a position which can predicate no legitimate connection between the humanity of the sinner and the concept of the image of God. In this position the concept of the "relic" represents an unwarranted intrusion.

B. CALVIN

a. The Imago-Similitudo Distinction

Calvin's doctrine of the imago Dei represents basically the same position as that of Luther, with the one qualification, that "within the common doctrine of the Reformers of the justitia originalis and of the corruptio totalis - the concern of the humanitas is perceived more clearly and urgently than within Lutheran theology, without, on that account, becoming Humanistic."¹ Such is Brunner's evaluation of Calvin's anthropology.

Calvin, like Luther, recognizes the terms zelem and demuth to be an instance of Hebrew parallelism; and, like Luther, regards the latter as a qualification of the former. The philosophical speculation over these terms which regards zelem as the image constituting the substance of the soul, and demuth as the likeness referring to its qualities, is ridiculous (Unde

¹ MLW p. 496. E.T. p. 509.

ridiculos esse apparet qui subtilius philosophantur in nominibus illis, sive Zelem, hoc est imaginem, statuunt in substantia animae, et Demuth, hoc est similitudinem, in qualitatibus¹). Demuth is added to zelem by way of explanation (exegetice repetit)². Equally clearly in his Commentary on Genesis 1:26, he characterizes the usual distinction in terms of "substance" and "accidents" (ut imago sit in substantia, similitudo in accidentibus)³; and defines this distinction in terms of the natural-supernatural structure (sub imagine tradunt contineri dotes quas Deus in humanam naturam constituit: similitudinem exponunt dona gratuita). Calvin's evaluation of this distinction is here summed up in his assertion that before defining the imago, he would deny that it differs from the similitudo (Ego priusquam imaginem Dei definiam, a similitudine differre nego.).

b. The Image as Imaging

When Calvin does proceed to define the image, he does so on the basis of its restoration in Jesus Christ. It is his contention that what the image means cannot be better known than from the remedy provided for the corruption of nature (Id vero non aliunde melius quam ex reparatione corruptae naturae cognosci potest.)⁴. Calvin assumes that Scripture presents a unified conception of the image. He does not concern himself with the distinction between the first Adam who was of the earth earthy and the second Adam who was the Lord from heaven in so far as the definition of the image of God is concerned. By examining the restored image in Jesus Christ, he hopes to comprehend the real meaning of the original lost image in Adam (Quoniam deleta est imago Dei in nobis per lapsum Adae, ex reparatione

1 John Calvin, Institutionis Christianae religionis libros I et II, Opera Selecta, ed. Petrus Barth et Guilelmus Niesel (Munich, 1928), III, E.T. Institutes of the Christian Religion, tr. Henry Beveridge (London, 1962), I, I. xv. 3.

2 Ibid. I. xv. 3.

3 Calvin, Commentarii in Quinque Libros Mosis, Corpus Reformatorum (Brunswick, 1882), LI, 26.

4 Calvin, Inst. I. xv. 4.

iudicandum est qualis fuerit.)¹ This is what G.C. Berkouwer calls Calvin's "hermeneutic method".²

The result, or presupposition, of this "hermeneutic method" is a relational doctrine of the image wherein the image consists in imaging the goodness of the Creator. Adam bore the image of God in as much as he was united to God (imaginem Dei Adam gestasse quatenus Deo coniunctus erat).³ However, Brunner's contention that Calvin displays more concern for the humanum than Luther is supported by the main clause of this same sentence which maintains that the likeness of God is to be sought only in those marks of superiority whereby God has distinguished Adam from all animals (Dei tamen similitudinem non alibi quaerendam esse contendo quam in illis praestantiae notis quibus Adam Deus insigniverat prae aliis animantibus). Thus Calvin can speak of the image in the relation of man to God, and also in the endowments of man which distinguish him from the rest of creation. Yet these two interpretations are not so diverse as they might appear. For in both cases the basic thought is that God's image is reflected in man as in a mirror. "There is no doubt that Calvin always thinks of the imago in terms of a mirror."⁴ The basic thought is that God images Himself in man. Thus in this same passage in which he has spoken of the image as dependent upon man's relation to God, and also of the superiority by which God has distinguished Adam from all animals, he can speak of the excellence "engraven" (insculptum) on Adam, and also of God the Creator beholding in man whom He created, as in a mirror, His own glory (in quo sua gloriam creator ipsi conspici quasi in speculo voluit).⁵ In both cases the thought

1 Calvin, C.R. II, 26.

2 G.C. Berkouwer, Man: The Image of God, tr. D.W. Jellema (Grand Rapids, 1962), p. 87.

3 Calvin, Inst. II. xii. 6.

4 T.F. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man (London, 1949), p. 36.

5 Calvin, Inst. II. xii. 6.

is one of God imaging Himself in man.

c. The "Relic"

Thus, like Luther, Calvin conceives the image in a unified manner. Also like Luther, he is confronted with the problem of accounting for man's continuing humanum in his desire to speak in total terms of man's being in both grace and sin. Brunner suggests that his solution to this is his concept of a "defaced reason",¹ and as such is unsatisfactory. In support of this, Brunner refers to a passage² in which Calvin distinguishes between natural and supernatural gifts. Here Calvin records his appreciation for the Augustinian distinction which describes man's natural gifts as corrupted (corrupta) by sin, and the supernatural gifts as withdrawn (exinanitum), the latter being defined as the light of faith and righteousness which would have been sufficient for the attainment of heavenly life and everlasting felicity (fidei lucem quam institiam, quae ad caelestem vitam aeternamque foelicitatem adipiscendam sufficerent). The picture grows even more sombre as Calvin goes on to assert that in addition to the light of faith and righteousness, soundness of mind and integrity of heart (sanitas mentis et cordis rectitudo) were also withdrawn, and it is this which constitutes the corruption of the natural gifts. For in spite of the remaining residue of intelligence and judgment and will, the mind is weak and immersed in darkness.

This depreciation of fallen man's capabilities may be seen as a rebuttal of the classic natural-supernatural distinction. In a preceding section of this same chapter,³ while again affirming his pleasure in this Augustinian distinction, Calvin attacks those who propound it because

1 MIW p. 496. E.T. p. 510.
 2 Calvin, Inst. II. ii. 12.
 3 Ibid. II. ii. 4.

scarcely one in a hundred understands it. The problem, says Calvin, is that they do not consider what power (valeat) remains to man whose natural gifts have been corrupted, and whose spiritual gifts have been withdrawn. This is the core of Calvin's teaching on the subject of the "relic". There can be no compromise in acknowledging the totality of sin. Although some obscure lineaments of the image remain in us, they are so vitiated and mutilated that they may truly be said to be destroyed (Nunc etsi obscura quaedam imaginis illius lineamenta in nobis residua manent: sunt tamen adeo vitiosa et mutila, ut vere dicere liceat esse deleta.)¹ In short, no part escapes the infection of sin (nulla pars est peccati labe non infecta.)² But having said this, we must nevertheless affirm the good Creation of God. It will not do to despise the gifts of God. For in so doing we insult God Himself. But Calvin asks rhetorically whether we can deem anything worthy of praise, without realizing that it is provided by God (Porro laudabile aliquid aut praeclarum censebimus, quod non recognoscamus a Deo provenire?)³ This is Calvin's central concern. Whatever we retain ought to be ascribed to God's indulgence, without which our rebellion would have resulted in the total destruction of our nature (quod nobis relictum est, Dei indulgentiae merito debere ascribi: quia nisi nobis perpercisset, totius naturae interitum secum traxisset defectio.)⁴ Therefore, the natural gifts which remain cannot be contaminated (inquinari) in themselves (per se), but they have ceased to be pure to polluted man, lest he should obtain praise by them (nequam inde laudem consequatur.)⁵

d. The Unified Concept of the Image

Thus, in Calvin as in Luther, we are left with the contradictory

1 Calvin, C.R. II, 27.

4 Ibid. II. ii. 17.

2 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

3 Calvin, Inst. II. ii. 15.

assertions that man has lost both imago and similitudo in sin, and that a "relic" of the image remains to fallen man. The distinction between the Old Testament creaturely image and the New Testament heavenly image is united in the basic thought of the image as God's imaging of Himself in man. Yet there is substance to Brunner's contention that Calvin shows more concern than Luther for the humanitas which distinguishes man even in sin. In his concern not to despise the gifts with which God has endowed man precisely because they are the gifts of God, Calvin demonstrates his concern with the distinctiveness of man. But the identification of these gifts as a "relic" of the image is inconsistent in terms of the original equation with the justitia originalis. The image, because it involves the active reflection of God, is totally lost in sin. Therefore, the introduction of the concept of the "relic" represents an illegitimate intrusion into Calvin's basic doctrine of the image of God.

E. THE CONTROVERSY WITH KARL BARTH

Brunner's contribution to the doctrine of the imago Dei consists essentially in his distinction between two senses of the image, the "formal" Old Testament sense, and the "material" New Testament sense. By this distinction he claims to avoid the natural-supernatural dichotomy of the traditional view based on the imago-similitudo distinction, as well as the suggestion of a quantitative demarcation of the effects of sin inevitably involved in the concept of the "relic". The issues involved in this distinction between the "formal" and "material" senses of the image can best be appreciated in terms of the 1934 Controversy with Karl Barth.

a. The Theses and Counter-Theses

Brunner begins his contribution to the discussion with Barth, Natur und Gnade, by asserting that Barth's denial of the validity of his formal-material distinction rests on a misunderstanding as to just what he means by it.¹ He contends that they are agreed in their concern with sola gratia, which means that revelation, the Word, can be the only norm for the Church's proclamation.² On the basis of this confidence in their essential agreement, Brunner proceeds to enumerate six theses in which he presents what he considers to be Barth's position in regard to the imago and the corresponding questions of natural theology.³ On the basis of the sola gratia principle, and the acceptance of the Bible as "the sole ultimate standard of truth", Brunner suggests that Barth maintains a position which denies:

- 1) any remnant of the imago in fallen man,
- 2) any general revelation of God in nature, conscience, and history,
- 3) any grace of creation and preservation, active from the creation of the world, and evident in God's preservation of the world,
- 4) any ordinances of preservation (lex naturae) by which we could recognize the will of God as normative for our own action,
- 5) any "point of contact" for the Gospel in fallen man,
- 6) any continuity between the "old" and "new" man, whereby grace is regarded in any sense as a perfecting of nature.

Having summarized what he considers to be Barth's position, Brunner proceeds to enumerate six "counter-theses"⁴ by which he hopes to clarify the basic agreement which he is confident exists between Barth

¹ Natur und Gnade: Zum Gespräch mit Karl Barth (Tübingen, 1934), 2nd ed. (1935), p. 3. E.T. in Natural Theology, tr. Peter Fraenkel (London, 1946), p. 16.

² Ibid. p. 5. E.T. p. 18. ³ Ibid. pp. 7ff. E.T. pp. 20ff.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 9ff. E.T. pp. 22ff.

and himself.

- 1) A distinction must be made between imago in the formal sense, by which man is and remains man, and imago in the material sense of conformatas which is totally lost through the Fall.
- 2) A distinction must be made between the subjective and objective aspects of revelation in Creation - objectively this revelation is the basis of man's responsibility for sin, and is a thoroughly Biblical concept; subjectively it is perverted by human sin so that it is not really revelation, but the basis for sinful idolatry, and thus is not saving revelation.
- 3) A distinction must be made between divine presence and human distance whereby a "preserving grace" is acknowledged, so that sinful man is still sustained by the grace of Creation in spite of his sin.
- 4) Within this "preserving grace", social life is maintained by "ordinances of creation" such as matrimony, and "ordinances of preservation" such as the state.
- 5) The formal imago Dei, man's persisting "subjectness", in the sense of "capacity for words" (Wortmächtigkeit) and "responsibility" (Verantwortlichkeit) is the "point of contact" for the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.
- 6) The relation between the "old" and "new" man is not simply one of discontinuity, in so far as the fact of self-consciousness is not destroyed by the act of faith, but persists as the identity of the subject in both the "old" and "new" man.

b. Barth's Denial and the Counter-counter Theses

The contrast between these two sets of theses suggests that

Brunner is mistaken either in his evaluation of Barth's position or in his conviction that a fundamental bond of agreement exists between Barth and himself. Barth's reply, Nein!, contends that both these judgments are true, although not in the manner which the contrast between these two sets of theses suggests. Barth affirms the distance between himself and Brunner in terms of their respective assessments of the task of their theological generation.¹ His concern to "learn again to understand revelation as grace and grace as revelation and therefore turn away from all 'true' or 'false' theologia naturalis"², he judges to be irreconcilable with Brunner's contention that "it is the task of our theological generation to find its way back to a true theologia naturalis."³ On this basis, Barth rejects Brunner's summary of his position as a misrepresentation of his theological concern, in virtue of the fact that it is based on a concept of theologia naturalis which he rejects. He refuses to give a systematic account of the denial of natural theology, such as that which is attributed to him in Brunner's theses, because such an account would be itself natural theology.⁴ However, having rejected the systematic denial of natural theology, Barth proceeds systematically to demonstrate the errors of the counter-theses proposed by Brunner.⁵

Essentially Barth's argument is that in so far as Brunner's distinctions are concerned with the purely "formal" aspects of human existence, they are merely statements of the obvious, but that this obvious form never exhausts Brunner's contentions for the formal aspect. For example, in the basic distinction between the formal and material senses of the imago, Barth affirms the distinction between man and the lower creation, but asserts that Brunner is not satisfied with this obvious formal description of man.⁶ In so

1 Barth, Nein!, pp. 7-8. E.T. p. 70.

3 NuG p. 44. E.T. p. 59.

5 Ibid. pp. 15ff. E.T. pp. 78ff.

2 Ibid. p. 8. E.T. p. 71.

4 Barth, Nein! pp. 11-12. E.T. pp. 74-5.

6 Ibid. pp. 16-17. E.T. p. 79.

far as he goes beyond the obvious assertion, he contradicts the Reformation principle of sola scriptura - sola gratia.¹ But Brunner does not deny that his "formal" image has content. To argue that you cannot have complete form without any matter,² is to miss the point of Brunner's doctrine. He clearly asserts, in a post-Controversy clarification of his doctrine, that the formal imago has a great deal of content, but is formal in terms of power to be righteous in the sight of God.³ Sin is not the emptying of man's being, but its perversion, so that man is not merely a shell of his true self, but rather a being in self-contradiction.⁴ These terms, "formal" and "material", are merely concepts which enable us to speak about a complex reality,⁵ and as concepts should not be permitted to obscure the reality they are meant to serve. This is not to say that Brunner's distinction between the formal and material image does not present any problems. The point is that it does not present the problems which Barth here raises. It is not Brunner's contention that the image can be designated by mere form without any matter. On the contrary, the whole problem of Brunner's doctrine consists in the matter which the formal element is said to contain. Barth is most instructive on this point in later writings, but in the debate itself his criticism misses the mark.

Barth presents a similar criticism of Brunner's doctrine of general revelation. He holds that Brunner's contention for a general revelation, or a revelation in Creation, in so far as it is a formal concept denoting man's preoccupation with his idols, is undeniable, but as a concept which implies that fallen man can have any true knowledge of God or any knowledge of the true God, it proceeds beyond the merely formal, and assumes

1 Barth, Nein!, p. 17. E.T. p. 80.

2 John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (London, 1963), p. 30.

3 MiW p. 498. E.T. p. 513.

4 WGM p. 45.

5 MiW pp. 107, 498. E.T. pp. 105, 513.

positive material significance. Barth suggests that Brunner means that the one true God is known by man without Christ, and without the Holy Spirit, although this knowledge is turned into idolatry.¹ But in an article written prior to the debate, Brunner clearly affirms: "The natural knowledge of God is neither knowledge of God, nor really knowledge of God."² In the debate itself, as well as in his recent Dogmatik, he distinguishes between the formal objective revelation of God in His Creation, and the material subjective idolatry of sinful men.³ This distinction is based on the much discussed text of Romans 1:18ff. Objectively, God is revealed in His Creation; subjectively, man turns this revelation into idolatry and is unable to know the God there revealed. In this interpretation, Brunner is in good company.

20. For the invisible things of him. God by himself is invisible; but because his majesty shineth in all his works and creatures, men ought in them to acknowledge him; for they do plainly show forth their workmaster.

To the intent that they should be without excuse. Hereby it doth easily appear what men get by this demonstration; namely, that they can allege no excuse before the judgment of God, but they are justly condemned. Let this distinction therefore stand; the demonstration of God, whereby he maketh his glory apparent in his creatures, in respect of the brightness thereof, is clear enough; but in respect of our caecity is not so sufficient. Yet we are not so blind that we can pretend ignorance, to quit us from the blame of naughtiness or perversity. First, we conceive with ourselves there is a God; secondly, that the same whosoever he be, is to be worshipped. But here our reason faileth, before it can obtain either who is God, or what he is. 4

Again, this is not to deny that there are problems involved in Brunner's concept of general revelation or the revelation in Creation. Indeed, it may be that Barth's detection of a positive material significance in the concept, even in the subjective aspect, is not without its justification.

The allied concept of "preserving grace" presents a similar dilemma.

1 Barth, Nein!, p. 18. E.T. p. 81.

2 Fr n Anknpt p. 510.

3 NuG pp. 13-14. E.T. p. 26; Dogmatik Vol. I. E.T. Dogmatics, tr. Olive Wyon (London, 1962), I, 132f.

4 Calvin, Commentary on Romans, tr. Christopher Rosdell, ed. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh, 1844), pp. 26-7.

It is Barth's contention that Brunner posits an "abstract preserving grace" in addition to the one grace of Jesus Christ, and thereby severs creation and reconciliation.¹ But Brunner's concern is to emphasize that creation and preservation is also the result of God's grace, a concern which he elsewhere² charges Barth with neglecting.

The problem of the formal-material distinction is climaxed in Brunner's concept of the point of contact (Anknüpfungspunkt). Part of the confusion here may be the result of Barth's rendering of Brunner's term Wortmächtigkeit (capacity for words, speech) as Offenbarungsmächtigkeit (capacity for revelation). Yet there is some justification for Barth's interpretation in the very term which Brunner uses. For Wortmächtigkeit employs the singular Wort which could suggest that it is a capacity for "the Word" which Brunner means to express. This is not Brunner's intention. "Unter 'Wortfähigkeit', 'Wortmächtigkeit', 'Ansprechbarkeit' verstehe ich die Tatsache, dass der Mensch keine stumme Kreatur ist, sondern dass er - wie man auf deutsch sagt - 'des Wortes mächtig' ist."³ Yet the difference between Brunner and Barth on this point cannot be dispensed with as a mere confusion in terminology. Although the terms themselves may have added to the confusion, the basic problem is the underlying distinction between the formal and material aspects of the point of contact. Brunner does not wish to attribute any positive contribution to man in respect of his salvation. The "capacity for words" and "responsibility" which constitute the formal imago Dei by which man continues to be man, and is as such the point of contact for the Gospel, this "'receptivity' must not be understood in the material sense."⁴ In this contention Barth and Brunner are agreed. If the

¹ Barth, Nein!, pp. 20-1. E.T. p. 84.

² Das Gebot und die Ordnungen (Tübingen, 1932), pp. 593-4. E.T. The Divine Imperative, tr. Olive Wyon (London, 1964), p. 615.

³ NuG (1935), p. 45.

⁴ NuG p. 18. E.T. p. 31.

formal imago is really formal, then, says Barth, it represents an obvious assertion. For obviously "man is man and not a cat", and if we choose to call this the "'point of contact', 'the objective possibility of divine revelation', then all objections to these concepts is nonsensical."¹ But it is Barth's contention that Brunner is not satisfied with stating this formal fact, but rather makes salvation dependent upon this formal addressability, thus attributing to man a positive share in achieving salvation. On this basis, Barth's rendering of Brunner's Wortmächtigkeit as Offenbarungsmächtigkeit is not so much a confusion of terms as a didactic expression for the positive content which he feels to be intrinsic to Brunner's concept. His own claim is that "the fact that God 'reaches' man with His Word may very well be due to something other than the formal possibility of his being addressed and his humanitas."² Here the difference between Barth and Brunner is seen to be much more basic than a confusion in terminology. Brunner would hardly deny that "the fact that God 'reaches' man with His Word ... is ... due to something other than the formal possibility of his being addressed and his humanitas." But he would also want to affirm that man's humanitas is somewhat more significant than a mark of distinction which prevents confusion between men and cats. Unlike Barth, Brunner takes account of the human pre-requisites of faith.

We cannot say we believe through or with the reason, in a certain sense we believe against the reason. But we can say even less: we believe without the reason. The humanum, what distinguishes us from the animals, is the place where faith happens. ³

Every preacher presupposes a basic knowledge of grammar and an appreciation for logical argument. This is not itself a capacity for the Word, but it is a capacity for words which is a pre-requisite for any proclamation of the Word.⁴

1 Barth, Nein!, p. 25. E.T. p. 88.

2 Ibid. p. 26. E.T. p. 89.

3 Fr n Anknpt p. 514.

4 NuG (1935), p. 49.

As such, it is not a matter of insignificance. Again, however, Barth is instructive, in that it is important to clarify the distinction between man's addressability in this sense of rational competence to understand discourse and his addressability in terms of his capacity to receive the Word.

The corresponding question of the continuity and/or discontinuity between the "old" and "new" man, raises the same issues. Again Barth claims that Brunner's concern for the continuity in the identity of the subject endows the formal concept of man's identity as subject with a positive "capacity" for salvation, without which God could not accomplish His miracle.¹ Undoubtedly, there is great danger in Brunner's definition of continuity in terms of the formal imago, the responsible structure of human life, the inherent subjectness of man. On the other hand, there is a continuity in man. Obviously this continuity can exist only by the mercy of God. But to say this tells us nothing about the continuity itself. If it is illegitimate to define this continuity because this would presuppose a "neutral" element in man untouched by sin, then theology has nothing to say about the sinner who denies God and yet continues to exist as man.

c. Evaluation of the Debate

It is extremely difficult to evaluate the merits of either side in this debate. It has been suggested that Brunner is nearer the truth, but "confused and compromising"; whereas Barth is untrue to the facts, but consistent in his argument.² This evaluation has also been proposed on the basis of the contention that "Brunner accepts too many of Barth's presuppositions in his fundamental premises to be able to present his own position with plausibility and consistency."³ Hence it is argued that Brunner is nearer the truth, but

1 Barth, Nein!, pp. 28ff. E.T. pp. 91-2.

2 Baillie, p. 30.

3 Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York, 1964), II, p. 64n.

because of his greater consistency Barth wins the debate. Admittedly, there is a certain confusion in the distinctions which Brunner draws. The term "formal", which is in many ways the focal point of the debate, is shrouded in an ambiguity which will demand investigation in due course. Thus, in terms of the issues involved in the debate, this may represent a fair evaluation. However, in terms of the debate as a whole, there is good reason to suggest that this verdict would have to be reversed. For in his initial assessment of the issues involved, Barth denies the theses attributed to him by Brunner because to give the rejection of natural theology systematic treatment would be itself to indulge in natural theology. He specifically states that "'natural theology' does not exist as an entity capable of becoming a separate subject within what I consider to be real theology - not even for the sake of being rejected."¹ Yet from this uncompromising refusal to give any systematic treatment to the rejection of natural theology, Barth proceeds systematically to reject "Brunner's Natural Theology"². Consequently, if we must speak of a victor in this debate, then it must surely be Brunner to whom this dubious honour is directed. It may well be that within the discussion of the issues raised in the theses and counter-theses Barth is victorious because of his greater consistency, but in terms of the debate as a whole the reverse is the case because Barth accepts Brunner's terms of debate, and indulges in the natural theology he rejects.

d. The Gulf between Barth and Brunner

The subsequent references to each other in their later writings demonstrate the gulf which exists between Brunner and Barth, in spite of the occasional expression of hope that the other is approximating the writer's

¹ Barth, *Nein!*, p. 12. E.T. p. 75.

² *Ibid.* pp. 15ff. E.T. pp. 78ff.

position. The most fruitful approach for understanding this gulf is suggested by Brunner in his article "The New Barth", which is a reply to Barth's observations in his Church Dogmatics, III, ii, on Brunner's most comprehensive treatment of the issues surrounding the imago Dei, his Der Mensch im Widerspruch. In this article, Brunner suggests that the "concept of 'real man' is the particular crux of the reader attempting an interpretation."¹

Barth's principal reaction to Brunner's presentation of the formal-material distinction in Der Mensch im Widerspruch is a perplexity as to which of two concepts of man, which he claims to find in this presentation, is really representative of Brunner's doctrine. On the one hand, Brunner clearly asserts as "the first principle of his anthropology" that man can be known only from the Word of God, and that this Word of God "constitutes for man not only the basis of cognition but also being".² On the other hand, Brunner's emphasis on human responsibility leads Barth to ask "whether we can take it that the actuality in which we recognize real man as God's creature is the actuality, and only the actuality, which he acquires as a partner in the act of God's gracious dealings ..."³ Barth fears that Brunner deserts his major premise, that man has his being in the Word of God, and can be known only from the Word of God, in the interest of a "neutral" concept of man. Thus he suggests that for Brunner "man seems to be free to realize his being either in loyalty or disloyalty to God, to choose as his master either God, himself or the devil, either to confirm or to deny his creatureliness and therefore his being in the Word of God."⁴ Thus Barth concludes that the Word of God in the historical revelation in Jesus Christ is only the noetic basis of man's being, not the ontic, the latter being associated with the universal

1 "The New Barth", SJofTh, 4, No. 2 (1951), p. 126.

2 Barth, Church Dogmatics, tr. H. Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid, and R.H. Fuller, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh, 1960), III, ii, 129.

3 Ibid. p. 130.

4 Ibid. p. 131.

¹
Logos.

Brunner's principal reaction to Barth's more recent formulations of his position is a perplexity as to what he means by the assertion that every man has his being in Jesus Christ.² He will accept this if it means "that eternal Word and purpose of God which was revealed and became historical reality in Jesus Christ."³ But Barth's apparent identification of the covenant of creation with the covenant of grace suggests that this is not all that he means by the assertion, and as such provides a barrier to Brunner's compliance.⁴ The crux of Brunner's resistance resides in his contention that through sin man is excluded from the covenant, and that his restoration can be accomplished only "through the second Word of God, the Word of Atonement in so far as a man believes."⁵

On this basis we are forced to affirm a real gulf between Brunner and Barth, a gulf which is evidenced in their respective definitions of real man. The fact is that Brunner's "real man" finds no place in Barth's theology. Barth's "real man" is what Brunner designates as "true man". For Barth, real man is "man in Christ". For Brunner, real man is "man in self-contradiction". This gulf which separates Brunner and Barth is based on a more fundamental divergence, namely, the difference in their concepts of revelation. Both are agreed that man can be known only in the Word of God and that man has his being in the Word of God. But within this initial agreement, there is an equally basic divergence. For Barth the Word of God is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. It is in this Word that man has his being as well as the knowledge of his being. For Brunner the Word of God is both the pre-incarnate Logos and the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. The

1 Barth, Church Dogmatics, III, ii, 131-2.

2 "The New Barth", p. 132.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. p. 133.

5 Ibid. pp. 133-4 (italics are Brunner's).

being of man is in the former, while the knowledge of that being is in the latter.

There is complete agreement between us on the point that the Word of God, that is Jesus Christ as the perfect Word of God, is the ratio cognoscendi of the creaturely nature of man. Difference of opinion begins only where Barth asks if for me Jesus Christ is only the ratio cognoscendi and not as for him the ratio essendi, the ground of the creaturely being of man. Let me first confess my incapacity to understand what is meant by saying that every man - including also such as lived a thousand years before Christ - has his being in the history of Jesus. 1

Brunner's confession of "incapacity to understand" is not surprising.

The apparent equation of Creation and Redemption suggests insurmountable problems. If one considers Barth's remarks with reference to the New Creation, however, they shed a great deal of light on this whole area. Man has his being in Jesus Christ because in Him there is a New Creation. No man stands outside the atonement effected once for all in the Word become Flesh. Man is not simply created in the Word and left to decide for or against this Word. He is created in the world for which Christ died. There can be no doubt that Barth has recovered the cosmic sweep of the Gospel in his emphasis on the finality of the atonement, and in so doing has exposed many of the errors in the popular conception of a "potential atonement" which man must perfect for himself. However, Barth's contribution is not without its problems. If man has his being in the incarnate Word, does this mean that the incarnate Word is the Creator? On this basis it is difficult to see how the "becoming flesh" has any real significance. More important for our immediate concern, if man's real being is in Jesus Christ, what is one to say about the being of the sinner who denies Jesus Christ? It is not our concern to inquire into Barth's answers to these problems. Our concern is to demonstrate the gulf which exists between Brunner and Barth, and to seek any illumination which their mutual

1 "The New Barth", p. 132.

criticisms may offer. Thus it is sufficient for our purposes to note that Brunner exposes the primary difficulties in Barth's presentation - the lack of concern for "real man", and the refusal to distinguish between the pre-incarnate and the incarnate Word.

On the other hand, Brunner does not have these problems. The chief concept of his anthropology, in so far as the predicament of real man is concerned, is man in self-contradiction. This is developed in terms of the distinction between the Logos and the incarnate Word, whereby the former is the ratio essendi of man's being and the latter is the ratio cognoscendi of man's being. But just as Brunner exposes the difficulties in Barth's theology, so too Barth exposes the difficulties in his.

Let us agree that it is so; that man as the creature of God has his being in the Word of God. ... But my question is whether we can take it that the actuality in which we recognize real man as God's creature is the actuality, and only the actuality, which he acquires as a partner in the act of God's gracious dealings. ... Is he free for what God in His freedom does with him and for him in this act? ... Does the history inaugurated between God and himself reach its goal in his historicity? Is his capacity for decision his capacity to do justice to the decision of God which is prior to it? In all this do we have to do with a specific content of his being and not with its mere form, not with a mere possibility, potentiality, disposition and capacity, but with those which are actualized in that act of God's gracious dealings? Is his freedom, therefore, very different from a neutral freedom in which he might not correspond to the Word of God (as he should do according to Brunner), but might equally well refuse to do so? Only if this is the case can it be said that he is in the Word of God. 1

In the suggestion that Brunner's presentation involves a "neutral freedom" Barth exposes the chief difficulty in Brunner's theology. The concept of the formal image, the "subjectness" which characterizes man in spite of his relation to God, be it positive or negative, there may be the suggestion that man may relate himself to God in either manner. We shall seek to clarify this problem through an examination of Brunner's concept of the

1 Barth, Church Dogmatics, III, ii, 129-30.

sinner as "man in self-contradiction", and his distinction between the formal and material image.

F. MAN IN SELF-CONTRADICTION

a. The Relation between the Old Testament and New Testament Images

Scripture presents two concepts of the image of God. The Old Testament, and the two passages in the New Testament, predicate the image of man. The characteristic New Testament use, however, predicates the image of Christ. Unlike the Old Testament image, which implies likeness in basic unlikeness, the New Testament image signifies an exact correspondence. As we have seen, the difficulty which this situation presents for the systematic theologian consists in the fact that the relationship between the two images is not defined in Scripture. Sin has come in between, but Scripture does not explicitly relate the concept of the image to sin. The references to man being made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6, James 3:9) and to his being the image of God (I Cor. 11:7) suggest that the image in the Old Testament sense is a predicate of man which designates his nature irrespective of sin. Yet the New Testament image, Christ, is needed -- man must be "renewed into knowledge according to the image of him who created him." (Col. 3:10). Much discussion about the imago Dei has been unprofitable because of the failure to recognize these two concepts of the image in Scripture.

The Reformers detected the error in distinguishing between zelem and demuth in Gen. 1:26 so as to relate the image of creation to sin by positing the retention of the natural imago and the loss of the supernatural similitudo. Yet they did not consistently recognize the distinction which Scripture does present between the "creaturely" image, which is predicated

of man, and the "heavenly" image, Christ, the image of God who created man, to whom man is to be conformed. Combining these images in a unified concept of man's active reflection of God, they were forced to posit the total destruction of the image. Yet they were not so insensitive as to fail to recognize that the concept of the image which is presented in the Creation narrative does have some connection with man's being as such, the quality of humanity which distinguishes man from the rest of creation. However, having identified the image with active reflection, and having propounded a doctrine of total corruption, no legitimate possibility remained of accounting for man's continuing humanity. The Reformers created the possibility by the inconsistent introduction of a concept of a "relic" of the image, which somehow acknowledged the humanity of man while still affirming a doctrine of total corruption. It is this problem which provides the context for Brunner's interpretation of the concept of the imago Dei.

It is Brunner's contention that the concept of the "relic" is wholly inadequate as a means of relating the imago Dei and sin.

... we must abandon the dubious idea of a 'relic' of the Imago, which was introduced by the Reformers. For it says both too much and too little; too much, because it seems to suggest that there is a sphere in human existence which is not affected by sin; and too little, because it does not take into account the fact that man - precisely in his sin - bears witness to his original relation with God, that also, and particularly in sin, he manifests his 'theological' nature, as one who 'stands before God', and is related to God. 1

Obviously the crucial question here is - how is the sinner related to God? The immediate answer is that he is related to God by his very being. The affirmation that man is made in the image of God refers to the distinctive nature of man. He is a creaturely analogy to the Creator. His being represents an analogia entis to the being of the Creator.

1 MW p. 107. E.T. p. 105.

b. The Analogia Entis

In creation man is made in the image of God, and by the very nature of his being he continues to be the image of God in spite of sin. "The fact that man can speak is similar to the fact that God speaks; the fact that man is Person, is an analogy to the Being of God as Person."¹ Barth has criticized this doctrine, affirming that it constitutes the basic position of Roman Catholicism to which Protestant theology is opposed.² To this charge Brunner retorts that Barth himself employs the analogia entis. It is Brunner's contention that in his conception of the imago Dei as a relational reality on the creaturely level,³ Barth employs the analogia entis. This suggests that Brunner and Barth do not mean the same thing by analogia entis. Barth rejects it on the ground that it implies a continuity between God and man. After identifying the analogia entis with Catholic theology and liberalism, Barth asserts: "In the Bible ... it is not a being common to God and man which finally and properly establishes and upholds the fellowship between them, but God's grace."⁴ The assumption is that analogia entis is prejudicial to grace. But if this were the only possible interpretation of the analogia entis, Brunner would agree that it would have to be rejected. It is his contention that it is not the only possible meaning of the concept, and, indeed, that it is not a fair criticism of Catholic theology.

For an analogia entis too - even in the Roman Catholic sense - always has as its primary presupposition that God's being and man's being are unlike, as esse a se and esse a deo are unlike. It is an analogy between things basically different, namely between divine independent, and creaturely dependent, being.⁵

1 DII p. 27. E.T. p. 22.

2 Barth, Church Dogmatics, tr. T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, H. Knight and J.L.M. Haire, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh, 1957), II, i, 242f.

3 The analogia relationis, which Brunner claims is an analogia entis, is the sexual relationship - "the sex relationship is the true humanum" Cf. Barth, Church Dogmatics, tr. J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey and H. Knight, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh, 1958), III, i, 186.

4 Barth, Church Dogmatics, II, i, 243.

5 "The New Barth", p. 127.

This does not mean that Brunner accepts the Roman Catholic doctrine of the analogia entis. On the contrary, he rejects it when it involves "the neo-platonic analogia entis which since Bonaventura has made its home in Roman Catholic theology."¹ Brunner's contention is that there is an analogy of proportionality inherent in creation, which, far from demanding a pre-supposition of continuity between God and man, is grounded in the contrast between the independent Creator and the dependent creature. In Barth's terms, it is an analogy grounded in grace. It is an analogy, therefore, which precludes "natural" knowledge of God. Thus it is directly opposed to the popular interpretation which is rightly or wrongly identified with Roman Catholic theology.

This particular use of the idea of analogy presupposes the inviolable character of human knowledge, in accordance with the fact that man has been created in the image of God; it does not take into account the fact that God's revelation in Creation, as such, taken by itself, is not sufficient to lead sinful man to a true knowledge of the Creator. It overlooks the fact that wherever man has tried to know God by his own efforts, on the basis of that which is at his disposal as a creature among other created being, he has never attained his goal. The natural "knowledge" of God is actually no knowledge of the true God, but is always inevitably a mixture of true knowledge and the deification of the creature. 2

Thus by the analogia entis Brunner means to convey a concept of the imago Dei whereby man is like God in his creaturely being. Both aspects must be maintained - the likeness and the creatureliness.

c. The Relational Understanding of the Analogia Entis

Man is "like" God in his very being, in a creaturely manner. But this represents only one side of Brunner's concept of the being of man. The other side implies the direct antithesis of the concept of the analogia entis. In this other side of Brunner's concept of man's being, he equates the being

1 "The New Barth", p. 127.

2 DII p. 28. E.T. pp. 22-3.

of man with his relation to God.

It is ... difficult for us to combine the ideas of "structure" and "relation". And yet it is the distinctive quality of human existence that its "structure" is a "relation": responsible existence, responsive actuality. The Biblical testimony on this point is ruthlessly logical; man is the being who stands "before God", even if he is godless. 1

Now analogia entis involves a conception of man in himself. It is a concept which can be predicated only of a self-contained being. For it is a comparison between two beings. It is not at all easy to reconcile this with the equation of being and relation. What we seem to be left with are two contradictory propositions: 1) man is a being in himself, and 2) man's being is his relation to God. If we are not to abandon Brunner's anthropology as a paradoxical balancing of mutually exclusive conceptions, we must determine the connection between his two definitions of being.

It may be that a hint of the reconciling principle is given in the manner in which he distinguishes his analogia entis concept from that of Catholicism. He is concerned to disown any neo-platonic conception of a community of being common to God and man. The likeness is predicated of man only in the context of basic unlikeness. Thus this concept of the analogia entis, if taken seriously as Brunner suggests, implies a relation in the fact that man is creaturely dependent being. Man does not possess being in himself, but only in relation to the Creator. Then man's being is not essentially definable in itself, but only in terms of God who grants him being. "It is not that man as he is in himself bears God's likeness, but rather, that man is designated for and called to a particular relation with God."² If this combination of analogia entis and being as relation represents a fair construction of Brunner's basic anthropological position, then we might

1 DII p. 71. E.T. p. 60.

2 WaB p. 97. E.T. p. 146.

venture the further suggestion that this combination may be defined as "being for God". This "being for God" may be a fair representation of Brunner's understanding of the Old Testament image, which he describes as "the positive fact that he has been made to respond - to God."¹ Of the Old Testament image, Brunner says: "It signifies above all the superiority of man within creation."² To this he adds: "This superior position in the whole of creation, which man still has, is based on his special relation to God ..."³ Thus the image of God involves both man's distinctive endowments, that which distinguishes him from the rest of creation, and the total orientation of his being in that as creature he is made for the Creator. Man is created for God. This is his essence and destiny. If he were to escape this destiny he would cease to exist. It is to this end that man is endowed with all the distinctive characteristics which distinguish him from the rest of creation. On this interpretation, Brunner's concept of the sinner as man in self-contradiction becomes quite intelligible.

d. Man in Self-Contradiction

Man is a unity in faith and in sin. The difference consists neither in the loss of a supernatural relation which leaves man's "natural" nature intact, as the false exegesis of zelem and demuth suggests; nor in the retention of "relics" of the original image. Rather man's "unified 'theological' nature is perverted by sin, but in this perversion it still always reveals the traces of the image of God in the human structure, so that it is actually the formal 'human' element which betrays man's lost origin."⁴ This seems to be in accord with the witness of Scripture to the persistence of the Old Testament image,

1 DII p. 66. E.T. p. 57.

2 NuG p. 10. E.T. p. 23.

3 Ibid.

4 MiW p. 499. E.T. p. 514.

and also seems to explain the need for the New Testament image. "That which man, who has become and is ever becoming a sinner, retains of this divine origin in creation is not nothing, but it is the source of his perversion."¹ In sin man grasps the image of God as his own possession. The lie of the serpent was "Ye shall be as gods." Indeed, it was no lie. For this is precisely the result of sin. Men become "as gods". In taking life into his own hands, man usurps the place of the Creator. He becomes his own god.

Through the Fall the unity of being and destiny, or of the 'I' and the 'Self' has been lost. Hence sinful man is forced continually to seek his Self or himself. Instead of circling round God the human life-movement now circles round the Self - lost and therefore sought. 2

Man is made for God. Consequently he cannot live without God. But through sin he has set himself in the place of God, and, therefore, is doomed to be his own god. His grandeur has become his misery, and his misery reflects his grandeur. This is man in self-contradiction.

In God's Creation man is created not only for love, but in the love of God, which fills his whole life. Original existence in the love of God, and its counterpart, existence for eternal life, is not a mere ideal, or a law of obligation, but it is the God-created nature of man. When man decides against this divine destiny he is in opposition, not only to an ideal destiny, but also to his own nature, and this self-contradiction is now within himself. 3

Man in self-contradiction, interpreted in terms of the concept of man's being as "being for God" so that it is the very essence of man that he is a being who cannot escape this destiny, provides a possible explanation of the continuance of the Old Testament image in sin.

At this point, it is instructive to note a related concept, the law of closeness of relation. By this concept Brunner accounts for the significant achievements of man in spite of sin, and also presents the distinctive

1 R&R p. 74.

2 MIW p. 227. E.T. p. 229.

3 DII pp. 88-9. E.T. p. 73.

judgment of the Christian knowledge of sin.

The nearer a field of inquiry lies to that centre of existence where everything is at stake, i.e. where we have to do with the relation to God and the being of persons, the more clearly is the Christian viewpoint distinguished from every other one, while the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian becomes the more indistinct the farther the object of knowledge is distant from the personal centre. 1

This is a fundamental perspective of Brunner's whole theology. It is especially determinative for his doctrine of the imago Dei in his dialectical concept of the relation between the image and sin in terms of man in self-contradiction. Sin is essentially personal. Consequently its effects are most disastrous in the personal sphere. In impersonal activities the effects of sin are not so obvious. The competence of a mathematician, for example, is not directly related to his faith or lack of faith. In personal relations, on the other hand, the effects of sin are manifold. The competence of a father may well be determined by his faith or lack of faith. Obviously this is a dangerous principle. It can be misconstrued as a reduction of the totality of sin, as is done in a quantitative interpretation of the concept of the "relic" of the image. But it is also a noble effort to avoid this danger. As such it is worthy of recognition. How one distinguishes between the personal and the impersonal, is, of course, a most delicate issue. Be that as it may, this principle and the corresponding doctrine of man in self-contradiction provides a promising basis for a doctrine of the image which takes into account the continuing distinctiveness of man in spite of sin, while affirming the total reversal involved in the Fall of man. In sin man does not lose anything, and yet he loses everything. The distinctiveness of man, including his need for God, is not lost through sin. Rather the whole man is re-directed in sin, introverted, so that self replaces God.

1 WaB E.T. pp. 54-5; R&R p. 383; MLW p. 66. E.T. p. 62.

Therefore sin is total. The most laudable feature of this presentation is its accordance with the witness of Scripture. The totality of sin, and the continuance of the imago Dei in sin, are held together without violence to either doctrine. Thus the presentation offers a possible explanation of the references of Scripture to the continuance of the Old Testament image in spite of sin, and also accounts for the need for the New Testament image.

G. THE FORMAL AND MATERIAL IMAGES

a. Formal and Material

Brunner's doctrine of man in self-contradiction represents only one side of his doctrine of the imago Dei. The concept of man in self-contradiction is a concept which is concerned with man in himself. As we have seen, man is not describable in himself because he is not a self-contained being. He has been made for God. Thus man in self-contradiction represents an abstraction. It is a definition of the sinner who takes life into his own hands. He is still man created for God, but now Self replaces God, so that the God-man dialectic becomes the creature-sinner dialectic. Therefore, if our interpretation of Brunner's doctrine represents a fair grasp of his meaning, the man who can be understood only in terms of his relation to God is now understandable only in terms of the contradiction within his own being, his introversion of the divine determination in Creation whereby Self replaces God.

But man in self-contradiction is not only an abstraction, it is also an impossible situation. For Self cannot replace God. Man was made for God, and cannot be content to serve and worship Self. The need for God, which is integral to man's being, cannot be satisfied by Self. At this

point we encounter a difficulty in Brunner's presentation which suggests that our exposition of the concept of man in self-contradiction has been somewhat inadequate. For it is not the need for God which is integral to man's being, but responsibility to God. This is the common unalterable characteristic of man's being in Creation and in sin. He owes himself to God. This is what Brunner calls the formal image of God, the unalterable responsible being of man.¹ This is also the Old Testament image.² We have already noted the peculiarity of this contention that the Creation narrative presents "this 'neutral' or 'formal' conception of man's 'nature'",³ and have seen that the answer is that "the imago, understood in the Old Testament sense, is merely a 'relic' of the original, total imago."⁴ The original image knows no distinction between formal and material.⁵ The true relation to God which is given in Creation, lost in sin, and restored in Christ, is described as the material image which Brunner also designates as the New Testament image.⁶

b. The Old Testament and New Testament Images as Formal and Material

We have suggested the difficulties which Brunner's distinction between the formal and material images presents from the point of view of the Biblical witness. In Scripture the Old Testament image is predicated of man in his creatureliness, while the New Testament image is equated with Christ, and therefore conveys the idea of an exact correspondence, in contrast to the context of basic unlikeness in which the Old Testament image is predicated of man.

Nothing could make clearer the tremendous impact of the revelation of God in Christ than the fact that it has almost completely obliterated the thought of man as being in the image of God and

1 MiW pp. 170, 499-500. E.T. pp. 170, 514.

2 DII pp. 67, 92. E.T. 57, 77.

3 R&R p. 53.

4 Ibid. p. 70.

5 DII p. 71. E.T. p. 60.

6 Ibid. pp. 67-8. E.T. p. 57.

replaced it with the thought of Christ as being the image of God, that being understood in the sense of perfect correspondence to the divine prototype. 1

Thus the contrast between the Old Testament and New Testament images consists not in the distinction between a formal and a material sense of the image, but in the contrast between the creaturely image of God which is predicated of man, and the perfect image of God which is Christ.

In terms of this contrast between the two concepts of the image in Scripture, Brunner's distinction between the formal and material image would seem to be more a division of the Old Testament image itself. Yet it is a distinction which encompasses the New Testament image in so far as the New Testament image designates the destiny of the believer to be conformed to Christ. It is a distinction between man who conforms and man who does not conform to the divine destiny. Considered in this light, we might anticipate difficulty in distinguishing Brunner's doctrine from the classical distinction between the unalterable zelem and the dispensable demuth. The definitive question is - Is the material image integral to the formal image? Or otherwise expressed - Is sin a possibility given in Creation?

c. The Possibility of Sin

The formal image, which Brunner also refers to as the Old Testament image, involves the inalienable structure of man's existence as responsible being, the inherent legal structure of human life, the Gesetzlichkeitsstruktur.² The material image, which Brunner also calls the New Testament image, involves the true determination of man's existence as being in love, Sein in Liebe.³ This distinction is required because of sin, and therefore represents an abstraction which has no place in the divine Creation.

1 Porteous, p. 684.

2 MiW p. 500.

3 Ibid. p. 170.

We must note ... that necessary as it is for us to think of the Imago Dei with this distinction between the formal and material aspect, from the point of view of the divine Creation it does not exist. God calls man into existence in order that he may respond to Him aright - not in order that he may respond wrongly or rightly. 1

Yet this distinction is potentially present in the original imago. For Brunner continues:

God has made man in such a way that he can respond as God wills him to do. A certain freedom of choice, which makes this response possible only becomes visible when the wrong response has been made. 2

It is at this point that Barth's detection of a "neutral freedom" in Brunner's presentation is significant. "Is sin a possibility foreseen and contained in the creaturely being of man?"³ That is to say, is man created so that he can respond rightly or wrongly to God? We have seen that Brunner denies this, and yet in an inverted way denies his denial by suggesting that the possibility of a wrong response is demanded in order to assure the genuineness of the right response.

It seems that here we must make a distinction between two senses of the word possibility. Obviously sin is possible. Otherwise there is no such thing as sin. The fact of sin implies the possibility of sin. Now if sin is rebellion of the creature against the Creator, as Brunner says, then it is both possible and impossible. It is impossible in the sense that it has no place in the economy of the divine Creation. The creature exists by the mercy of the Creator, and as such can live only in the determination of the Creator. Therefore it is impossible that the creature should deny this dependence. On the other hand, sin is a fact. The rebellion has taken place. Thus sin must be possible, and since sin is the rebellion of the creature against the Creator, its possibility must lie in this very fact

1 DII pp. 71-2. E.T. p. 60.

2 Ibid. p. 72. E.T. pp. 60-1.

3 Barth, Church Dogmatics, III, ii, 130.

that the creature is not the Creator. This fact, which by Creation makes sin impossible, by the agency of the tempter makes sin possible in the suggestion that the Creator-creature distinction is not the only possibility. This is the irrationality of sin. It has no place. It enters through the unidentified serpent. Thus sin is both possible and impossible. It is impossible from the point of view of Creation. It is possible in the very structure of Creation once its possibility is awakened. But it is this possibility which comes from outside which creates the possibility in the economy of the divine Creation. The creature must be seduced into questioning his creatureliness. These questions regarding the origin of sin and the irrationality of sin are central issues for an appreciation of Brunner's theology, and consequently will demand more thorough treatment in later sections. At present it is sufficient to notice the difficulty with which Brunner is involved in this area. On the one hand, he denies the possibility of sin in Creation. "God calls man into existence in order that he may respond to Him aright - not in order that he may respond wrongly or rightly."¹ On the other hand, he casts doubt on the seriousness of this denial in suggesting a "neutral" freedom behind this true freedom for God. "A certain freedom of choice which makes this response possible only becomes visible when the wrong response has been made."² This seems to suggest that sin is an inherent possibility of creaturely being. Now this is not an impossible doctrine for one who holds that creaturely life is essentially a test of moral fortitude whereby man is required to prove or disprove his qualifications for eternity. It is an impossible doctrine, however, for one who insists that God has given man his determination in Creation. If, in fact, Brunner does

1 DII pp. 71-2. E.T. p. 60.

2 Ibid. p. 72. E.T. pp. 60-1.

allow for the "neutral" freedom which Barth believes he detects in his presentation, this clarifies his doctrine of the formal and material image.

d. Two Senses of "Formal": "Neutral" and "Negative"

If the formal image is equated with the analogia entis in the sense that it is a description of man in himself, irrespective of his relation to God, and the material image is defined as conformity to God which is lost through sin, then it is difficult to see how this differs from the classical distinction between the natural imago and the lost supernatural similitudo. "This distinction of a 'formal' and a 'material' image of God is - historically viewed - a resumption of the mediaeval Catholic distinction between the two expressions employed in the Old Testament narrative, 'image' [Bild] and 'likeness' [Ähnlichkeit], imago and similitudo."¹ Undoubtedly there is a real problem here in Brunner's presentation. On the one hand, he speaks of the unified theological image being perverted, or perhaps more accurately, inverted, through sin.² This is the dialectical concept of the image which is involved in the definition of the sinner as man in self-contradiction. On the other hand, he asserts that the formal image remains untouched, while the material image is completely lost through sin.³ The suggestion is that the material image is not integral to the formal image, so that one could conclude that the formal image is the basic one, upon which depends the material image. This would mean that man as unalterable formal image of God can choose to relate himself to God either positively or negatively. At this point we detect a basic ambiguity in Brunner's doctrine of the imago Dei. It seems that the word 'formal' is being used in two senses. On the one hand, it

1 Carl Stange, "Natürliche Theologie", ZsyTh, 12 (1934-35), p. 370.

2 MiW p. 499. E.T. p. 514.

3 Ibid. p. 227. E.T. p. 229.

means "negative"; on the other hand, "neutral".

The formal image is a predicate of man in sin. It is a description of man's negative relation to God in sin, in contrast to the material image which designates man's positive relation to God in Creation and Redemption. The formal image is also a predicate of man irrespective of his relation to God. It is, therefore, a neutral concept which designates man's essential nature in itself. It is easy to conclude from this that what is involved in Brunner's distinction between the formal and material image is indeed a resumption of the mediaeval distinction between a natural retained imago and a lost supernatural similitudo. But such a facile conclusion ignores the problem with which Brunner is wrestling. The fact is that Scripture does predicate the Old Testament image of man, and continues to do so without regard for the fact that man is a sinner. There is, therefore, a common element peculiar to man in Creation and in sin, and this involves the concept of the image of God.

e. Two Senses of "Neutral"

It will not do to dismiss summarily the idea of a neutrality in the imago concept. It seems that we must make a further distinction, one between two senses of the term "neutral". On the one hand, it may mean "common". In this sense we must certainly affirm a neutral concept of the image. On the other hand, it may mean indifferent to sin. This sense of the term must be excluded from the concept of the image.

The difficulty in Brunner's doctrine of the image is that it seems to involve both senses of the term "neutral". On the one hand, the dialectical doctrine of the image suggests that the neutrality involved is that of a

common being of man which remains in sin, but which is by no means indifferent to sin.

... the nature of man is to be understood as a unity, from the point of view of man's relation to God, without the distinction between nature and super-nature; this unified 'theological' nature is perverted by sin, but in this perversion it still always reveals the traces of the image of God in the human structure, so that it is actually the formal 'human' element which betrays man's lost origin. ¹

The image of God consists in man's being for God as well as in his unique endowments. Through sin man does not lose this destiny. If he did he would cease to exist. Rather he ceases to fulfil this destiny, and instead becomes being for Self. The Self replaces God, so that even if the thought of God should arise it is not the God in whose image he is made which is involved, but the God whom he makes in his own image. Nothing is lost, and yet everything is lost. Man remains man, but instead of God there is the Self. Man retains his destiny and his endowments, but because Self replaces God both destiny and endowments are perverted. This is man in self-contradiction. On the other hand, the categorical distinction between the formal and the material image suggests that 'formal' refers to a common being of man which not only remains in sin, but which is indifferent to sin. "The human element as form, as structure - namely, as responsible being - has remained; the human element as content, that is, as being in love, has been lost."² Instead of "perversion" or "inversion", we now hear of "remained" and "lost". Responsible being has remained, and being in love has been lost.

f. Man in Contradiction

It is difficult to see how the concept of a unified image which is perverted or inverted through sin, and a dualistic concept of a formal image

¹ MiW p. 499. E.T. pp. 513-14.

² Ibid. p. 170. E.T. p. 170.

which is retained and a material image which is lost can be combined in any consistent manner. It may be that we have been too hasty in assuming that Brunner's concept of the analogia entis and the equation of being and relation can be combined to yield the concept of man in self-contradiction. For Brunner does not say that man has his being only in relation to God. Rather he asserts that man's being is his relation to God. This equation of being and relation excludes any concept of man in himself such as the concept of man in self-contradiction presupposes. If man's being is equated with his relation to God, and if sin involves man's denial of this relation, then in sin man denies his own being. The result of this line of reasoning is that one can say absolutely nothing about the sinner because as sinner he is non-existent. The fact that he continues to exist can only be attributed to God's grace, but nothing can be affirmed about the being of the sinner himself. The only other way around this logical result of the equation of being and relation is to affirm a continuing relation to God from man's side. Then it is not man in self-contradiction with which we are concerned, but man in contradiction, that is, man who somehow transcends the contradiction in his own being. On this interpretation, our development of Brunner's concept of man in self-contradiction proves to be grossly inadequate. That presentation was based on the interpretation which assumes that, in the words of one of Brunner's recent interpreters: "The dialectical relation God-man has become the inner-anthropological dialectic of the man in self-contradiction, the man in contrast of image of God and sinner."¹ But now it appears that man in self-contradiction is not really concerned with a contradiction within man, but with a contradiction in which man is involved.

¹ Roessler, p. 41.

The concept of man in self-contradiction involves a transcendent reference in that man is not describable in himself, but only in terms of his being for God. Brunner preserves this transcendent reference for fallen man in terms of his concept of the revelation in Creation, but this is interpreted from the side of fallen man so as to suggest that he is in some sense superior to the contradiction.

Humanity in the formal sense is never without relation to the knowledge of God and to the determination for God. Man as humanum has either God or an idol. 1

In terms of Brunner's distinction between the objective and subjective aspects of the revelation in Creation, the knowledge of God and the determination for God will be objectively given, but subjectively perverted into idolatry. Yet Brunner affirms of the sinner: "His knowledge of God is his humanity - as disfigured and questionable as this knowledge is."² The result of this is that we seem to be left with a basic contradiction in Brunner's theology between his doctrine of revelation and his concept of fallen man. He seems to affirm more for fallen man than his doctrine of revelation will permit. The problem is climaxed in his concept of "responsibility".

g. Ambiguity in the Meaning of "Responsibility"

The corollary of man in self-contradiction is self-responsibility. In presuming to be his own god, the sinner takes responsibility for his own life. Yet Brunner insists that fallen man is responsible to God.

... the divine determination in the Creation is far higher than our negative self-determination; in other words ... the divine (positive) and the human (negative), are not in equal proportions; this comes out in the fact that although, through sin, we cease to express our responsibility, we do not cease to be responsible. We do not even cease to be aware of responsibility. Responsibility still remains the characteristic formula for the nature of man,

1 Fr n Anknpt p. 552.

2 "Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie", ZdZ, 7, Heft 3 (1929), p. 264.

for fallen man as well as for man in his origin. But responsibility is now no longer the formula of his reality, but only the formula of his obligation, and through this fact its meaning is profoundly changed. 1

The difficulty in Brunner's presentation is that the profound change in the meaning of responsibility is not what one would expect in terms of his concept of the sinner as man in self-contradiction. For the change is not from responsibility to God to responsibility to Self, but rather from responsibility in love to legalistic responsibility. This antithesis of law and love suggests a possible influence of the Kantian contrast between duty and inclination which shall have to be investigated. For the present we may content ourselves with the observation that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Brunner is confusing his perspective as a theologian with the perspective of "natural man".

As a Christian, Brunner can affirm the sinner's responsibility before God, but this affirmation can hardly be predicated of the sinner himself.² It almost seems as though Brunner is charging natural man with Pharisaism, a legalistic attempt at self-justification before God. But such a position represents a highly sophisticated religious orientation which can hardly be associated with man in general. What can be associated with man in general is the responsibility for his own life which he assumes as a sinner, the moral responsibility which has as its ultimate point of reference the moral agent himself. It may be that Brunner's whole position rests on an unacknowledged shift in meaning in the term "responsibility".

Responsibility, which is one of the two terms Brunner uses to define the formal image (the other is the equally indefinite term "subject") can be used in at least three senses. It can mean a neutral concept which is a predicate of man's being in itself. The chief concept of Brunner's anthropology,

1 MIV pp. 156-7. E.T. p. 156.

2 Cf. Carl Stange, "Natürliche Theologie", ZsYTh, 12 (1934-35), pp. 378ff.

the definition of man as "responsible being"¹, carries this neutral sense of the term. Man's being is essentially responsive actuality.² This is a description of man in himself regardless of his orientation. It is a concept which implies relation in that man is created to respond to God, but as a working concept, the relation to God, positive or negative, is external to the responsible being itself. When responsibility is used as a description of man's relation to God, the term acquires two further meanings, depending upon the positive or negative character of the relation. In Creation man is responsible to God in that he owes his being to God, and exists only by the mercy of God. In sin man is responsible to God in that he is answerable for the negative response to God which he has made. When these three senses of the term "responsibility", the neutral, the positive, and the negative, are combined in the one concept of the formal image of God, the distinction between the moral sense of responsibility as an affirmation of man's being in itself and the religious sense of responsibility as an affirmation of man's relation to God becomes obscured. It may be that Brunner's distinction between a formal and a material sense of the image of God is only possible because of this ambiguity in the word "responsibility". If this is the case, then Brunner's doctrine of the imago Dei is built on an ambiguity which is insoluble within the context of the doctrine itself. Its clarification demands an examination of Brunner's use of the term "responsibility".

¹ MiW p. 100. E.T. p. 97.

² Ibid.

CHAPTER III RESPONSIBILITY

The analysis of Brunner's doctrine of the imago Dei has resulted in the suspicion that his distinction between a formal and a material sense of the image is possible only because of an ambiguity in the meaning of the term "responsibility" which enables him to employ it in three different contexts without acknowledging the distinctions which the different contexts involve. The formal image is a predicate of the sinner as well as a predicate of the common characteristic of man in Creation, sin, and Redemption. Hence the formal image is a predicate of man's negative relation to God, and also an ingredient in his positive relation to God. It is therefore a neutral concept which describes man's being irrespective of his relation to God.

In an effort to clarify this complexity, we shall begin with an examination of the three senses which the term seems to have in Brunner's writings. The neutral sense of responsibility appears in Brunner's concept of man as responsible being which is a formal definition of man's being as "responsive actuality". This use of the term is neutral in the sense that it is a description of man's being in itself without regard for the character of the "responsiveness" involved. The negative sense of the term involves the situation of the sinner, and therefore implies culpability. The positive sense concerns man's relation to God in Creation and Redemption, and thus implies the ability to respond. Having presented Brunner's three principal senses of the term "responsibility", we shall then endeavour to penetrate beneath this ambiguity to what, as we have suggested, may be the basic confusion underlying this oscillation which enables Brunner to use the one term to describe three different situations, namely, the question of the

distinction between moral responsibility and religious responsibility.

I. THE THREE MEANINGS OF "RESPONSIBILITY"

A. RESPONSIBILITY AS RESPONSIVENESS

a. Responsive Actuality

Man has his being in the Word of God.¹ This major premise from which Brunner constructs his anthropology is immediately qualified by the assertion that man is "summoned to receive the Word actively."² The distinction between man and the lower creation consists in the fact that man is created not only "by His Word", but also "for and in His Word".³ Hence to be true man, man must respond to the Word. "Responsibility is existence in the Word of God as an existence which is derived from and destined for the Word of God."⁴ This is the unique position of man in Creation; man alone is "responsive existence".⁵ Unlike the lower creation which comes finished from the hand of God, man's being is a being "in self-knowledge and self-determination on the basis of being known and determined."⁶ This is the fundamental meaning of the term "responsibility" as it is employed by Brunner. Responsibility is "responsive actuality",⁷ and as such it is the essence of human existence. "God has created man ... in such a way that he must himself determine to be that for which he was designed."⁸ From the point of view of man this means, in the Kierkegaardian phrase, "the specifically human is decision."⁹ Man is the being whose essential nature is response, and only in the exercise of

1 MiW p. 75. E.T. p. 72.

2 Ibid. p. 99. E.T. p. 97.

3 Unser Glaube (Zürich, 1939), p. 42. E.T. Our Faith, tr. John W. Rilling (London, 1962), p. 39.

4 MiW p. 57. E.T. p. 53. 5 Ibid p. 69. E.T. p. 65. 6 Ibid. p.100. E.T. p.97.

7 WaB E.T. pp. 19, 31. 8 GuO pp. 153-4. E.T. p. 170.

9 "Die Botschaft Sören Kierkegaards", NSR, 23, Heft 2 (1930), p. 92.

that response is he truly human. This is the basic meaning of "responsibility", at least in the formal sense, "responsiveness" or "responsive actuality".

b. Kant's "Imperative" and Kierkegaard's "Individual"

If we enquire into the basis of this "responsive actuality", we encounter two of the principal influences on the development of the concept of responsibility in Brunner's theology. It is Brunner's basic affirmation that "our responsibility can only be based on the divine claim."¹ In an article on Kant and Kierkegaard, he asserts that in contrast to the "general subject" of the theoretical reason, the "Categorical Imperative" singles out the single "Individual".² Here the Kantian "Categorical Imperative" and the Kierkegaardian "Individual" combine to foreshadow the "responsible being" of Brunner's theology.

The impact of Kant is seen in Brunner's contention that "through this Categorical Imperative I first know that I am an I, a responsible subject."³ It is "through the 'You ought!'" that my personality is called into existence."⁴ Such references, demonstrating a profound appreciation for the Kantian Categorical Imperative, are by no means rare in Brunner's writings.⁵ In his estimation, Kant effected a fundamental break with the classical notion of the person which was based on the idea of a common reason in which man participated in divinity. "Among the philosophers it was Kant who first shook this thousand-year-old tradition by his definition of the person as a responsible being ..."⁶ Not only did this represent a break with the classical Greek outlook, but it also meant a return to the true Christian understanding of persons. For in this Kantian concept of the person, Brunner affirms, "the

1 GuO p. 279. E.T. p. 295.

2 "Das Grundproblem der Philosophie bei Kant und Kierkegaard", ZdZ, 2, Heft 6 (1924), p. 39.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 GuO p. 13. E.T. p. 27; "Freiheit als Verantwortlichkeit", Schweizer Monatshefte, 37, Heft 5 (1957), p. 358.

6 MIV p. 103. E.T. pp. 100-1.

Christian idea forced its way into philosophy."¹ Kant's concept of the person as a moral being represents a move toward a Christian understanding of man. In this respect, Kant's "conception of personality as the 'freedom of a rational being according to moral laws' ... is decisive."² As an indication of the basis for this appreciation, it will be sufficient to notice one reference from Kant's Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone in which he characterizes "the predisposition to animality in man" as "living being", "the predisposition to humanity in man" as "rational being", and "the predisposition to personality in man" as "accountable being".

The predisposition to personality is the capacity for respect for the moral law as in itself a sufficient incentive of the will. ... We cannot rightly call the idea of the moral law, with the respect which is inseparable from it, a predisposition to personality; it is personality itself (the idea of humanity considered quite intellectually).³

Yet in spite of this significant development in Kant, his doctrine is not ultimately acceptable. For "the Christian idea ... forced its way into philosophy; but the notion of the one, autonomous reason left no room for this idea to develop."⁴ Thus in the end it is not the Christian, but the rationalist, concept of man which is presented in Kant's notion of responsible being.

Brunner's assessment of Kant suggests that his initially promising approach to man in terms of the concept of "responsibility" breaks down in his bifurcation of man into an empirical self and an intelligible self, so that the concept of responsibility is internalized.

The most serious approach to the idea of true responsibility is presented in Kant's Categorical Imperative; but it too - through the idea of the intelligible, autonomous self - finally ends in self-responsibility without any feeling for the 'Thou', whereby

1 MiW p. 103. E.T. pp. 100-1.

2 Ibid. p. 220n. E.T. p. 222n.

3 Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, tr. T.H. Greene and H.H. Hudson (Chicago, 1934), pp. 21ff.

4 MiW p. 103. E.T. p. 101.

we cannot even say that the empirical self is responsible to the intelligible self; for the empirical self is not capable of responsibility because it is causally determined. 1

This assessment of Kant's doctrine of responsibility will demand more detailed examination. For the present we may merely note that it is Brunner's contention that through the bifurcation of man into an empirical and an intelligible self Kant deserted the true imperative, and because of this his development of the concept of man as responsible being loses its promising significance.

In view of this assessment of Kant, and of Brunner's own contention that true responsibility singles out the "Individual", we may venture the suggestion that the further development of Brunner's doctrine of man as responsible being bears a striking similarity to the Kierkegaardian concept of the singling out of the "Individual" in the "teleological suspension of the ethical". In Kierkegaard's schema of existence in the three stages, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious, the ethical is superior to the aesthetic in that it represents the beginnings of "seriousness" in which the individual forsakes the uncommitted self-centred life of indulgence for the life of commitment to the universal. But "the ethical as such is the universal, and as the universal it applies to everyone, which may be expressed from another point of view by saying that it applies every instant."² Thus "the particular individual is the individual who has his telos in the universal, and his ethical task is to express himself constantly in it, to abolish his particularity in order to become the universal."³ The goal of the ethical is the abolition of particularity, which we may define as self-assertion, and resignation to the universal. The ethical represents the recognition of the equal rights of all men, and the acceptance of just

1 MiW p. 189n. E.T. p. 189n.

2 Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, tr. Walter Lowrie (New York, 1954), p. 64.

3 Ibid. pp. 64-5.

relations in which no individual strives to assert himself to the detriment of his fellows. But the ethical is not the religious. It is an intermediate stage between the aesthetic and the religious.

The religious stage of life involves a concept which is not associated with the ethical, the concept of faith. Herein lies the decisive contrast between the ethical and the religious. For "faith is this paradox, that the particular is higher than the universal - yet in such a way, be it observed, that the movement repeats itself, and that consequently the individual, after having been in the universal, now as the particular isolates himself as higher than the universal."¹ This is the incomprehensible paradox of faith as it is expressed in "the teleological suspension of the ethical", the unique example of which is Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac. From the ethical point of view, which is the universal, Abraham's contemplated act can only be described as sin. It violates the subordination to the universal which is characteristic of the ethical. But from the point of view of faith, Abraham "is justified over against it",² i.e. over against the universal. The distinction between the two is the distinction between the individual and the universal. As the "Individual" elevated above the universal in "the teleological suspension of the ethical", Abraham is either justified as the "Individual" or not at all. His action cannot be justified in terms of the ethical, which is the universal, because this by its very nature discredits the individual.³ The similarity between the Categorical Imperative which commands the emergence of the "person" and the teleological suspension of the ethical which elevates the "Individual" above the universal category of the ethical is striking.

1 Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, p. 65.

2 Ibid. p. 66.

3 Ibid. pp. 80-1.

In addition to this apparent similarity between the Kantian Categorical Imperative and the Kierkegaardian teleological suspension of the ethical, there is a more basic divergence between the two in that Kant's Imperative is purely formal, whereas Kierkegaard's "Command" prescribes a definite content. We shall have to take account of this basic difference when we come to evaluate Brunner's concept of responsibility. At this stage, where we are concerned merely with tracing the development of Brunner's concept, we may ignore this difference because Brunner does not take it into account. In the concept of responsibility, as Brunner presents it, the basic orientation is that of the Kantian Categorical Imperative qualified in terms of a unified concept of the person such as that presented in Kierkegaard's concept of the "Individual". The Kantian Categorical Imperative is not productive of true "responsibility" or of true "personality" because it is not a "genuine act of command, but a universal law."¹ It remains within the ethical sphere, as Kierkegaard has described it, the sphere of the universal. As such it is an immanent law in Kant because he subordinated his concept of radical evil to his concept of autonomy in dividing man into an empirical sense-bound self and an autonomous rational self which is its own legislator.² This destroys the concept of responsibility because "this imperative is in Kant immanent in the rational self", and thus involves a "responsibility to oneself, which annuls the very concept of responsibility."³ This means that the Kantian concept of personality is also abstract in that it describes the person as self-sufficient and autonomous in contradiction to the inter-dependence which characterizes true personality. "Kant does not recognize a claim on man which makes him person; but in the last resort this claim comes from himself, namely, rational self-respect, and thus

¹ Religionsphilosophie evangelischer Theologie (München, 1927), p. 36.
 E.T. The Philosophy of Religion from the Standpoint of Protestant Theology, tr. A.J.D. Farrer and B.L. Woolf (London, 1958), p. 76.

² GuO p. 32. E.T. p. 46; R&R p. 410. ³ WaB E.T. p. 20.

leaves man without any relation to the 'Thou'." ¹

The Kierkegaardian concept of the "Individual" succeeds where Kant failed in that it regards man as a unified person subject to the command which comes from beyond himself. Unlike Kant, Kierkegaard did not define man from the point of view of autonomy. He took the "ought" much more seriously than Kant. ² His "Imperative" is a real one, external to man, and therefore demanding a real response on the part of man. His inconceivable paradox represented by "the teleological suspension of the ethical" resembles what Brunner regards as the true Imperative which cannot be reduced to the levelling confines of thought. ³ In the Kierkegaardian "Individual" ⁴ we have the genuine Imperative which Kant abandoned in the interest of autonomy.

c. The I-Thou Framework

One further qualification is involved in Brunner's development of the concept of responsibility as the distinctive feature of human life, as "responsive actuality". If "Individual" is taken in the ordinary sense of the term as referring to an individual, then it can be interpreted abstractly so that no advance will be made beyond the Kantian concept of the autonomous rational person. It is Brunner's contention that this outcome may be avoided in the recognition that responsibility "receives its concrete content through the fellow man." ⁵ For the development of this aspect of responsibility, Brunner employs the I-Thou framework associated with the names of Ferdinand Ebner and Martin Buber. In this I-Thou framework there is not only the genuine Imperative - "Responsibility presupposes one who addresses me primarily, that is, from a realm independent of myself, and to whom I am answerable." ⁶ -

1 MiW p. 220. E.T. p. 223.

2 GPhKK p. 43.

3 Ibid. pp. 44ff.

4 GuO p. 688. E.T. p. 702.

5 "Freiheit als Verantwortlichkeit", p. 360.

6 Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, tr. R. Gregor Smith (London, 1947), p. 45.

but also the recognition of the concrete nature of responsibility.

"In order to come to love", says Kierkegaard about his renunciation of Regina Olsen, "I had to remove the object". This is sublimely to misunderstand God. Creation is not a hurdle on the road to God, it is the road itself. We are created along with one another and directed to a life with one another. Creatures are placed in my way so that I, their fellow-creature, by means of them and with them find the way to God. A God reached by their exclusion would not be the God of all lives in whom all life is fulfilled. A God in whom only the parallel lines of single approaches intersect is more akin to the "God of the philosophers" than to the "God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob". God wants us to come to him by means of the Reginas he has created and not by renunciation of them. 1

That aspect of Kierkegaard's doctrine which we have suggested provides a basic contrast with the Kantian Imperative, namely the fact that Kierkegaard's Imperative prescribes a definite content, now suggests that this evaluation of his position presented by Buber is somewhat inadequate. For that content which the "Imperative" contains concerns precisely "the Reginas" who, in Buber's estimation, are mere obstacles for Kierkegaard. However, as we have been able to defer consideration of this issue in reference to the distinction between Kant and Kierkegaard because Brunner does not take account of it, so too we are able to defer it in reference to Buber's I-Thou framework because it is Buber's category which Brunner employs in defining the content of responsibility.

In the I-Thou framework the Categorical Imperative becomes the "thou-address" of the living God, the pure Subject, the I, and the "Individual" becomes the "thou" thus addressed. True personality and true responsibility do not come from the Categorical Imperative as such, because "I am an 'I' only because, and in so far as, God addresses me as 'thou'."² This is the ultimate source of responsibility and of personality. But, and here the distinctive contribution of the I-Thou framework appears, the concrete expression

1 Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 52.

2 GuO p. 137. E.T. p. 153.

of this responsibility is given through the fellow-man. For "I am responsible always only in regard to another man."¹ It is through the second I-Thou relation with my fellow-man that the primary I-Thou relation with God is expressed. There is no personality and no responsibility in isolation. Rather, "there is genuine human life only where there are two men, I and Thou."² Yet this concreteness must not be permitted to submerge the primary transcendent element of the principal I-Thou relation. For "not to our fellow men are we responsible, but for them we are responsible to God."³ The fellow-man provides the concrete setting of responsibility. It is only in the I-Thou relation with our fellow-man that our responsibility can be realized. But the ground and source of responsibility is God. Similarly, it is only through the I-Thou relation with our fellow-man that personality is realized. Without the "Thou" there is no "I". Personality is not an individual possession, but a social reality. The "Thou" of the fellow-man is given in the social solidarity of Creation. That is to say, the inter-dependence of human life, characterized by the I-Thou framework, is grounded in Creation. In spite of Buber's dissociation of his position from that of Kierkegaard, this insistence on the inter-dependence of human life is as prominent in Kierkegaard's concept of the "Individual" as encompassing both himself and the race as it is in Buber's I-Thou framework. However, it is the I-Thou framework which Brunner employs in developing his concept of the concrete content of responsibility. Thus we can confine ourselves to this framework for the exposition of Brunner's doctrine. Because God the Creator has created us for fellowship, it is only in fellowship, in the human I-Thou relation, that we can know Him. For God "can only become concrete and real in a relationship with the human 'Thou'."⁴

1 Das Grundproblem der Ethik (Zürich, 1931), p. 28.

2 Ibid.

3 "Freiheit als Verantwortlichkeit", p. 361.

4 GuO p. 280. E.T. p. 296.

This is based on the previous assertion that "the power which alone can make the 'I' responsible to the 'Thou' is God."¹

d. Responsiveness is a Formal Concept

"Responsiveness" is a formal concept in that it designates man's essential being without reference to the nature or quality of the response involved. This basic sense of responsibility as "responsive actuality" indicates its antecedents in the Kantian "Categorical Imperative", qualified by the Kierkegaardian "Individual", and given concrete expression in the "I-Thou" framework sketched by Ebner and Buber. The end result of this combination of diverse concepts is a definition of the essential nature of man as a responding being. "In this 'being-addressed' and 'must-answer' we have our existence as persons or our personal being, what distinguishes us from every other known form of being."²

The fact that Brunner can employ such diverse concepts as the moral Categorical Imperative of Kant, the notion of the command of faith which confronts man from beyond himself as in Kierkegaard's concept of the Individual elevated above the ethical, and the I-Thou framework of Ebner and Buber, in his definition of man as "responsive actuality", suggests the complexity of his concept of "responsibility". Because of this diversity behind his concept of man as "responsive actuality", the analysis we have presented has not been without overtones of the other meanings of responsibility which Brunner's use of the term suggests, the sense of "answerability" and the sense of "response-ability". We must now turn to these concepts which define the actual character of the relation in which man as "responsive actuality" stands, depending upon whether that relation is qualified negatively or

¹ GuO p. 279. E.T. p. 295.

² "Freiheit als Verantwortlichkeit", p. 360.

positively.

B. RESPONSIBILITY AS CULPABILITY

a. Responsibility and "Real Man"

The definition of responsibility in terms of "responsiveness" is abstract in that it is not concerned with responsibility in the normal sense of the term, answerability, or at least it is concerned with this sense only parenthetically. In defending dialectical theology against the charge of "unreality", levelled at Kierkegaard by Grisebach, Brunner retorts that Grisebach "overlooks the fact that all human speech is necessarily 'unreal', because sinful men never stand concretely in the 'I and Thou' relation."¹ It is this abstract meaning of responsibility which characterizes Brunner's basic definition of human nature; man is essentially a responsive being, regardless of the nature or character of the response involved.

When the position of real man is taken into account, however, the term "responsibility" takes on a more definite meaning. No longer is it the formal category for understanding man's essential nature. Rather it is now a description of the predicament of "real man". For "between the true man and the real man stands that contradiction, which determines the whole of human life, even the whole human constitution."² Not only is man the being who must respond, and only in responding realizes true humanity; but he is now the being who has responded, and must accept "responsibility" for that response. He is not only responsible, but guilty.³ Responsibility viewed in terms of the concrete situation is always in relation to the past, a past which represents "guilt". This does not alter the fact of man's responsibility,

¹ Rph p. 93. E.T. p. 181.

² "Imago Dei", NSR, 2, Heft 8 (1934), p. 482.

³ GuO p. 137. E.T. p. 153.

but "his responsibility now bears the character of guilt."¹ Responsibility in this concrete sense means "culpability". Man "is still a responsible being, even in his irresponsibility, there, where he denies his responsibility and sets himself in opposition to his origin."² The fact that man is described as "irresponsible" suggests the change in meaning which the term undergoes in the transition from the abstract definition of man as "responsive actuality" to the concrete consideration of man as fallen and guilty. It also raises one of the most difficult questions of Brunner's theology. For in spite of the irresponsibility of man's fallen state, Brunner insists that he can be addressed on the basis of his responsibility. It is in this context that Brunner's employment of the Kantian Categorical Imperative is most pronounced.

b. The Inescapable Categorical Imperative

It was the fact of sin, the profound contradiction in man as he actually is, on which the Kantian Categorical Imperative floundered.³ In Brunner's estimation, Kant's failure to take radical evil seriously, which he could have done only by forsaking the autonomy of the philosopher for the confession of the believer, led him to reduce the Categorical Imperative to an immanent law through his bifurcation of man into an empirical self and a legislating intelligible self.⁴ Nevertheless, Kant's return to the notion of autonomy, in internalizing the Categorical Imperative, does not diminish the significance of the Categorical Imperative as such. The statements which we noted in considering responsibility in the abstract sense of "responsive actuality", to the effect that personality emerges through the "ought" of the Categorical Imperative, are equally applicable to responsibility in this concrete sense of "culpability". Indeed, this is properly the place

1 Fr n Anknpt p. 523.

2 MiW p. 82. E.T. p. 79.

3 Rph p. 36. E.T. p. 76.

4 GuO p. 32. E.T. p. 46.

for such statements. They were employed in the previous section to illustrate the influence of Kant in Brunner's development of "responsibility" as the principal category of anthropology. However, Kant's primary meaning was undoubtedly "accountability", as the above reference from his Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone shows.¹

Brunner employs the Kantian concept of the Categorical Imperative as designating the responsibility which is characteristic of fallen man because it is his estimation that Kant perceived the true meaning of responsibility before reverting to the perspective of autonomy in the bifurcation of man into an empirical self and an intelligible self. Thus if the Categorical Imperative is taken seriously, then the division of man by which Kant deserted the true Imperative will not be possible. For in this division Kant lost both the Imperative and real man. The result of his reversion to the notion of autonomy is that Kant's real man is somewhere between the empirical and the intelligible self, and also between the naturally individual and the universally spiritual.² But if the Categorical Imperative is taken seriously, then the empirical self and the intelligible self are seen in their unity as one undivided culpable person. It is in this sense that "the 'Thou shalt' of the Categorical Imperative means the emergence of the idea of personality."³ Similarly, if the Categorical Imperative is taken seriously, then the naturally individual and the universally spiritual are seen in their unity in the concrete responsible individual.

The theoretical reason knows nothing of an I, but only of a general subject. But the Categorical Imperative speaks to me, this single man, in its absolute concreteness. Justification is now demanded from me. 4

¹ Cf. above p. 96.

² GuO pp. 667-8. E.T. p. 702.

³ Ibid. p. 13. E.T. p. 27.

⁴ GPhKK p. 39.

This serious and unavoidable Categorical Imperative is somehow, and in some measure, known by man even in his sinful fallen state.

Even as an unbeliever, man knows of the Categorical Imperative, of a spiritual power that limits his own will. He knows that he does not simply belong to himself. ... No one ever lived wholly without consciousness of responsibility. 1

As responsibility abstractly considered is the essence of true man in the sense of "responsive actuality", so responsibility concretely considered is the essence of real man in the sense of "culpability" which he cannot avoid. Even in sin the dignity of man, the specifically human, evidences itself in his dim though inescapable awareness of responsibility. But the dimness of this knowledge is a further indication of the depth of the human predicament, and of the corresponding misunderstanding of responsibility. For "man of himself knows God's Law ... but not His Command, and because he does not know the Law as His Command, he does not rightly know the meaning of the Law, which is love."²

It is in this distinction between Law and Command, a distinction which will merit further attention when we come to evaluate Brunner's doctrine, that Brunner finally distinguishes his Imperative from that of Kant. Kant, because of his autonomous perspective, was doomed to misunderstand responsibility. It is only within the Christian revelation that we see the stark reality of sin, and hence the proper meaning of responsibility. For responsibility is not a subject for theoretical definition, but a reality which is known only in the concrete situation of life. "This sense of responsibility is never neutral; we become aware of responsibility either along the negative path of the voice of conscience or along the positive one of faith."³ In the former case, responsibility represents the awareness of

1 Dogmatik Vol. III. E.T. Dogmatics, tr. David Cairns (London, 1962), III, 149.

2 GuO p. 100. E.T. p. 115.

3 Ibid. p. 143. E.T. p. 158.

my inescapable culpability, and, though dimly, an awareness of some higher source before whom I am responsible. But it is a "negative path", and not a knowledge of God. The other source of the sense of responsibility, "the positive one of faith" is the proper knowledge of God. How the negative path of the "voice of conscience" yields place to the "positive one of faith" is the mystery of divine grace. "A conscience in itself, within which faith could be born, does not exist."¹ On the contrary, "the No of conscience must be brought to silence in the Yes of forgiveness."² The fact that this happens, "that guilt comes to maturity is entirely a work of grace."³ Yet in this "work of grace" man's sense of responsibility plays a major role. It is this dialectic of responsibility and grace which represents the most difficult subject of Brunner's theology.

C. RESPONSIBILITY AS RESPONSE-ABILITY

a. Freedom as Dependence and as Choice

The formal meaning of responsibility which designates the essence of man as "responsive actuality", when considered in terms of the character of the response involved, issues in two further senses of the term. When the response involved concerns the negative qualification of the sinner, then responsibility means "culpability". On the other hand, when the response involved concerns the positive qualification of the creature as he is in Creation and again in Redemption, then responsibility means "response-ability". This third meaning of the term involves the concept of "freedom". In this meaning of responsibility, Brunner's major premise is that man has "true freedom only in complete union with his Creator."⁴ Contrary to the popular

1 GuO p. 143. E.T. p. 158.

2 Fr n Anknpkt p. 517.

3 Ibid. p. 518.

4 GuO pp. 45-6. E.T. p. 59.

conception of freedom as "unboundness"¹, autonomy, true freedom is identical with being bound to the will of God.² This freedom in being bound to the will of God is the same as responsibility.³ This is the ultimate meaning of responsibility, perfect freedom in affirming the purpose for which we are created.

It is this true freedom from which man turns in renouncing his dependence upon God. Real man does not know this true freedom because his life is permeated by the chasm which runs through his existence as fallen man. It is only through the Fall that life becomes involved in the distinction between good and evil.⁴ This distinction is reflected in the concept of freedom as "choice", an arbitrariness in which man is conceived as being in a neutral position above the dualism between good and evil. The basis for this misconception of freedom consists in man's confusion of the God-given independence with which he is endowed in Creation with an independence from God.⁵ The result of man's emancipation is not freedom, as would be the logical conclusion from the definition of freedom as choice, but rather the very opposite of freedom, namely, bondage. "The freedom of the will in decision is a phantom. Man is no free one, but a slave, a slave of the world, and of his self ..." ⁶ Because man has been created in freedom for God, any other orientation is bondage. By "misusing his freedom" man has "lost his freedom".⁷

b. The Loss of True Freedom

The problem of how man could ever "misuse" that freedom which is identical with dependence upon God represents one of the central issues in

1 "Freiheit als Verantwortlichkeit", p. 354.

2 Das Grundproblem der Ethik, p. 26.

4 Rph p. 44. E.T. p. 91.

6 "Christlicher Glaube nach reformierter Lehre", Der Protestantismus der Gegenwart (Stuttgart, 1926), p. 245.

7 GuO p. 137. E.T. p. 153.

3 Ibid.

5 WaB p. 70. E.T. p. 121.

Brunner's theology. We have already encountered the difficulty which his explanation raises in considering his doctrine of the formal and material senses of the image of God. On the one hand, he regards this distinction as a product of sin, and therefore one which is foreign to the good Creation. On the other hand, he suggests that this distinction is potentially present in Creation itself, because of his contention that the possibility of a wrong response is required in order to assure the genuineness of the right response. It may be that the solution to this dilemma rests upon the interpretation of the formal meaning of responsibility which Brunner denotes as "responsive actuality", the essentially responsive nature of man. For Brunner qualifies his primary definition of freedom as dependence upon God in terms of his concept of man as "responsive actuality". Not only does true freedom consist of complete dependence upon God, but it also involves actively willed consent to this dependence. This qualification of freedom in terms of man's active participation is based on the fact that God has endowed man with a relative independence so that he is not only a dependent being, but "a dependent-independent being"¹. It is this relative independence which constitutes the uniqueness and the grandeur of man. Indeed, "this liberty of self-determination forms the very essence of selfhood ... it is personal existence itself."² At the same time, this "liberty of self-determination" constitutes the danger to human life, and in the real existence of fallen man forms the basis for the misery of man. Only one who is created for the true freedom of the liberty of self-determination in the dependent-independent relation to God can experience the agonizing bondage in which the very grace of God is known as the impossible demand.

1 WaB p. 38. E.T. p. 92.

2 GuO p. 154. E.T. p. 170.

Here a further qualification is demanded. As might be expected from Brunner's doctrine of the formal and material senses of the image, fallen man is described not only in terms of utter bondage and complete loss of freedom, but a qualification is made by a parallel distinction between formal and material freedom. Man is free only when he determines himself in accordance with the basic determination given in Creation. "But if man chooses to live on another basis ... he is still formally free ... he is still a being who understands and determines his own course of action, but he no longer possesses material freedom ... He has become the slave of his own emancipation."¹ Here again we encounter problems similar to those involved in the distinction between the formal and material senses of the image. On the one hand, the use of the term "freedom" to designate what from the perspective of true freedom is only definable as bondage, appears questionable. The formal freedom seems to parallel what the rational perspective of natural man regards as freedom, namely, choice. On the other hand, the concept of formal freedom would seem to be demanded for two reasons. First, it is a corollary of the concept of dependent-independent being. In order that man may respond to God in true freedom there must be, according to Brunner, the possibility of responding irresponsibly. This involves the question of the relation between the freedom in Creation and the freedom which is predicated of fallen man. Secondly, the concept of formal freedom is demanded by the attribution of responsibility to fallen man. It is Brunner's concern to distinguish the "un-freedom" of the fallen state from the determinism with which, in his estimation, it has been associated in the history of theology.² This involves the question of the relation between

¹ Gu0 p. 154. E.T. p. 170.

² DII p. 140. E.T. p. 122; WaB p. 104. E.T. p. 152.

the formal freedom of fallen man and the material freedom of redeemed man. In both cases, with reference to Creation and fallen man and to Redemption and fallen man, the question is one of the relation between a freedom which is intrinsic to man and a freedom which is given only by divine confrontation. It may be that what is involved is a contrast between moral freedom, which is a predicate of man as a responsible moral agent, and religious freedom, which is a corollary of divine confrontation. It will be along these lines that our evaluation of Brunner's doctrine of responsibility will have to be conducted. At present we may content ourselves with a clarification of the problem which Brunner's distinction between formal and material freedom presents.

True freedom is identical with dependence upon God. Formal freedom, from the point of view of true freedom, is bondage; "it is freedom to sin, it is freedom for eternal death."¹ The common element which permits the term freedom to be applied to both is the ability to choose. True freedom presupposes "a certain freedom of choice."² Formal freedom means that even fallen man is "a being who understands and determines his own course of action."³ Here the question arises as to whether, on this basis, formal freedom is not the more basic of the two. The immediate answer is that it is not. Man is given his basic determination in Creation.⁴ He is a being who knows and determines himself on the basis of being known and determined.⁵ Man is not created with a "neutral" freedom by the exercise of which he may equally well respond to God responsibly or irresponsibly. "God calls man into existence in order that he may respond to him aright - not in order that he may respond wrongly or rightly."⁶ Yet the possibility of a wrong

1 MiW p. 268. E.T. p. 271.

3 GuO p. 154. E.T. p. 170.

5 MiW p. 100. E.T. p. 97.

2 DII p. 72. E.T. p. 61.

4 MiW p. 100. E.T. p. 98.

6 DII pp. 71-2. E.T. p. 60.

response is implicit in Creation itself. For the initial premise that man is given his basic determination in Creation, that his freedom is freedom for God, is qualified by the assertion that this freedom is really freedom only if there is "a certain freedom of choice" along with it. "God has made man in such a way that he can respond as God wills him to do. A certain freedom of choice, which makes this response possible, only becomes visible when the wrong response has been made."¹ Yet the concept of freedom as choice "is already the effect of sin, and of separation from his connexion with God."² Brunner's position seems to be that this awareness of freedom as choice, once it is achieved, enables us to see it, from the perspective of faith, as the unknown freedom which makes true freedom possible. Here we seem to be confronted with two possible interpretations. On the one hand, this unknown freedom of Creation which becomes known through its exercise in the Fall can be seen as an attempt to ensure the creaturely independence of man in whom God wills a real counterpart to Himself. On the other hand, the concern to predicate a freedom of choice, behind the primary freedom of dependence in which and for which man is created, may be an accommodation to the "existentialist" emphasis on "decision". If decision is the specifically human, then man may be more human in his post-Fall state, after he has taken the ultimate choice upon himself. It is clear that Brunner would not endorse such a view of man. Yet it is also clear that there is a real problem in this emphasis which he places on freedom as choice.

c. Restricted Freedom and the Free Restriction

Brunner's dialectical affirmations on freedom are made in the context of the I-Thou framework. In terms of this framework, God is pure

¹ DII p. 72. E.T. pp. 60-1.

² Ibid. p. 72. E.T. p. 61.

Subject, which in terms of freedom means that He alone is absolutely free, absolutely spontaneous.¹ On the human side, the fact that man is a "Thou" is based on the fact that by Creation "man is derivatively what God is originally."² Thus man too is free in the sense of spontaneity, but, and this is the decisive point, man is free "derivatively". It is because of this all-important contrast that for man "a maximum of freedom is at the same time a maximum of dependence."³ This is the context of responsibility. "Responsibility is restricted freedom, which distinguishes human freedom from divine freedom ..."⁴ Yet in spite of this emphasis on the fact that human freedom is "derived" and therefore a restricted freedom, he goes on to affirm that "it is a restriction which is also free - and this distinguishes our human limited freedom from that of the rest of creation."⁵ Thus on the one hand, Brunner affirms that the ability to choose is not a maximum of human freedom, but rather that freedom to say "Yes" or "No" is a limitation of freedom.⁶ True freedom consists in dependence on God. Yet on the other hand, in order that this dependence be free, even the restriction must be subordinated to freedom. It cannot be denied that this central dialectic in Brunner's doctrine of responsibility and freedom presents a real difficulty.

d. The Return to True Freedom

This ambiguity in Brunner's concept of freedom is no less difficult in the explanation of how the formal freedom of the fallen state becomes the material freedom of the redeemed than it is in the explanation of how the true freedom of Creation becomes the formal freedom of the fallen state. Real man, man in his fallen state, possesses formal freedom in his ability to "determine his own course of action",⁷ but he no longer possesses material

1 WaB E.T. p. 53.

3 Ibid. pp. 39-40. E.T. p. 93.

5 Ibid.

7 GuO p. 154. E.T. p. 170.

2 Ibid. p. 97. E.T. pp. 145-6.

4 DII p. 66. E.T. p. 56.

6 MIW p. 260. E.T. p. 264.

freedom in that this formal freedom is itself bondage. Man is free only in so far as he is responsible, and he is responsible only in so far as he is free. This was the insight which Kant reached. It is thus that the person first emerges in the claim of the Categorical Imperative. However, the co-implication of responsibility and freedom cannot be affirmed in terms of responsibility as "culpability" and freedom as "material freedom". The responsibility which is implied in formal freedom is merely the negative path from which true responsibility and true freedom emerge. How this happens, and the significance of the Categorical Imperative in this transition, constitute the major difficulty in Brunner's distinction between formal and material freedom. The immediate answer, and one which Brunner repeatedly affirms, is that this transition can be attributed only to divine grace.¹ That the demanding address of the Categorical Imperative which makes man a responsible, "culpable", person becomes the Thou-address of the living God who makes man a response-able person is the mystery of divine grace.

Yet from the human point of view this transition involves a reorientation, in some respect, on the part of man. The responsibility which is experienced in the claim of the Categorical Imperative implies an ultimate source to which we are responsible, and in virtue of which we are free, in as much as "the imperative is not at all understood by us other than as demonstration of will."² Here the limits of the Categorical Imperative, as such, are reached, just as in the knowledge of guilt and radical evil the limits of the "critical principle"³ are reached. The identification of the will behind the Categorical Imperative can occur only through revelation. Since the Categorical Imperative, like true "criticism", represents the

¹ GuO p. 143. E.T. p. 158; Fr n Anknpt p. 518.

² GPhKK p. 41.

³ Ibid.

limits of the human possibility, it constitutes only a transitional stage between irresponsible egoism and true responsibility in fellowship. If this stage is not transcended, the possibility of reverting to a merely utilitarian concept of responsibility is an immanent danger. "Whoever does not trust himself to accomplish this step from the Categorical Imperative to the acknowledgement of a divine will, because it appears to him not rationally founded, stands in permanent danger of confusing the moral imperative with that utilitarian worldly wisdom, and therefore of misunderstanding¹ and losing the basic essence of humanity." In Brunner's estimation, this was the failure of Kant himself. Between the responsibility of the Categorical Imperative and the responsibility before the living God, there stands faith.

The above account might suggest that the transition involved in moving from the acknowledgement of the Categorical Imperative to the acknowledgement of the divine will is a human prerogative. That these, as well as other, statements of Brunner on the subject suggest such an interpretation, cannot be denied. This may be an indication of the profound impact of Kant on his thought. On the other hand, contrary assertions, stressing the radical discontinuity between the "natural" responsibility before the Categorical Imperative and the responsibility of faith before God, are not lacking. Brunner asserts, for example, that "it is the arrogance of man that he understands the bond of God as a double-sided one, a bond of two equal partners."² Because of this misconception, "we think of our relation to Him as a conditional one: if you keep my commandments, then I will be your God."³ Clearly then, Brunner does not regard the transition from the acknowledgement of the Categorical Imperative to the acknowledgement of the divine will as a human prerogative.

1 "Freiheit als Verantwortlichkeit", p. 360.

2 "Christlicher Glaube nach reformierter Lehre", p. 248.

3 Ibid.

Yet even in the responsibility of faith there are traces of what might well be a continuing significance of the Categorical Imperative. On the one hand, a distinction is drawn between the conception of faith of the believer from within, and the conception of faith of the natural man from without.

... from the standpoint of the "natural man" faith is foolhardy rashness, a leap in the dark. From the standpoint of faith itself, it is not rashness, but necessity; not a leap, but a case of being drawn and carried along. What from the human standpoint must be regarded as placing far too heavy a responsibility on the individual factor - a decision in an exaggerated and maximum degree - when viewed from the standpoint of faith as such, is not a decision but a free gift, not exaggerated activity but sheer passivity. 1

On the other hand, a distinction is drawn within the knowledge of faith itself between the passivity of faith in the gift and the activity of faith in the demand. "The promise of grace and faith refer to my being as it is determined apart from myself; the Divine Command and obedience refer to my being, not apart from myself, but as it ought to be determined by means of my will ..." ² On the basis of these two sets of propositions, one might conclude that through the foolhardy leap of faith from the sense of responsibility engendered by the Categorical Imperative to belief in the divine will behind it one experiences the gift of faith through grace, and therein knows true responsibility in the accompanying Divine Command. Yet faith itself is a gift, and only on the basis of this is it a human activity.

The difficulty is accentuated most clearly when we attempt to state how the formal freedom, which from the point of view of faith is bondage, becomes the material freedom of faith. On the one hand, Brunner dismisses the suggestion that this formal freedom of choice can be employed

1 Rph p. 12. E.T. pp. 29-30.

2 Gu0 p. 98. E.T. p. 111.

to realize the material freedom of faith.

Here is the critical point between Catholic and Reformation theology. The hearing, faith, the Yes-saying where it comes to that, is wholly God's work, but the No-saying is of man. The No-saying ability must not be expanded dialectically so that the Yes-saying also becomes his act. 1

The Yes-saying is the divine break-through into "that circle of immanental possibility in which man is captured through sin."² The formal freedom, which is bondage, can be transformed only from without. This is the uncompromising correlate of the recognition of the totality of sin and of the sole efficacy of grace. On the other hand, Brunner elsewhere,³ in reference to the formal personality which he regards in terms of freedom and word-ability (Wortfähigkeit), states: "Man cannot say nothing, he can only say 'yes' or 'no'." The suggestion that formal freedom makes some contribution to the return to true freedom in faith, and responsibility before God, can easily be read from such statements. It is not at all easy to reconcile these two contradictory lines of thought running throughout Brunner's treatment of the relationship between freedom and responsibility. The most obvious avenue of clarification resides in an examination of the relationship between moral responsibility and freedom and religious responsibility and freedom.

II. MORAL AND RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITY

Brunner uses the term "responsibility" as a predicate of the essential nature of man, and as a description of the negative and positive relation to God. The manner in which we have presented these three senses of the term - the predicate of man's essential nature as "responsiveness",

1 "Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie", p. 268.

2 Ibid.

3 Fr n Anknpt p. 522.

the description of the negative relation as "culpability", and the description of the positive relation as "respose-ability" - admittedly has been inadequate. This inadequacy does not invalidate the threefold representation of Brunner's concept of responsibility, but rather consists in the fact that these three senses of the term are inter-woven in Brunner's thought in a more complex manner than the above analysis suggests. We have come to the conclusion, or at least the suspicion, that behind this confusion over the meaning of the term there lies a more basic ambiguity in the relation between moral responsibility and religious responsibility. The most obvious starting-point for an examination of this possibility is the Kantian background which enjoys such a prominent place in Brunner's writings on the subject. As we have seen, Brunner is highly appreciative of the centrality of the moral imperative in Kant. In fact, as we have also seen, it appears that the only significant complaint he registers against Kant's treatment of the subject of responsibility in terms of the Imperative is directed against the latter's ultimate subjection of the Imperative to the concept of the autonomous, self-legislating intelligible Self.

There is, indeed, a certain analogy between Kant's conception that personal being can only be grasped as freedom under the imperative and what we said about responsibility. For the imperative is indeed the expression of responsibility. And yet this imperative is in Kant immanent in the rational self. ... Responsibility is for him not a relationship but something immanent; responsibility not only for oneself - which it is in faith also - but responsibility to oneself, which annuls the very concept of responsibility. ¹

This criticism suggests that Brunner accepts the Kantian setting for the problem of responsibility, while seeking to avoid the consequences which he judges to be a product of Kant's rationalism.

¹ WaB E.T. pp. 19-20.

Kant indeed defined "person" in the light of the moral law and thus felt himself obliged to define "personal" life as responsibility; we do this too, and most decidedly, but from the standpoint of a higher responsibility: we are persons, because, and in so far as, we have been called by God. 1

In an effort to determine the relation between the "higher responsibility", which Brunner wants to affirm, and the moral responsibility of Kant, we shall examine Kant's own affirmations on the subject in the hope of detecting something of Brunner's debt to him.

A. THE SOURCE OF RESPONSIBILITY IN KANT

a. The Conflict between Kant's "Fundamental Principles" and his "Critique"

The central concept in Kant's writings on the subject of responsibility is that of the Imperative, or more precisely the Categorical Imperative. Among the many ambiguities involved in this concept, the different pronouncements as to its source is the most striking. The difficulty is most apparent in the variance between the concept of the Imperative presented in the Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals and that presented in the Critique of Practical Reason.

In the Groundwork he seems to think that the moral law is both justified and established by an independent and necessary presupposition of freedom. In the Critique, on the contrary, it is our consciousness of the moral law which leads to the concept of freedom; and in such a consciousness Kant no longer finds difficulty. 2

Behind this distinction there lies a conflict as to the source of the Imperative. For the "independent and necessary presupposition of freedom" suggested by the Fundamental Principles is, in fact, the concept of the autonomous, self-legislating reason, whereby man is himself the source of the Imperative; whereas in the Critique the Imperative is of divine origin.

1 R&R p. 410.

2 H.J. Paton, The Categorical Imperative (London, 1963), p. 203.

In the Fundamental Principles, Kant begins by identifying "duty" as the only source of morally valid action.¹ From this a second proposition follows: "That an action done from duty derives its moral worth, not from the purpose which is to be attained by it, but from the maxim by which it is determined, and therefore does not depend on the realization of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of volition by which the action has taken place, without regard to any object of desire."² Finally, a third proposition is added: "Duty is the necessity of acting from respect for the law."³ Now the crucial question arises - whence the law? The immediate answer is that for the will "there remains nothing but the universal conformity of its actions to law in general, which alone is to serve the will as a principle, i.e. I am never to act otherwise than so that I could will that my maxim should become a universal law."⁴ This is the Categorical Imperative, the universal demand of duty, but in order to answer the question as to the source of the Imperative we must consider an alternative formulation of it. This formulation involves a judgment as to the value of human life whereby the imperative becomes: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only."⁵

This formulation of the moral imperative [i.e. to treat humanity as an end] so very much agrees with what we all feel to be true that we are very apt to ignore the fact that in the course of this argument Kant has passed from the view that duty is conceivable only in terms of 'something whose existence has in itself an absolute worth, something which, being an end in itself, could be the source of definite laws', to the view that duty is conceivable only in terms of the absolute worth of every finite rational creature; and the result is going to be that each rational being is to be regarded as the source of a law which at other times Kant can describe as holy. 6

1 Immanuel Kant, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, tr. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics (London, 1889), pp. 10ff.

2 Ibid. p. 16.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. p. 18.

5 Ibid. p. 47.

6 A.E. Teale, Kantian Ethics (London, 1951), p. 168.

Thus with this reformulation we arrive at the source of the Imperative; it is man himself, or the self-legislating reason, "the will of every rational being as a universally legislative will."¹

On this principle all maxims are rejected which are inconsistent with the will itself being universal legislator. Thus the will is not subject simply to the law, but so subject that it must be regarded as itself giving the law, and on this ground only, subject to the law (of which it can regard itself as the author).²

Thus Kant has moved from the stipulation that moral validity can be predicated only of actions done solely from duty, to the conclusion that duty must be wholly self-determined, if it is to be completely free of motives which militate against moral purity. In fact, failure to realize this latter principle, Kant contends, has been the reason for lack of success in previous moral theories.

For when one has conceived man only as subject to a law (no matter what), then this law required some interest, either by way of attraction or constraint, since it did not originate as a law from his own will, but this will was according to a law obliged by something else to act in a certain manner. Now by this necessary consequence all the labour spent in finding a supreme principle of duty was irrevocably lost. For men never elicited duty, but only a necessity of acting from a certain interest. Whether this interest was private or otherwise, in any case the imperative must be conditional, and could not by any means be capable of being a moral command. I will therefore call this the principle of Autonomy of the will, in contrast with every other which I accordingly reckon as Heteronomy.³

We are not concerned, at this point, with the difficulties which this development involves, or with the basis for it, but merely with the result itself. The result is the principle of autonomy, the confidence in the universal legislative ability of the individual will.

In the Critique of Practical Reason Kant is equally insistent on the principle of autonomy. Yet there his insistence involves a concept of duty which has a distinctly numinous quality.

1 Kant, Fundamental Principles, Ab. p. 49.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. p. 51.

Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name ... What origin is there worthy of thee ... a root to be derived from which is the indispensable condition of the only worth men can give themselves? 1

Kant's answer to this rhetorical question is strongly reminiscent of the concept of autonomy presented in the Fundamental Principles.

It can be nothing less than a power which elevates man above himself (as a part of the world of sense), a power which connects him with an order of things that only the understanding can conceive, with a world which at the same time commands the whole sensible world, and with it the empirically determinable existence of man in time, as well as the sum total of all ends (which totality alone suits such unconditional practical laws as the moral). This power is nothing but personality, that is, freedom and independence on the mechanism of nature, yet, regarded also as a faculty of being which is subject to special laws, namely pure practical laws given by its own reason; so that the person as belonging to the sensible world is subject to his own personality as belonging to the intelligible world. 2

The concept of "pure practical laws given by its own reason" suggests the concept of the autonomous, self-legislating reason of the Fundamental Principles, but there is a fundamental difference. The laws of the individual rational being are "special laws", they are "maxims" which only approximate the moral laws as such. Otherwise expressed, the source of the genuine imperative is not man, but God. In finite beings "the law has the form of an imperative, because in them, as rational beings, we can suppose a pure will, but being creatures affected with wants and physical motives, not a holy will, that is, one which would be incapable of any maxim conflicting with the moral law."³ Man is autonomous in that he is his own law-giver, but if his laws are to be morally valid, they must correspond to the moral order itself which is not of man's making. The most that man can achieve is "purity", but "in the supreme intelligence the elective will is rightly conceived as incapable of any maxim which could not at the same time be objectively a law."⁴ The distance

1 Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Ab. p. 180.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. p. 121.

4 Ibid.

between the "holy" will of God and the potentially "pure" will of man is one that man can only strive indefinitely to bridge.

This holiness of will is, however, a practical idea, which must necessarily serve as a type to which finite rational beings can only approximate indefinitely, and which the pure moral law, which is itself on this account called holy, constantly and rightly holds before their eyes. The utmost that finite practical reason can effect is to be certain of this indefinite progress of one's maxims, and their steady disposition to advance. 1

This distinction between the autonomous, self-legislating reason of the Fundamental Principles and the reason which can originate only maxims which approximate the laws of a "holy" will is precipitated by the consideration that duty itself does not provide the goal of moral effort. This goal, the summum bonum, includes both virtue, the pure morality motivated solely by duty, and happiness, the appropriate reward of virtue.² But in itself the moral will cannot assure itself happiness in proportion to virtue attained.

Accordingly, the existence of a cause of all nature, distinct from nature itself and containing the principle of this connexion, namely, of the exact harmony of happiness with morality, is also postulated. Now, this supreme cause must contain the principle of the harmony of nature, not merely with a law of the will of rational beings, but with the conception of this law, in so far as they make it the supreme determining principle of the will, and consequently not merely with the form of morals, but with their morality as their motive, that is, with their moral character. Therefore, the summum bonum is possible in the world only on the supposition of a supreme Being having a causality corresponding to moral character. 3

The identity of this supreme Being is disclosed as being God, conceived as an intelligence, which is the condition of "a being that is capable of acting on the conception of laws", and will, which is "the causality of such a being according to this conception of laws."⁴

The positing of a necessary connection between virtue and happiness appears as a foreign element in the pure morality of duty. However, the source

1 Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Ab. p. 121.

2 Ibid. p. 206.

3 Ibid. pp. 221-2.

4 Ibid. p. 222.

of this concept is disclosed in Kant's subsequent comments on the subject. The concept of happiness, which is foreign to the concept of morality as defined by duty, is borrowed from Christianity.

Now Christian morality supplies this defect (of the second indispensable element of the summum bonum) by representing the world, in which rational beings devote themselves with all their soul to the moral law, as a kingdom of God, in which nature and morality are brought into a harmony foreign to each of itself, by a holy Author who makes the derived summum bonum possible. 1

At this point the distinction between the imperative of the Critique and that of the autonomous reason suggested by the Fundamental Principles becomes clear. In the subsequent references to "duties as divine commands" the suggestion of the divine origin of the imperative is made explicit.

In this manner the moral laws lead through the conception of the summum bonum as the object and final end of pure practical reason to religion, that is, to the recognition of all duties as divine commands, not as sanctions, that is to say, arbitrary ordinances of a foreign will and contingent in themselves, but as essential laws of every free will in itself, which, nevertheless, must be regarded as commands of the Supreme Being, because it is only from a morally perfect (holy and good) and at the same time all-powerful will, and consequently only through harmony with this will that we can hope to attain the summum bonum which the moral law makes it our duty to take as the object of our endeavours. 2

b. The Explanation for the Conflict

The contrast between the concept of the autonomous, self-legislating reason presented in the Fundamental Principles, and that of the recognition of duties as divine commands presented in the Critique, is striking. Two possible explanations have prevailed in the course of Kantian criticism. One is that the concept of God in the Critique represents an unwarranted intrusion into Kant's system.³ The other is that Kant presupposes the existence of God

1 Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Ab. pp. 225-6.

2 Ibid. p. 226.

3 Teale, p. 218.

throughout his whole argument.¹ In spite of the seeming incompatibility of these two explanations, they are, in fact, easily reconcilable. The compatibility of the two is revealed in the suggestion that although Kant began with the assumption of a God in whom the moral order is grounded, he neglected this assumption in developing his concept of the amoral source of the imperative from the self-legislating reason, so that recourse to God as the guarantor of happiness proportionate to virtue represents an unwarranted intrusion in this ethic of autonomy.²

Brunner's estimation of the Kantian ethic implies this twofold explanation. It is his contention that "behind his [i.e. Kant's] Categorical Imperative lies the narrative of the giving of the law on Sinai."³ But Kant's development of the imperative in terms of duty for duty's sake, conceived as the purely formal morality of autonomy, is concerned only with the "ought" and can have no relevant connection with the "is". For "the Kantian philosophy offers no link between the world of existence - and, indeed, the concrete world, as it now is - and that which ought to be."⁴ The link which Kant does provide is illegitimate on his established basis. It is, in fact, a concession to the Eudaemonism which his system supposedly combats - "a principle has actually been introduced which contradicts the fundamental idea of the system, the idea, namely, of well-being."⁵ On Kant's rational basis, any concept of well-being is excluded by definition. "The formal rational conception of law ... provides no foundation for the idea that the Good ought to be that which furthers the welfare of all."⁶ It is Brunner's contention that this unjustified principle is not simply an indication of Kant's concession to Eudaemonism, but is, in fact, a product

1 Teale, p. 11.

2 Ibid. pp. 217ff.

3 DI E.T. p. 151.

4 GuO p. 34. E.T. p. 48.

5 Ibid. p. 25. E.T. p. 39.

6 Ibid. p. 25. E.T. pp. 39-40.

of his Christian background. "Kant's actual alliance with Eudaemonism can only be understood when we remember that Kant was not merely an Idealist, but that he was an Idealist with a Christian foundation, and that in the conception of God the Creator, Christianity provided him with a link between that which is and that which ought to be, which, although it had no logical right within his system, was, nevertheless, firmly established in his real thought."¹ The wisdom of this assessment is attested by the manner in which, as we have seen, Kant introduces the Creator God as guarantor of happiness proportionate to virtue in his Critique of Practical Reason. Further, there is no doubt that Brunner's over-all assessment of Kant's position, as a blend of Christianity and rational philosophy, perceives the essential setting of Kant's moral theory. How these two elements are related, however, is another matter.

c. The Testimony of the "Opus Postumum"

The importance which this interpretation of Kant has in Brunner's theology demands an examination of Kant's alliance with the Christian faith. This question is illuminated from Kant's own writings published in the Opus Postumum. The first observation which must be made from what he says there on the subject is that it is indeed inconceivable that Kant could have propounded his moral theory without the Christian background from which his thought emerged. The statements he makes there fully justify the remarks of the editor of the Opus Postumum to the effect that Kant believed in "the real trans-subjective existence of a personal (theistic) God",² and indeed that "Kant was always a decided theist."³ In the Opus Postumum the assumption

1 GuO p. 34. E.T. p. 49.

2 Erich Adickes, Kants Opus postumum (Berlin, 1920), p. 776.

3 Ibid. p. 831.

of the existence of God, so unobtrusive at times in Kant's moral theory, is clearly linked with the Categorical Imperative. "There is a God for there is in the moral practical reason a categorical imperative which extends to all rational world-beings, and whereby all world-beings are united."¹ Or more firmly stated - "The reason behaves according to the categorical imperative, and the law-giver is God. - There is a God for there is a categorical imperative."² Indeed, "the categorical imperative, and the [considerations] grounded thereon of all duties of men as divine commands, is the practical proof of the existence of God."³

The second aspect of this problem which comes to light in the Opus Postumum is that this "moral proof" is only valid for "moral man". Indeed, this might serve to explain the absence of reference to God in the treatment of duty in the Fundamental Principles. For "that such a being [i.e. God] exists cannot be denied, but it is not affirmed [i.e. from the transcendental philosophy as strict science] that it exists outside the rational thinking man."⁴ In fact, "God is 'the product of our own reason', 'the ideal of a substance which we create ourselves'. ... 'more precisely: the reason makes (creates) itself the concept of God' ..."⁵ Adickes' explanation of this seeming contradiction between the knowledge of God in the categorical imperative and the mere self-created conception of God of the rational thinking man hinges on the contention that in the latter we have to do with pure reason which is the sphere of the transcendental philosophy. For "the transcendental philosophy has to do only with the mind of man, its formal functions and a priori products, never with any kind of trans-subjective realities."⁶ In short, when pure reason attempts to comprehend God, it is stopped short by

¹ Kant, Opus postumum, ed. Erich Adickes (Berlin, 1920), p. 778.

² Ibid. ³ Ibid. p. 782. ⁴ Ibid. p. 785. ⁵ Ibid. p. 793.

⁶ Adickes, p. 792.

the thing in itself. For the pure reason God is possible, but no more provable than the reality of space and time. In Adickes' words, we are left with "the thoroughly legitimate thought in the transcendental philosophy, that an affirmation of the absolute (trans-subjective) existence of God is just as unallowable as of the world of space and time."¹ It is otherwise with the practical reason. The practical reason is the will. Its concern is not conceptions, but duty. In the moral sphere, in contrast to the purely rational, God is a necessary postulate. "The concept of God is a principle of the moral-practical reason - to consider the knowledge of all duties of men as divine commands."² It is the formal nature of duty, of the Categorical Imperative, which constitutes the necessity for seeing duties as divine commands. "The idea of the absolute authority of an absolutely direct command of duty of a moral being is the divinity (the person who commands) of the same (divinitas formalis). A substance which possesses this authority is God. - That such a substance exists cannot be proved."³ The numinous quality of duty suggests the divine origin of the imperative -- "the categorical imperative governs with absolute authority, and because of that its formal character is apprehended as command of divinity."⁴ Thus the affirmation of the existence of God remains essentially a subjective judgment. The concept of duty demands the recognition of God, and yet, in itself, duty is such a noble phenomenon that it can be considered without reference to the subjective judgment as to its source. This may explain the apparent contradiction between the concept of the Imperative presented in the Fundamental Principles and that presented in the Critique. "All duties of men are to be considered as super-human, i.e. as divine commands. Not as though one therein must

1 Adickes, p. 798.

2 Kant, Opus postumum, p. 809.

3 Ibid. p. 812.

4 Ibid.

presuppose a particular, law-promulgating person [eq. substance], but it lies in the moral practical reason; there is such a reason in man; the moral practical reason commands equally categorically as a person through the imperative of duty."¹ Thus it seems that Kant's high estimation of the practical reason can permit him to speak of the imperative as the product of autonomous, self-legislating man as well as of God.

d. Kant's Rational Christianity

Clearly, Kant's concept of the Imperative displays a conflict of interests. On the one hand, the numinous quality attaching to duty, and the corresponding necessity for seeing duties as divine commands, betrays the influence of Kant's Christian background, without which his moral theory is inconceivable. Philosophers who approach Kant's ethical writings purely as a formal analysis of morality, and seek to judge it in terms of its inner coherence and logical consistency, provide an unsatisfactory account of Kant's work. Indeed, at times Kant is distinctly theological, especially in his Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone where he is concerned with original sin, and even deals with such a distinctly theological topic as substitutionary atonement.² This theological aspect of Kant is also a definite element in his concept of the Categorical Imperative as leading to religion through the recognition of duties as divine commands.

On the other hand, Kant is confident in the ability of reason to determine its own course autonomously. Brunner's contention that these two aspects are discernible in Kant's ethical theory is indisputable. However, that these two elements are as basically antagonistic for Kant as Brunner suggests, is not so obvious. Kant's own estimation of the merits of these

¹ Kant, Opus postumum, p. 823.

² Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, pp. 68ff.

respective sources of morality is presented succinctly in the Opus Postumum.

I believe from the bottom of my soul, and after the most mature reflection, that the doctrine of Christ, purged of all clericalism, and understood to express itself in conformity with our method, is the most perfect system, which I at least can think of, to promote peace and happiness of the swiftest, most powerful, most secure, and most universal kind in the world. Only I believe also that there is yet another system, which grows completely out of the pure reason, and leads even thereto; but it is only for skilled thinkers, and certainly not for men generally; and even should it find favour, so must one still choose the doctrine of Christ for practice. 1

One significant phrase in this statement does not come under consideration in Brunner's analysis of Kant, the phrase - "and understood to express itself in conformity with our method". In fact, Brunner's contention that Kant is striving to reconcile the conflicting interests of Christian theology and autonomous reason suggests that he minimizes the extent to which Kant's doctrine of reason has shaded his concept of the subject matter of theology.

The Kantian ethic ... has an Idea of God in the background, but this Idea is not the Stoic idea but the Christian idea - although somewhat weakened by a certain tinge of Deism; but it is now common property from his opus postumum, how Kant strove to the very last to eliminate this theological background from his ethical theory, and that he was unable to do so. It is this which gives the Kantian ethic its divided character. 2

Kant's confidence in the ability of the autonomous reason certainly suggests more than "a certain tinge of Deism". In fact, one might suggest that the method by which he sought to "eliminate the theological background from his ethical theory" was thoroughly deistic. "The categorical imperative is not set in the highest commanding substance which is outside me, but is a command or prohibition of my own reason. - Yet, nevertheless, it is still considered as proceeding from a being, which has irresistible power over all."³ The most obvious interpretation of such a statement, which is indeed typical of the seemingly contradictory position represented in the Opus Postumum, is that

1 Kant, Opus postumum, p. 763.

2 GuO p. 561. E.T. p. 579.

3 Kant, Opus postumum, p. 822.

Kant is propounding a deistic doctrine as the context of his ethics. Thus interpreted, the source of the Imperative may well be God, but by His endowment of man in Creation, in which he has set man on his own feet, or, more accurately, on his own reason, man is fully capable of providing his own Imperative. Certainly, the suggestion of an internal battle, on Kant's part, between autonomy and theonomy, is not so poignantly represented by the Opus Postumum as Brunner would suggest.

If we start from the most fundamental antithesis of all, from that between an ethic based on immanence and one based on transcendence, then certainly the intention of Kant at this point is not clear. Can it be that a theonomy lies behind his principle of autonomy? Is it then possible that he had found the point where both become one, and thus the point at which the contradiction is overcome? Above all, the recent publication of Kant's opus postumum has shown us, most impressively, the way in which Kant wrestled with this very problem. It has shown us equally clearly that a solution of this problem along the lines suggested by Kant is impossible. His essentially Idealistic point of view can never be combined with the recognition of a "divine substance" - as Kant expressed it - that is, with the recognition of a personality which confronts me as Thou. 1

Undoubtedly, Brunner is perfectly sound in his contention that the problem cannot be solved along the lines which Kant suggested, but it is possible that he underestimates the satisfaction with which Kant contemplated his own solution. The Opus Postumum does not suggest the conflict in Kant's own mind between his rational basis and Christian theism which Brunner attributes to him. The solution may be that Kant was more convinced of the susceptibility of the Christian faith to rational explanation than Brunner is prepared to recognize. An interpretation of Kant's position with regard to Christianity, which is more compatible with Kant's own statements in the Opus Postumum, is presented by Abbott in his preface to his translation of

1 Gu0 p. 31. E.T. pp. 45-6.

Kant's major ethical writings.

Kant's own position with respect to Christianity is that of a Rationalist. He accepts the whole moral and spiritual teaching of the New Testament, because he finds it in accordance with reason, and this being so, he judges that it is a matter of no practical consequence whether its introduction was supernatural or not. 1

Kant's ethical theory is unimaginable without reference to his Christian background in which he matured; nevertheless, the conception of the Christian faith which lies behind his theory bears his own distinctive rationalistic stamp.

e. Brunner's Debt to Kant

If the above interpretation reflects a fair understanding of Kant's basic position, then the question arises as to whether Kant's Imperative was ever a genuine one. Brunner assumes it was. In spite of his censure of Kant's principle of autonomy, he is unmistakably impressed by Kant's presentation of the Imperative in so far as it is not the Imperative of the self-legislating reason. In contrast to the speculation of theoretical reason, "the categorical imperative speaks to me, this single man, in its absolute concreteness."² Indeed, "in the Kantian philosophy ... the absolute Good becomes the challenge of the present moment to the individual."³ It is a sobering thought, however, to realize that the individual thus singled out is rational man. Brunner is not unaware of this.

Even where the law is conceived quite formally, as in Kant's Categorical Imperative, where it expresses the pure form of responsibility itself and renouncing all content loses its statutory character, it does not cease to be abstract and impersonal because it remains a law of obligation. It does not put me in contact with the 'Thou' - whether divine or human - but with the abstract entity 'reason'. 4

Brunner is aware of the rational nature of the Kantian Imperative, but his

1 Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, "Memoir of Kant", Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics, p. lxi.

2 GPhKK p. 39. 3 Mitt. p. 91n. E.T. p. 115n. 4 MiW p. 159. E.T. p. 158.

opposition to it is based on the fact that it is a law of obligation. This suggests that Brunner is using Kant to combat Kant. For it is Brunner's contention that the reality which does put me in contact with the 'Thou' is love. We have already seen that this opposition between law and love, which is axiomatic for Brunner, suggests a Kantian influence. The final decision on this possibility will depend upon the status Brunner accords to law. This must await our final chapter where the relation of Law and Gospel will be considered. For the present, we may pursue this direction in a more general way in the examination of the chief contrast by which Brunner distinguishes his position from that of Kant with regard to the Imperative, his contrast between Law and Command. We have already suggested that this development in Brunner's doctrine suggests a parallel with Kierkegaard's concept of the teleological suspension of the ethical, and that Kierkegaard's concept is basically distinguished from the Kantian position in that it prescribes a definite content, whereas the Kantian Imperative is purely formal. It is this difference between Kant and Kierkegaard which will concern us in examining Brunner's distinction between Law and Command.

B. LAW AND COMMAND

a. The Universality of Law and the Particularity of Command

Kant is a moralist with a Christian background, and not a theologian concerned with morality. Consequently morality provides the determinative context in which any and all theological issues must be set. Brunner's method of stating this is to distinguish between Law and Command.

... it is only the transcendental conception of law and not the theological conception of command which is legitimate in the Kantian ethic. Law, however, in contrast to command, is that

which is not intended for any particular time, it is non-individual, it is timeless and universal. As a rational moralist, that is, as one who thinks of the good will not in view of an actual Divine command but in view of the law, Kant also believes absolutely in the possibility of an ethical system, that is in the possibility of constructing timeless valid norms of duty for actual conduct. 1

As a moralist, Kant cannot appreciate a theological concept of command. He can speak only in terms of law, because a strictly rational ethic cannot include a concept of a law-giver. "Within strict thought all transcending from the law to the law-giver must be described as mythological."²

This contrast between Law and Command is presented most distinctly in Kierkegaard's concept of the teleological suspension of the ethical. In Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, which Kierkegaard takes as the classic example of this phenomenon, the contemplated act of murder, which is ethically indefensible, is sanctioned by the direct command of God. Thus, as we have seen, Kierkegaard's "Command", like Brunner's distinction between Law and Command, differs from Kant's "Imperative" in that the former is particular, whereas the latter is universal.

b. Kierkegaard's Distinction between Universal Duty and Absolute Duty

The distinction between the particularity and universality of the Command represents only one side of the contrast between the Kantian Imperative and the Kierkegaardian Command. In addition to the distinction between particular and universal, Kierkegaard's concept centers on a distinction between the universal and the absolute.

The initial premise of Kant's ethical theory is that duty is the sole source of morally valid action. So concerned is he to establish the purity of motive that it becomes the whole subject of ethics.

1 GuO p. 33. E.T. p. 48.

2 "Gesetz und Offenbarung", Anfänge der dialektischen Theologie (München, 1962), I, 292.

... an action done from duty derives its moral worth, not from the purpose which is to be attained by it, but from the maxim by which it is determined, and therefore does not depend on the realization of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of volition by which the action has taken place, without regard to any object of desire. 1

On this basis, the moral worth of actions "cannot lie anywhere but in the principle of the will without regard to the ends."² We have already seen that Kant had to come to terms with Eudaemonism in order to give content to this formal ethic of duty. Here the contrast with Kierkegaard's notion of the divine command is most striking.

It is Kierkegaard's contention that within the context of duty as a formal concept, the pure categorical imperative, duty for duty's sake, the concept of duty is self-defeating.

The ethical is the universal, and as such it is again the divine. One has therefore a right to say that fundamentally every duty is a duty toward God; but if one cannot say more, then one affirms at the same time that properly I have no duty toward God. Duty becomes duty by being referred to God, but in duty itself I do not come into relation with God. 3

Duty is determined by its content. In the duty to love one's neighbour, for example, one comes into relation with one's neighbour.⁴ If one speaks of God in this context, then God is equated with the moral order, the universal demand of duty. Within the ethical sphere, which is the sphere of the universal, "God becomes an invisible vanishing point, a powerless thought, His power being only in the ethical which is the content of existence."⁵ If duty is to have any relation to God, it must have its source in God, in the absolute, and not in the universal which is the ethical. "The individual ... determines his relation to the universal by his relation to the absolute, not his relation to the absolute by his relation to the universal."⁶

1 Kant, Fundamental Principles, Ab. p. 16.

3 Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, p. 78.

5 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

6 Ibid. p. 80.

c. The Inseparability of Command and Commanded in Kierkegaard

It is in relation to the absolute that Abraham illustrates the teleological suspension of the ethical, which is the universal. In terms of the ethical, Abraham's duty is to love Isaac. "Abraham's relation to Isaac, ethically speaking, is quite simply expressed by saying that a father shall love his son more dearly than himself."¹ There can be no doubt that Abraham fulfilled this ethical demand. Kierkegaard is so highly appreciative of this fact that he betrays lack of confidence in his ability to expound Abraham's love for Isaac with anything like full justice.

... I would describe how Abraham loved Isaac. To this end I would pray all good spirits to come to my aid, that my speech might be as glowing as paternal love is. I hope that I should be able to describe it in such a way that there would not be many a father in the realms and territories of the King who would dare to affirm that he loved his son in such a way. ²

Ethically considered, then, Abraham is above reproach. Yet it is not through this fulfilment of duty that he is related to God. Quite the contrary, it is through the demand to contradict this duty that the relation to God is established. For the demand to sacrifice Isaac comes from God Himself - "it was God who tried Abraham."³

At this point the distinction between Kant's Categorical Imperative and Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical is radically disclosed.

What ordinarily tempts a man is that which would keep him from doing his duty, but in this case the temptation is itself the ethical ... which would keep him from doing God's will. But what then is duty? Duty is precisely the expression for God's will. ⁴

The distinction between Kant's Imperative and Kierkegaard's Command is a distinction between the universal demand of duty and the absolute demand

¹ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, p. 67.

³ Ibid. p. 34.

² Ibid. p. 42.

⁴ Ibid. p. 70.

of God. The significance of this distinction consists in the fact that, in contrast to Kant's formal Imperative, Kierkegaard's Command prescribes a definite content. The "recognition of all duties as divine commands"¹ begins with the ethical, and never gets beyond the ethical because it presupposes that man knows what God requires. The message of Kierkegaard's concept of the teleological suspension of the ethical is precisely the reverse. Only God Himself can prescribe the individual's duty. The fact that this is not what man conceives as his duty on the ethical plane constitutes the passionate conflict which makes the demand of God a true trial, and is expressed in Abraham's case by "the pain of his trial"².

The demand of God sets the individual on a plane above the ethically familiar, a plane which discloses frightening possibilities for evil as well as for good, the possibilities of murder and of sacrifice. It was this which constituted the agonizing trial which Abraham endured, and which constitutes the uniqueness of faith.

The paradox can also be expressed by saying that there is an absolute duty toward God; for in this relationship of duty the individual as an individual stands related absolutely to the absolute. So when in this connection it is said that it is a duty to love God, something different is said from that in the fore-going; for if this duty is absolute, the ethical is reduced to a position of relativity. From this, however, it does not follow that the ethical is to be abolished, but it acquires an entirely different expression - that, for example, love to God may cause the knight of faith to give his love to his neighbour the opposite expression to that which, ethically speaking, is required of duty. ³

The ethical expression for Abraham's contemplated act is murder; religiously considered, it is sacrifice.⁴ The decisive qualification which makes what is ethically indefensible, religiously obligatory, is the demand of God and the possibility of meeting that demand, which in Abraham's case is provided by

1 Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Ab. p. 226.

2 Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, p. 63.

3 Ibid. p. 80.

4. Ibid. p. 41.

his love for Isaac.

Isaac he must love with his whole soul; when God requires Isaac he must love him if possible even more dearly, and only on this condition can he sacrifice him; for in fact it is this love for Isaac, which, by its paradoxical opposition to his love for God, makes his act a sacrifice. 1

It is this insistence on the necessity for Abraham to love Isaac, and to love him even more dearly in the face of the demand to sacrifice him, which gives the lie to Buber's contention that for Kierkegaard the "Reginas" of this world are hurdles to be overcome in the ascent to God. The teleological suspension of the ethical does not consist in the fact that Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac. The whole point is that he was not. The life of Isaac meant more to Abraham than his own. "If Abraham had doubted ... he would have plunged the knife into his own breast."² Abraham was not willing to renounce Isaac. "By faith Abraham did not renounce his claim upon Isaac, but by faith he got Isaac."³ The teleological suspension of the ethical demands a total trust which is radiant with hope for this life. It is not a commitment to a higher path which works itself out on the familiar plane of the ethical. It is a faith in the total demand of God for this present life. As such, it prescribes a definite content.

Yes, if Abraham the instant he swung his leg over the ass's back had said to himself, "Now since Isaac is lost, I might just as well sacrifice him here at home, rather than ride the long way to Moriah" - then I should have no need of Abraham, whereas now I bow seven times before his name and seventy times before his deed. If this had not been the case with Abraham, then perhaps he might have loved God but not believed; for he who loves God without faith reflects upon himself, he who loves God believingly reflects upon God. 5

The distinction between moral and religious responsibility, then, as Kierkegaard presents it, does not consist merely in the recognition that

1 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 84.

2 Cf. above p. 101.

3 Kierkegaard, p. 35.

4 Ibid. p. 59.

5 Ibid. p. 47.

duties are divine commands, but in the detailed obedience to demands which are not discernible on the familiar plane of the ethical.

d. Brunner's Debt to Kant and Kierkegaard

Whatever the difficulties presented by Kierkegaard's concept of the teleological suspension of the ethical, and they are not few, the contrast with the Kantian Categorical Imperative is quite clear. In terms of this analysis, we may now re-examine Brunner's indebtedness to Kierkegaard. We have suggested that Brunner's contrast between Law and Command bears a striking similarity to Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical in terms of the contrast between the particularity of the Command as opposed to the universality of Law. However, in the light of the contrast between Kierkegaard's concept and Kant's Categorical Imperative now discernible, the parallel ends here. For in Kierkegaard's presentation, the command is not only specific, but it is also detailed with regard to content. The command cannot be separated from what is commanded. In this respect, Brunner's position is more compatible with that of Kant. "Theologically expressed: Not what God demands is important, but whether one is willing to take the claim of God - what it always is - as the guide, the consciousness of responsibility opposite Him, the 'first command' is the decisive one."¹ Brunner does not conceal the fact that this is a Kantian allegiance. "The formalism of the Kantian ethic is in most precise agreement with the New Testament ethic."² This formalism is founded on the conviction, unthinkable in Kierkegaard's presentation, of the separability of command and commanded. "This formalism is nothing other than the knowledge that only the obedience opposite God Himself, nothing of details, decides between good and evil."³

1 GPhKK p. 39.

2 "Gesetz und Offenbarung", p. 292n.

3 Ibid.

Brunner's concern is the wholly legitimate one of emphasizing the absolute nature of the divine demand, in contrast to all utilitarian concepts of human ambition. Yet the question remains, assuming the illegitimacy of a utilitarian perspective, what gives the responsibility of faith content? The problem with which Brunner confronts us is this - he seems to be endeavouring to combine the formalism of Kant's Categorical Imperative with the particularity involved in Kierkegaard's concept of the command of faith. How is this possible? The immediate solution to Brunner's predicament is suggested by his reference to Kant's concession to Eudaemonism. As we have seen, it is Brunner's contention that Kant's alliance with Eudaemonism is only intelligible in terms of his Christian background.¹ This contention is hardly open to dispute in view of Kant's own admission that Christian morality provides the link between the attainment of virtue and its appropriate reward.² But Brunner insists that while this intrusion of the concept of the Creator God is illegitimate in Kant's rational ethic, it is quite legitimate in a similarly formal Christian ethic. In spite of his recognition of the incompatibility of the Kantian ethic and the true Christian ethic, Brunner regards the two as easily reconcilable. This is so because the rationalist basis provides an ethic which is in essential agreement with the Christian ethic. "Kant placed his ethic deliberately alongside the Christian ethic, and made no secret of the fact that the formal principles he had discovered produced exactly the same ethic as that of the Gospels - although the basis is different."³ Now it is undoubtedly true that the formalism of the Kantian ethic is parallel to the Christian ethic in that the Christian ethic demands absolute obedience, and as such excludes all utilitarian motives. In an age when morally valid action is determined in terms of the anticipated

1 GuO p. 34. E.T. p. 49.

2 Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Ab. pp. 225f.

3 GuO p. 30. E.T. p. 45.

consequences, it is well to recall Kant's emphasis on the authoritative imperative, the Categorical Imperative, as distinguished from mere hypothetical imperatives which refer to a certain end. It is not so obvious, however, that this formalism of the Kantian ethic is parallel to the Christian ethic in its lack of content. It is not obvious that ~~one~~ must depict the imperative as being completely empty in order to eliminate all possibility of utilitarian compromise. Brunner gives no indication of any difficulty in these two senses of "formality". The formality of the Christian ethic as absolute demand also involves the formality of complete lack of content. In other words, the distinctive feature of the Christian ethic is the motive it provides. The assumption seems to be that man is able to give content to this motive himself. "So far as motive is concerned, our motto is: 'all from Christ', but where the concrete demand is formulated, the only rule is: loyalty to the order of Creation."¹ Brunner never doubts that command and commanded can thus be separated.

The parallel to Kant's ethic of duty represented by Brunner's formal ethic of motivation clarifies the difficulty in distinguishing between moral and religious responsibility in Brunner's writings. We have suggested that Kant's rational understanding of Christianity raises the question as to whether his imperative was ever a genuine one. Brunner's alliance with Kant now raises the question as to whether Brunner really deals with religious responsibility at all. Not only does he say that "morality appears - so far as it is genuine, i.e. so far as an absolute demand is involved therein - as latent religion";² but he seems to suggest also that the passage from moral responsibility to religious responsibility involves merely the recognition

¹ DII p. 267. E.T. p. 226.

² Das Symbolische in der religiösen Erkenntnis (Tübingen, 1914), p. 75.

of the ultimate source of moral obligation, the recognition of duties as divine commands. The feeling of respect for our fellow man is intimately bound up with the "reverence for a highest being."

But it is impossible to prove the identity of both, the categorical imperative and God's will. We are here in a sphere where every proof loses its value, in the sphere of faith and of religion. 1

Apparently the distinction between moral responsibility and religious responsibility is essentially the recognition of the true absoluteness of duty. The suggestion is that Kant did not go far enough - "the critical philosopher, if he cannot become a believer, will always somehow make a weakening attempt (see Kant)."² The contrast with Kierkegaard's distinction between duty as the self-enclosed sphere of the ethical and duty which comes from God, is striking. If our analysis is faithful to Brunner, it would seem that his doctrine of responsibility bears a strong idealistic tinge. Since he himself has suggested that idealism is distinguished from Christianity in terms of the recognition of evil, it will be well to examine Brunner's account of this distinction.

C. IDEALISM AND EVIL

a. Brunner's Assessment of Kant's Concept of Evil

Kant's concept of evil represents a curious blend of the Christian doctrine of Original Sin and the rationalist confidence in the basic integrity of reason. In his concept of "radical evil" Kant demonstrates a profound appreciation for the seriousness of fallen man's predicament such as has been formulated traditionally in the Christian doctrine of Original Sin.

1 "Freiheit als Verantwortlichkeit", pp. 359-60.

2 Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube, (Tübingen, 1923), p. 88.

... evil is radical, because it corrupts the ground of all maxims; it is, moreover, as a natural propensity, inextirpable by human powers, since extirpation could occur only through good maxims, and cannot take place when the ultimate subjective ground of all maxims is postulated as corrupt ... 1

Yet from this uncompromising affirmation of the "bondage of sin", which clearly approximates the Christian doctrine of Original Sin, Kant goes on to reverse his judgment: "yet at the same time it must be possible to overcome it, since it is found in man, a being whose actions are free."² Brunner's assessment of the Kantian concept of evil represents an essentially credible explanation of Kant's basic position. "The answer of Plato - and of all the idealists after him including Kant - is that only our animal nature ... our sensuous or bodily nature, is responsible for moral evil."³ It is ultimately the rationalist, and not the Christian, concept of evil which prevails in Kant.

This judgment of Brunner, however, represents only one side of his assessment of Kant. One would expect, in terms of his appreciation for the influence of Kant's Christian background,⁴ that Brunner would describe the concept of radical evil as a rationalist corruption of the Christian doctrine of sin. Such is not the case. On one occasion he declines to investigate the possibility of Kant's concept being a product of his Christian background, and instead contrasts it as an impersonal concept with the personal doctrine of sin presented in Christianity.

... the Kantian doctrine of radical evil is not the Christian doctrine. It is not our business here to enquire whether it is derived from the Christian doctrine or not; in any case, in vital seriousness it lags far behind the Christian doctrine, although it certainly attains far greater heights than all other philosophical theories of evil. The reason why the Kantian doctrine lags behind the Christian view is that it remains within the sphere of mere reason, and this means that it is not truly personal. For it measures man only by an impersonal law. 5

1 Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, p. 32.

2 Ibid. 3 DIII E.T. p. 384. 4 DI E.T. p. 151.

5 Mitt. pp. 117-18. E.T. p. 142.

It is strange that Brunner should decline to investigate the possibility that Kant's concept of radical evil may be derived from the Christian doctrine of Original Sin. Yet it is true that this possibility is never seriously considered by Brunner. His most consistent position with regard to the derivation of Kant's doctrine assumes that it is purely a product of his rational philosophy. "It is not an accommodation to his Christian environment, but an expression of the most stringent and sharpest conceptual analysis, when he speaks of 'radical evil'.¹"

It is Brunner's contention that Kant's doctrine of radical evil need not be referred to the Christian doctrine of Original Sin because it is thoroughly explicable in terms of his moral philosophy.

He, the enemy of all muddled thinking, of all would-be clever profundity, the relentless logician, is forced by the very nature of the problem to come to the paradoxical conclusion of "inborn guilt". He reaches this conclusion simply because he sees what a moral will means, because he has understood the moral phenomenon better than other thinkers. ²

There can be no question of the moral setting in which Kant presented his doctrine of radical evil. But this is something different from the contention that it was a product of the moral philosophy as such. Brunner's assessment would present no problem if he were merely contending that Kant has transposed insights from the Christian faith into a moral setting. For unquestionably it is morality which is the central concern in Kant. Brunner's assessment, however, is much more radical. It is not his contention that Kant's doctrine is presented in moral terms, but that it is derived from the moral as such. "The doctrine of radical evil was a necessary consequence of the purity of his conception of morality."³ In the final analysis, Brunner is really affirming that "radical evil" represents a rationally discerned and rationally

1 DIII E.T. p. 257.

2 Mitt. p. 103. E.T. p. 128.

3 Ibid. p. 104. E.T. p. 128.

discernible doctrine.

Kant's idea of radical evil remains the most serious attempt ever made by any philosopher - who does not bring his system into conformity with the Christian revelation - about evil. In spite of this, however, his doctrine certainly cannot be considered as the reformulation of the Christian truth about sin. It is the expression of that which the man who reflects seriously upon evil can discover for himself. 1

When we consider the serious view of bondage represented in Kant's concept of radical evil, it seems strange that this concept should be described as rationally discernible.

b. Kant's Basic Confidence in Reason

We have already seen reason to question whether Kant's imperative was ever a genuine one because of the basic confidence in reason on which his moral philosophy is founded. We must now question Brunner's affirmation that Kant's concept was possible because he started with the "divine Law".

... Kant's theory of Radical Evil ... shows how an exact and unprejudiced analysis of evil comes very near to the Christian truth. ... Kant is able to conceive evil in its personal unity because he understands man as a unified personality. He is able to do so, without starting from the Christian revelation, because, and in so far as, he starts from the idea of the divine Law ... 2

Again, this would be quite intelligible if Brunner were simply contending that behind Kant's doctrine of radical evil, as behind his concept of the Categorical Imperative, there stands the Christian knowledge of a supreme law-giver to whom man is answerable. But this is not what Brunner is affirming. On the contrary, he is contending that Kant's doctrine of radical evil springs from an "idea of the divine Law" which is something other than the Christian revelation. He goes on to state his main criticism of Kant: "as soon as the idea of the divine Law gives place to the law of Reason, as soon as he once more regards the person as autonomous, as a self-legislator, then he also

1 MIW p. 128. E.T. pp. 126-7.

2 DII p. 109. E.T. p. 95.

loses the view of radical evil."¹

The ambiguity in Brunner's assessment of Kant rests on an ambiguity in the Kantian position itself. It is Brunner's contention that Kant oscillates between a concept of autonomy and one of theonomy because he is working with the concept of law and not with revelation. "The law is ambiguous, for it can be interpreted sometimes from the aspect of theonomy, and sometimes from that of autonomy, and for that reason the depths of evil cannot be perceived."² What Brunner does not seem to take into account is that in the concept of law as the pure fact of law, the Categorical Imperative, even the theonomy must be based on autonomy. This is the lesson to be learned from Kierkegaard's distinction between universal duty and absolute duty. Brunner assumes that Kant is really dealing with divine law. The problem comes, in Brunner's estimation, when Kant abandons this divine law which prescribes the contrast between is and ought, and establishes the contrast within man himself in the bifurcation of man into an empirical and an intelligible self. Although at times Brunner seems to recognize that this bifurcation was inherent in Kant's position from the outset.

If we hold to the most impressive formulation the natural moral consciousness has received, that of the Stoic Kantian ethic, we find that precisely this ethic leads to insoluble contradictions. It wishes to establish an imperative, but the principle of autonomy converts the imperative into the will of the intelligible ego. It professes to recognize evil in the concept of "radical evil", but again the principle of autonomy does not permit it to seek this evil in the innermost kernel of the person. It professes to give due recognition to the contradiction in man, but it makes the ethical contradiction into a metaphysical antithesis between the intelligible and the empirical self. 3

This could be interpreted to mean that the outcome of this approach is implicit in its method from the start. There is good reason to believe that this is what Brunner means in this presentation of the situation. For he continues:

¹ DII pp. 109-10. E.T. p. 95.

² Ibid.

³ GuM p. 27. E.T. pp. 73-4.

It tries to make the imperative a serious one, by locating it in a will which confronts mankind, but the transcendentalism of its philosophical method ... does not permit it to conceive of the divine will as a will which confronts us. For it cannot acknowledge a God metaphysically known without ceasing to be critical, and it cannot acknowledge a self-revealing God without ceasing to be philosophy. 1

But from this early evaluation of the Kantian predicament, Brunner has gone on to develop a theory of the imperative wherein it is assumed that the problem in Kant comes when he converts the genuine imperative into the law of the intelligible self. As we have seen from his recent Dogmatik,² Brunner affirms that Kant "starts from the idea of the divine Law". Thus the problem only comes when "the idea of the divine Law gives place to the law of Reason", that is, when the ethical dualism between is and ought gives place to the metaphysical dualism between the empirical self and the intelligible self. This latter interpretation assumes that initially Kant is dealing with a genuine imperative. There can be no doubt that this, and not the more critical evaluation suggested in Gott und Mensch, represents Brunner's most consistent position, with regard to Kant.

On this latter interpretation, it would seem that Brunner would be forced to accept the assessment of A.D. Lindsay as to the basic similarity between Kant and St. Paul. It is Lindsay's contention that Kant's distinction between the empirical and the intelligible world is basically the same as that which Paul draws between the "law in my members" and the "law of my mind".

Man is a creature of two worlds, the intelligible world of reason, of which he is aware in his recognition of his obligation to act according to its principles, and the world of nature, where as a physical creature he is conscious of inclinations and desires prescribed to him by his physical nature and by the effect upon it of the surrounding physical world. As free, he is undetermined by the natural order just because, as a moral being, he is determined by and subject to the laws of the moral order; and the laws of the

1 GuM p. 27. E.T. p. 74.
2 DII p. 109. E.T. p. 95.

moral order are the legislation of his rational will. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." Kant's distinction and St. Paul's are in essence the same though what St. Paul calls the law of God is for Kant the law of self-legislative reason. 1

This contention that the contrast between the law of self-legislative reason and the law of God is the only difference between Kant and St. Paul, which would seem to represent Brunner's basic position as well, overlooks one important fact, namely, that there is a fundamental difference between rational law and divine law. The fact is that the reason was never in question in Kant. It is not simply a case of his deserting the true imperative for a concept of the autonomous self-legislating reason. Kant's imperative is rational from the outset. It is not an imperative which confronts man from beyond himself, but an imperative by which reason is to subdue the inclinations. The contrast between is and ought is a contrast between empirical and intelligible from the outset. The problem as it was formulated by Kant is - how can reason be motivated to regulate the inclinations?

If we had only to do with a being in whom Reason was irresistibly dominant, we should not need to raise any further questions; but having to treat of a being with affections and appetites distinct from Reason, and not of themselves dependent on it, we must answer the further question: How is Reason to maintain its authority in spite of these resisting forces? i.e. What is the motive? 2

Thus the problem in Kant's moral theory, from the Christian perspective, does not begin with his identification of the imperative with the self-legislating reason, as Brunner suggests. The bifurcation between the empirical self and the intelligible self is implicit in Kant's theory from the beginning, precisely in the contrast between duty and inclination. We have already seen that Brunner's contrast between law and love suggests a parallel to this

1 A.D. Lindsay, *Kant* (London, 1934), pp. 195-6.

2 Abbott, "Memoir of Kant", op. cit., p. 1.

Kantian contrast between duty and inclination. Examination of this possibility must await the final chapter where consideration will be given to Brunner's concept of Law and Gospel. We may note at this stage, however, that since Brunner does not seem to appreciate fully the significance of the rationalistic basis on which Kant's imperative is founded, in that he regards it as a genuine imperative prior to its identification with the self-legislating self, he casts suspicion on his own appreciation for the distinction between the divine command and the formal concept of duty involved in the rational categorical imperative. If this represents an accurate assessment of Brunner's relation to Kant, it clarifies his contention that radical evil represents a rational insight.

c. Responsibility and the Knowledge of Evil

The importance of Brunner's contention regarding the rational discernibility of evil consists in the fact that it explains how he can move so naturally from moral responsibility to religious responsibility. If rational man can know evil as a bondage which is "inextirpable by human powers",¹ then he is very close to the Christian knowledge of sin as a self-enclosing separation from God. We are here faced with the question of guilt, and of responsibility for guilt. It is at this point that the final decision on Brunner's doctrine will have to be made. This will be considered in the final chapter. At present, we may prepare the way for this evaluation by a further glance at the parallel between Kant and Brunner on the concept of responsibility.

Kant began with the concept of moral responsibility in terms of the imperative, and from this developed a concept of total responsibility whereby

¹ Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, p. 32.

man is regarded as a fully self-sufficient being in himself.

Though he begins by reaffirming the view that the consciousness of duty is the ratio cognoscendi of freedom, while freedom is the ratio essendi of duty, he ends by saying that a man must unhesitatingly admit that it is possible for him to do what he recognizes he ought to do and hence is conscious of freedom. 1

From the notion of moral freedom which is grounded in obligation, Kant proceeds to the notion of arbitrary freedom which is superior to obligation.

The fallacy in this development is well summarized by Teale.

Our freedom does not follow from our awareness of being able to act accordingly; it follows from our recognition of the fact that if we were not free, we could never experience moral obligation. To reverse this order of ideas is to make the proof of freedom depend on man's ability to act in accordance with his ideas, whereas the whole point of Kant's argument at this stage is that the idea of duty is unlike every other idea in that it carries with it a peculiar feeling of constraint and hence presupposes a source of action quite different from that involved in man's ability to act according to any purpose he may entertain. 2

Kant has transformed the legitimate predication of moral freedom which is the ratio essendi of moral responsibility into an ultimate freedom which is superior to the moral obligation.

Brunner is not unaware of the difficulties in Kant's position. His general reaction may be summed up by saying that from ought to can the consequence need not follow.

The knowledge of duty which gives Kant sufficient reason to believe in the goodness of the human heart can only be regarded in this optimistic way by one who secretly turns duty into will, who thus recognizes in the mere fact of the Divine Imperative a divine-human will. If, however, the imperative is understood simply as an imperative and not as an act of volition - this means, however, as a divine command - then the fact that I ought to do so-and-so does not in any way mean that I can do it. 3

Brunner's reversal of Kant's judgment is based on the Christian affirmation of the "bondage of sin". From the Christian perspective, Brunner denies the

1 Teale, Kantian Ethics, p. 271.

2 Ibid. p. 272.

3 Mitt. p. 105n. E.T. p. 129n.

progression from the moral freedom which is implied in the predication of moral responsibility to real freedom wherein man is seen as truly free. But, and this is the difficulty in Brunner's presentation, he makes this denial in Kantian terms.

It is true, as Kant showed, following the Stoic line of argument, that the imperative of obligation is the principle by which I come to know my formal freedom, i.e. my responsibility. But it is at the same time - and no philosopher has recognized this - the ground on which I become aware of my lack of real freedom. 1

The assertion that "no philosopher has recognized this" does not change the fact that the recognition is set on a moral basis. If "the imperative of obligation is ... the ground on which I become aware of my lack of real freedom", then it will not be easy to distinguish this position from that of Kant. The distinction seems to be that Kant affirms, whereas Brunner denies, real freedom, on the basis of the freedom demanded by the predication of moral responsibility. In both cases, the basis is the same, the moral imperative. In the end, it seems that Brunner's sole criticism of Kant is that he did not come to the conclusion which he himself reaches on the same basis. This clarifies both the ambiguity in Brunner's natural progression from moral responsibility to religious responsibility, and his contention that radical evil is rationally discerned. It also represents a basic conflict with other affirmations which Brunner wishes to make, the principal one being the affirmation of the irrationality of sin.

d. Evil and the System

The climax of Brunner's thinking on the subject of the rationality or irrationality of sin comes in his contrast between evil and systematic thought. Thought is inherently systematic in that it strives for a tidy

1 GuM p. 30. E.T. pp. 78-9.

well-rounded conception of reality in which everything has its logical place. But evil is precisely that which has no place. It does not belong. Because evil cannot be fitted into any comprehensive system, such as reason demands, it is irrational. With this approach to the problem we move from Kant to Schelling, for it was Schelling who, in Brunner's estimation, most radically exposed the incompatibility of evil and the system. The context of Schelling's development of this theme is his contrast between the "negative philosophy", which seeks to prove God, and the "positive philosophy", which begins with God.

Sometimes Schelling touches hard on this boundary; he proves that the most important content of the positive philosophy is irrational, and therefore only to be believed: and still the whole is presented as philosophy, and therefore - one thinks particularly of his writing on freedom - as knowledge of reason. 1

Brunner's assessment of Schelling seems to be that he is trying to grasp rationally what, at times, he recognizes to be irrational. His judgment of Schelling is that his rational pride will not permit him to make the ultimate break with his own systematizing. "The philosopher will not take the humiliation of 'must believe' to himself."²

One can appreciate the enthusiasm which Brunner displays over Schelling. For he does represent a step beyond Kant.

The so-called antinomies therefore do not represent, as Kant thought, a conflict, a collision, of the reason with itself, but a contradiction between the reason and that which is more than reason, the proper positive knowledge; and I believe I have supported my statement that both these lines of philosophy have always co-existed and do now co-exist, through the great example of Kant, who knew well the existence of these contrasts, but certainly did not consider the possibility of a positive philosophy, although his philosophy with the claim (the postulate, as he says) of the real existing God as basis therefore ends with the claim of a positive philosophy, a transcendence over the mere knowledge-of-reason. 3

1 Philosophie und Offenbarung (Tübingen, 1925), p. 41. 2 Ibid.
 3 F.W.J. Schelling, Philosophie der Offenbarung, *Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart & Augsburg, 1858), III, 146.

This certainly represents a step beyond Kant. Whether it is a step forward or a step backward, however, is another matter. Kant declined to make positive affirmations about transcendent issues such as God, freedom and immortality. The most positive status he would accord such possibilities was that of "postulates of the practical reason". Schelling has no hesitation in constructing a positive philosophy to embrace this area in reference to which Kant confessed the impotence of reason.

Brunner summarizes the ambiguous position represented by Schelling's Philosophie der Offenbarung: "His Philosophie der Offenbarung presents us with the curious spectacle of a speculation which constructs in thought the happenings which it proves can only be discovered not by thought at all, but by something given, as a revelation."¹ This is indeed a "curious spectacle". In fact, it might be more accurately described as an "impossible spectacle". For how could one be presenting in thought what cannot be presented in thought? The implication is that revelation is rationally discoverable. This evaluation which Brunner makes of Schelling's position is most suggestive with reference to our central concern, the question of the rationality or irrationality of evil. It is this question which attracts Brunner to Schelling.

It is profoundly interesting to note that on the threshold of the closing phase of the German Idealist movement, when the Christian faith in revelation was once more considered as a possibility, the reappearance of the problem of "evil" in the later works of Schelling constituted the turning-point. Schelling's treatise on freedom, his most brilliant piece of work, which is really a dissertation on the problem of evil, heralds the decline of Idealism, and the approach of Christian ideas. 2

When we turn to this celebrated treatise, "Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände", we find that Schelling described evil as an inherent possibility of creaturely

1 Mitt. p. 107. E.T. p. 131.

2 Ibid. p. 99. E.T. pp. 123-4.

being. He distinguishes two principles, a principle of light and a principle of darkness. These two principles are united in God, but separable in man. Upon this separability depends both the fact of revelation and the possibility of evil.

Now in that the soul is living identity of both principles, it is spirit; and spirit is in God. Now if the identity of both principles in the spirit of man was as insoluble as in God, then there would be no distinction, i.e. God as spirit would not reveal. That unity which is inseparable in God, must therefore be separable in man - and this is the possibility of good and evil. 1

Behind this distinction of principles which are inseparable in God and separable in man there lies a basic outlook which combines elements of pantheism and idealism in a bewildering manner.² The picture presented is so far removed from anything one would normally associate with Christian thought that one wonders why Bruner hails the treatise with such enthusiasm. He does not approve of the systematic explanation which ultimately attributes evil to God Himself.³ In what way, then, did Schelling's consideration of the problem of evil mark the turning-point of German Idealism? It seems that Schelling's merit consists in the positive philosophy in which he proceeded beyond the limits set by Kant.

Kant refused to locate the origin of evil in a supra-temporal sphere. His only recourse was to take refuge in the inexplicable concept of "inborn guilt", or else to reduce the problem to the standard idealistic solution wherein evil is located in the sensual, as opposed to the rational, nature of man. Schelling is much more consistent in his solution to the problem. He concludes that evil originates in a transcendental act which determines the course of the empirical life.

1 Schelling, "Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände", Sämtliche Werke (Stuttgart & Augsburg, 1860), VII, 364.

2 Cf. John Watson, Schelling's Transcendental Idealism (Chicago, 1882), pp. 220ff.

3 Mitt. p. 107. E.T. p. 132.

Man in the original creation, as shown, is an undetermined being - (which may be represented mythically as a state of innocence and original bliss preceding this life) - only he himself can determine himself. But this determination cannot fall in time; it falls outside all time, and therefore together with the first creation ... 1

In Schelling's concept of evil as a transcendental act, evil is explained as the free pre-temporal self-determination which is definitive for the empirical life. If this doctrine fails the test as an affirmation of the irrationality of evil, it certainly qualifies for the category of incomprehensibility. We may readily accept the judgment of one of Schelling's expositors - "to explain the freedom to will evil or good as due to a timeless act really explains nothing; it is further away, indeed, from a true explanation than the view of Kant, which it affects to improve but really distorts."² But having said this, we must acknowledge that it seems to be precisely in this conception of evil as a transcendental act that Schelling's doctrine recommends itself to Brunner. His own emphasis on sin as act suggests the extent of Brunner's appreciation. Now this concept certainly takes evil seriously in that it locates it in a pre-temporal decision which is determinative for the temporal life. In this positive affirmation Schelling represents an advance beyond Kant. For Kant declined to identify a rational origin of evil.

... the rational origin of this perversion of our will whereby it makes lower incentives supreme among its maxims, that is, of the propensity to evil, remains inscrutable to us, because this propensity itself must be set down to our account and because, as a result, that ultimate ground of all maxims would in turn involve the adoption of an evil maxim (as its basis). Evil could have sprung only from the morally-evil (not from mere limitations in our nature); and yet the original predisposition (which no one other than man himself could have corrupted, if he is to be held responsible for this corruption) is a predisposition to good; there is then for us no conceivable ground from which the moral evil in us could originally have come. 3

Kant goes on from here to take refuge in the Fall narrative, which locates the origin of evil in the unidentified seducing serpent. This not only re-enforces

1 Schelling, *op. cit.*, VII, 385.

2 Watson, p. 233.

3 Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, p. 38.

the suspicion that Brunner does not appreciate the significance of Kant's Christian background for his doctrine of radical evil, but it also suggests that his insistence on the rational origin of Kant's concept is more indicative of his appreciation for Schelling than for Kant.

It seems that Brunner regards Schelling as a more acceptable companion for Christian theology than Kant because he is logically consistent where Kant admits defeat. If this is the case, then Brunner's insistence on the contrast between evil and systematic thought can hardly be taken seriously. This would explain how he can describe Schelling's positive philosophy as one which "constructs in thought the happenings which it proves can only be discovered not by thought at all, but by something given, as a revelation."¹ It would explain also how Brunner can regard Kant's doctrine of radical evil as a rational insight. This does not mean that Brunner accepts Schelling's positive philosophy. On the contrary, he regards it as a pointer to the truth, rather than as the truth itself.

... even Schelling's positive philosophy is only a signal at the point at which the decision has to be made. The knowledge of evil decides concerning the relation of truth and history, revelation and Idea. ²

Schelling's positive philosophy is not the Christian knowledge of sin. Yet it is a pointer to that knowledge, and as such it suggests a kinship to the Christian knowledge. This may indicate something of Brunner's conception of what the Christian knowledge is. It may be that his theology is unintelligible without the recognition that it involves a certain element of sympathy with idealist philosophy.

e. Idealism and Responsibility

Possibly the most fruitful approach to Brunner's theology lies in

¹ Mitt. p. 107. E.T. p. 131.

² Ibid. pp. 107-8. E.T. p. 132.

the recognition that what is involved is an attempted amalgamation of the theology of the Reformers with Kantian moral theory. On this interpretation, many of the central inconsistencies in Brunner's theology become clear. We may illustrate this from two contradictory statements which involve the issue of responsibility. In close company with the Reformers, Brunner holds a perspective from which he recognizes the basic incompatibility between the Kantian approach and that which is demanded by the Christian faith.

Just as Kant's conception of 'person' is derived from the law, the 'Thou shalt' - that means (on the one hand) a responsibility which is on this side of the contradiction to the generous Creator, God, and (on the other hand) a personality which no longer knows anything about being 'over-against' God - so also his 'radical evil' is only one manifestation of sin, whose other far more dangerous manifestation is precisely that which in the thought of Kant is regarded as the Good: the fact that man does good by his own efforts. 1

Here we have an affirmation of the totality of grace, and of the totality of sin, which is strongly reminiscent of the Reformers. The totality of grace is affirmed in the censure of Kant's basic moralism whereby it is assumed that "man does good by his own efforts". The totality of sin is affirmed in the contention that Kant's imperative involves "a responsibility which is on this side of the contradiction to the generous Creator, God", and also in the contention that the sinner "no longer knows anything about being 'over-against' God".

Yet this affirmation of the basic perspective of the Reformers represents only one side of Brunner's theology. There is another side which is directly contradictory, namely, an attachment to Idealistic philosophy which undermines the position Brunner is attempting to expound.

The idea of autonomy is the centre of moral idealism. It is at this point that the doctrine of the Intelligible Self arises; it is therefore also the real starting-point of the Idealistic

1 MiW p. 129. E.T. p. 128.

philosophy of religion, and the point where Christianity and Idealism both meet, and are most sharply opposed. The point of contact is this: if the idea of autonomy is conceived in a purely formal way as the Idea of the good will, then it is just as Christian as it is Idealistic. Conflict, however, arises at this point: if this idea is held at the same time as a statement about the "true being" of the real man then it becomes opposed to the Christian knowledge of Evil. 1

Brunner assumes that Idealism presents us with an accurate picture of man as he "should" be. The contention that "if the idea of autonomy is conceived in a purely formal way as the Idea of the good will, then it is just as Christian as it is Idealistic" clarifies much that is otherwise incomprehensible in Brunner's theology. It explains how he can regard radical evil as a rationally discerned insight. It explains how he can speak of the Categorical Imperative as a formal empty concept of duty which is but one step removed from faith which recognizes the source of duty. It explains, above all, how he can move so easily from moral responsibility to religious responsibility.

This idealistic tinge in Brunner's theology seems to substantiate the suspicion that Brunner is not fully appreciative of the basic confidence in reason which prescribes Kant's method from the outset, and also colours his conception of Christianity. It suggests why Brunner can regard Kant's theory as unsatisfactory only when it identifies the imperative with the self-legislating intelligible self, and thus converts the ethical dualism between is and ought into a metaphysical dualism between the empirical self and the intelligible self. Brunner does not detect the basis of this bifurcation in the major premise of Kant's ethical theory, in the contrast between duty and inclination. Because of this basic acceptance of the validity of the Kantian Imperative, Brunner can move quite readily from moral responsibility for free acts to religious responsibility to God. The

1 Mitt. p. 88n. E.T. p. 112n.

implications of this ambiguity must be examined in the final chapter where Brunner's theology will be evaluated in terms of the Reformation criterion of sola gratia which he himself affirms. Before attempting this evaluation, however, we shall investigate Brunner's position with regard to the doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin.

CHAPTER IV THE FALL AND ORIGINAL SIN

Christian theology affirms a doctrine of sin which involves a depth and seriousness totally imperceptible to the merely moral understanding of sin as individual transgressions of the moral law, or even of God's will. The traditional ecclesiastical doctrine formulates this depth and seriousness in its doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin. These two doctrines, while inter-dependent, have traditionally been distinguished in terms of the emphasis upon the beginning of sin and the propagation of sin, respectively. In Brunner's presentation of these doctrines, the distinction is minimized, at times almost to the point of obliteration, by his emphasis on "sin as act". In his concern to affirm personal responsibility, Brunner repeatedly asserts that sin must always be understood as "act".¹ Only when sin is understood primarily as act, can responsibility for sin be fully appreciated. This is true not merely of sins, but of sin itself. Thus the sinful state must be understood as "act", and only on that basis can the "state of sin" be appreciated.² Obviously this emphasis represents a departure from the traditional ecclesiastical doctrine in which the "state of sin", and consequently the origin of that "state", played a more determinative role. We must seek to appreciate Brunner's reasons for this departure, and to evaluate his success in reformulating the traditional doctrine. In order to do this we shall proceed on the basis of the classical distinction through which the Fall is primarily concerned with the beginning of sin, and Original Sin primarily with the propagation of sin. Although this distinction is not so prominent in Brunner, this procedure need not do violence to his

¹ MiW pp. 118n2, 148-9. E.T. pp. 116n2, 148; DII p. 127. E.T. p. 109;

WGM pp. 41, 45.

² MiW p. 119. E.T. p. 117; WaB p. 104. E.T. p. 152.

distinctive presentation of the doctrine, but may serve merely as a means of analysing his whole presentation from these two classical perspectives.

I. THE FALL

The suggestion that Brunner does not maintain the classical distinction between the Fall and Original Sin as rigorously as has been the case generally in the history of Christian thought does not imply that he reduces the doctrine of the Fall to an existential ingredient in the doctrine of Original Sin. Such an interpretation could be supported by statements from Brunner's writings, but it would overlook other statements which evidence a particular concern for the necessity of affirming a Fall, in addition to the affirmation of the fallenness of humanity. "At the basis of this conception of sin [i.e. as rebellion] there is always the idea of a reversing event."¹ This "reversing event", the subject of the Christian doctrine of the Fall, is an inescapable element in any adequate Christian theology for at least two reasons. First, "we cannot believe, in Christian and Biblical terms, without holding firmly to the distinction between Creation and Sin, and therefore the idea of a Fall."² This is the basic reason, in addition to which a second is affirmed, namely, that "apart from the doctrine of the Fall it is impossible to understand Sin as the presupposition of the New Testament message of Redemption. Only a fallen humanity needs a Redeemer."³ Really the two are aspects of the one basic reason for affirming a doctrine of the Fall - in Redemption we know the fallenness of humanity, and because of the goodness of Creation, we must affirm a "reversing event" to account for the discrepancy between Creation and Sin. Having established the necessity for affirming a

1 DII p. 104. E.T. p. 91.

2 Ibid. p. 59. E.T. p. 51.

3 Ibid. p. 103. E.T. p. 90.

Christian doctrine of the Fall, we turn to an examination of Brunner's understanding of this "reversing event".

A. THE STATUS OF GENESIS III

a. Genesis III is Not Literal Fact

The "reversing event" which the Christian faith is compelled to affirm has traditionally been identified with the account of the disobedience of Adam and Eve narrated in Genesis III. Although this is not the only version of the Fall,¹ it is the one which has determined the traditional Christian doctrine, and it is the one with which Brunner concerns himself. Since Genesis III has played such a determinative role in the theological account of the Fall, it is important to define the type of narrative involved therein. It is generally agreed today that the early chapters of Genesis do not confront us with a literal account of the beginnings of the human race. Thus we are faced with the urgent task of relating this narrative to the faith of the Old and New Testaments, which, with the possible exceptions of these earlier chapters of Genesis and other scattered portions, has a definite historical reference. It is in this setting that we must seek to appreciate Brunner's understanding of the Fall, and particularly at present his estimation of the status of Genesis III.

Brunner is frankly outspoken in his rejection of a literal interpretation of the narrative in Genesis III, and for two reasons. First, and in his estimation most important, "by clinging to the historical framework the actual fundamental content of the Christian doctrine of the origin of man has been either concealed or buried."² It is his contention that man's

¹ Cf. N.P. Williams, The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin (London, 1927), pp. 20ff.

² MiW p. 89. E.T. p. 86.

fallenness, his perpetual contradicting of his origin, is obscured by a literal interpretation of the narrative. The narrative, interpreted literally, "is the main source of that 'determinism' with which even Barth reproaches the classic ecclesiastical doctrine."¹ This "theological reason" for dispensing with the literal interpretation of Genesis III is grounded in Brunner's desire to emphasize man's present responsibility - "Only unseriousness creates a distance of thousands of years between us and 'Adam's Fall'."² That it is necessary to abandon the story of Genesis III in its narrative form in order to secure the reality of each individual's fall, is by no means an obvious conclusion. The justification for this contention will have to be assessed when we come to consider the reality of man's present fallenness, i.e. under the doctrine of Original Sin. Secondly, and, in spite of Brunner's protests,³ what seems to provide the most obvious motive for rejecting the literal interpretation of the narrative, there is "the scientific refutation of the Adam story."⁴ Brunner leaves no doubt as to his respect for the scientific challenge - "This whole historic picture of 'the first man' has been finally and absolutely destroyed for us to-day."⁵ In one of his most recent statements on the subject,⁶ Brunner distinguishes three possible positions with regard to the Adam story, and the challenge of modern science: first, a literal interpretation of the story in disregard of the modern post-Copernican view of the universe; second, a compromise between 'Adam' and the Copernican perspective; and third, the surrender of 'Adam' to the Copernican perspective. His conclusion is that the last is the only possible course.⁷ Yet it is not the Copernican explosion of our concept of space, but the Darwinian explosion of our concept of time, which has finally reduced

1 MiW p. 91nl. E.T. p. 88nl. 2 *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, p. 110.

3 MiW pp. 89, 122. E.T. pp. 86, 120. 4 WGM p. 42.

5 MiW p. 88. E.T. p. 85. 6 DII p. 58. E.T. p. 50. 7 Cf. also WGM p. 30.

the Adam story to the level of impossibility.¹ The death blow from Darwinian-ism is the summit of a series of attacks beginning with the world-view created by Copernicus, Galileo and Newton, followed by the development of historical criticism, the impact of Darwin himself and the whole new series of ventures in the sphere of pre-historic anthropology, the better knowledge of the ancient Semitic and Egyptian civilizations, the rise of Biblical criticism, and the development of the Comparative Science of Religion.² As a result, we cannot go back - "we know that there never was a paradise on earth with Adam and Eve and the serpent; we know that most of the Old Testament pre-history is mythology, not history, and that there is no unbroken chain of witnesses from Adam and Noah to Christ."³

b. Genesis III and Science

In view of this admiration for the achievements of modern science, Brunner's protests that the scientific challenge is only a secondary reason for abandoning the literal interpretation of the Adam story might seem unconvincing. In any event, this admiration prompts us to seek an understanding of Brunner's concept of the relationship existing between science and faith. The immediate answer to this question, which has enjoyed such prominence in the recent past, is that "the conflict between natural science and biblical faith ... is always a sham problem."⁴ The unnecessary conflict only arises when either science or faith presumes to make pronouncements within the other's sphere. "There is no conflict between science and faith, so soon as one has noted that faith has nothing to do with the surface and science has nothing to do with the meaning."⁵ We seem to be confronted here with an absolute distinction between the concerns of faith and those of science, whereby

1 DII pp. 93-4. E.T. p. 79. 2 W&W p. 98. 3 Ibid. p. 99. 4 WGM p. 29.
5 "Welt und Person", Zwinglikalender (1962), p. 21.

science is concerned with the "how" and only the "how", and faith with the "why" and only the "why". True science and true faith are completely harmonious. "Thus the real opponent is not science but a false estimate of science, a scientific monism, i.e. the superstitious belief in one science including all possible forms of knowledge in itself."¹

The significance of this segregation of science and faith in its application to the issues involved in the Adam story consists in the affirmation that science is concerned with the development of the race, while faith is concerned with the meaning and distinctiveness of humanity. So long as each respects the legitimacy of the other in its own sphere no conflict can arise. The prerequisite for such respect is the recognition that faith deals with the humanitas, that personal quality of life which transcends anything that can be known from the animalitas which is the proper sphere of natural science. Thus while natural science may propound theories depicting the ascent of man from primitive origins in terms of some form of evolution theory, this remains in the sphere of the animalitas, and in no way approaches the sphere of the humanitas which represents a totally new dimension of life completely discontinuous with the levels of development of the animalitas, and as such represents the proper and secure sphere for the concerns of faith.

Once this truth has been perceived, we can watch the further development of the theory of physical descent with the utmost indifference, and we shall not be in the least disturbed by any theories or hypotheses which may be put forward. The whole problem is not one of zoology, but simply of logic, and it is quite independent of the results of natural science, whether of the past or of the future. 2

The conflict with science only arises when either faith presumes to make pronouncements regarding the animalitas, or science presumes to make

¹ RPh p. 89. E.T. pp. 173-4.

² DII p. 95. E.T. p. 81.

pronouncements regarding the humanitas. The erroneous presumption of science can best be presented in Brunner's own words.

... the misunderstanding on the part of science ... consists in the belief that the modern evolutionary theory has invalidated the conception of the singularity of man. Man, it is said, is "nothing more than" a mere highly developed animal. In this phrase "nothing more than" lies the fallacy. ... The continuity of evolution does not exclude the discontinuity in the thing itself. 1

On the other hand, faith may also be guilty of infringing upon the proper sphere of science. Indeed, this has been the traditional presumption of the Church in its insistence on the factuality of the early chapters of Genesis. "We are obliged through our conscience, therefore, to thank God that Biblical criticism came, not so much with regard to the worldly progress of knowledge, but above all with regard to the truthfulness of faith."² Because of the enlightenment received through the impact of modern science, and the subsequent rise of Biblical criticism, we can and must recognize that "in so far as the Bible speaks about subjects of secular knowledge, it has no teaching authority."³ If the exclusiveness of the respective spheres of science and faith is recognized, it will be recognized also that the conflict is not between science and faith, but between philosophy and faith;⁴ or, theologically expressed, between belief and unbelief.⁵

On first impression, the designation of the conflict between science and faith as "a sham problem", and the delegation of each to distinct spheres, bears a more striking resemblance to the Kantian noumenal and phenomenal worlds, than to the "historical" faith of the Old and New Testaments. "In a word, Kant, like many others before him and since, proposes to separate completely science and religion by restricting them to distinct realms, and

1 WGM p. 34.

2 "Inspiration und Offenbarung", Der Kirchenfreund, 61, No. 1,3,4 (1927) p. 50.

3 DI E.T. p. 48.

4 RPh p. 89. E.T. p. 173.

5 W&W p. 104.

by this simple device hopes to reconcile the scientific and the religious interpretations of the world." ¹ Nevertheless, while this segregation of science and faith may reflect the Kantian background of the noumenal and phenomenal worlds, Brunner is not unaware of the fact that the world with which science deals is the same world in which the events of faith take place.

Space has indeed only a very remote relation to the contents of faith. It is otherwise with time. For the Christian faith is in its essence historical. Time plays a distinctive role in it. ²

Because "the Christian faith is in its essence historical" it is concerned with the same world which science investigates. The dualism between faith and science cannot ultimately be maintained. Yet it is not finally annulled. Herein we reach an inner conflict in Brunner's presentation which apparently defies any simple solution. The Kantian dualism is augmented by what might be described as a version of the Kierkegaardian dialectic of time and eternity. Science and faith are still relegated to separate spheres, but it is now admitted that they have "a common intersecting line".

Science and faith are on different planes, perhaps we may say on planes standing vertically at right angles to one another, and having therefore merely a common intersecting line. The revelation in Christ takes place in that world which science investigates, but this revelation cannot become an object of science. Therefore it is equally stupid not to believe in God for scientific reasons and to oppose science for reasons of faith. The battle between Christian theology and science, which has aroused so much bad feeling between the two, has proved to be a mutual misunderstanding, caused by an over-stepping of limits, partly from the side of faith, partly from that of science. In principle this problem does not exist any longer, though in practice it may never cease to bother us. ³

We may conclude from this that science and faith are not entirely unrelated, but that their allegiances are mutually exclusive. That is to say, there is

¹ Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, "Introduction" to Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, p. xli.

² WGM p. 32. ³ Christianity and Civilisation (London, 1949), II, 22.

no possibility of basing science on faith or faith on science, but science can be an ally of faith, and faith can be a companion of science. On the one hand, "science stimulates us to find a positive and adequate form for the Biblical message of the origin of Creation and the Fall of man."¹ On the other hand, "the theologically purified doctrine of the Origin and of the Fall ... can neither be proved nor disproved by the findings of empirical science."²

c. Form and Matter

What, then, is the status of the narrative of Genesis III? The first judgment must be that it is scientifically inadequate. Through the insights of modern science, we see that the form of the narrative represents an ancient Weltanschauung which is no longer tenable. The second judgment must be that, in spite of this human form, there is divine revelation involved in it, before which the scientist, if he is humble, will acknowledge the inadequacy of his scientific concepts. The problem with Genesis III arises because "modern Bible criticism confounds almost thoroughly form and matter. The form of Genesis III is history, therefore world-knowledge. The matter is a happening between God and man, therefore matter of faith."³ However, this division of science and faith, form and matter, begins to break down when we learn that the inadequate form in which the narrative is set can be replaced by a form which is immune from further attacks from the insights of science. The insights of science apparently disprove the form of the Adam story as it is given in Genesis III, but they cannot disprove the "theologically purified doctrine of the Origin and of the Fall."⁴ This seems to suggest that it is possible to recast the story in a form which

¹ MiW p. 91. E.T. p. 88. ² Ibid. p. 394. E.T. p. 402.

³ "Der Stündenfall und die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft", Christliche Welt, 40, No. 20 (1926), p. 996.

⁴ MiW p. 394. E.T. p. 402.

transcends any and every Weltanschauung. Yet it is not the form itself which Brunner regards as permanent, but rather the matter which it contains. On the one hand, the form of the Fall story is subject to change; on the other hand, the matter of the Fall story is permanent.

In the psychological make-up of the Yahwist, of Paul or of the Reformers that world-view and this "matter" of faith are inseparable moments ... We also press our faith into a world-view which will be altered just as quickly as that of the Reformers, of Paul and of the Yahwist. But we know that the matter is not identical with this world-view which we assume. 1

Brunner is quite undisturbed by the fact that his complete separation of form and matter stands in direct contrast to the inseparability of form and matter which he recognizes in the narrator, in Paul and in the Reformers. His confidence stems from the assumption that "Biblical theology does not have to do with the psychological make-up of the Biblical Scripture writer, but with the subject matter of the Bible."² One would hesitate to deny this, but the problem is thereby accentuated rather than solved. To dismiss the Adam story because of the divergence between our present day knowledge of the beginnings of the race and the knowledge of the beginnings of the race reflected in the Adam story itself is to have very much to do with the make-up of the author of Genesis III. The literal interpretation of the story is dismissed on the basis of the narrator's perspective. If we are concerned with the form of Genesis III which can in some way be separated from the matter which it involves, then we are concerned with the narrator, for it is the narrator who contributes the form in contrast to the matter which is revealed.

The difficulty in this whole presentation consists in this assumption that there is a matter in Genesis III which can be abstracted from the form in which it is set. It is only on this assumption that

1 "Der Stündenfall", p. 996.

2 Ibid. p. 997.

Brunner can disengage the concerns of faith from the embarrassment occasioned by the challenge of modern science. Yet Brunner is not always consistent in his separation of form and matter. He criticizes liberal theology for abandoning the Biblical position in seeking a position above the shifting plane of history, saying that this "means the same thing as abandoning Christianity."¹ Similarly, in regard to the problem of the Primitive State as it is involved in the question of the imago Dei, he asserts:

Later theologians, as a rule, have not understood what this question involves. Their whole attention has been absorbed in the questions raised by modern science; on the one hand, some of them try to save an impossible doctrine of the Primitive State by means of apologetics, while others abandon the historical form altogether as impossible, and in so doing they lose the meaning of the doctrine of the Primitive State as well. ²

Clearly, then, Brunner does not wish to advocate a complete disengagement of the Fall narrative from the "historical" world. Yet it is difficult to see how this concern is related to his distinction between an optional form and a permanent matter in the Fall narrative. For this latter approach seems dangerously close to a positivistic demarcation of spheres wherein faith is totally disinterested in the world with which science deals. In this line of thought we seem to have abandoned the conflict with science rather than resolved it. A mediating consideration appears at this point in the form of a distinction between a theoretical and a practical solution. It is Brunner's contention that the conflict between science and faith has been solved theoretically, although in practice it may not cease to bother us.³ The theoretical solution consists in the recognition of the distinct concerns of science and faith. The practical difficulty then stems from the overstepping of the boundary by either science or faith. But this distinction

¹ WEW p. 100. ² MIW p. 497. E.T. p. 510.
³ Christianity and Civilisation, II, 22.

between theory and practice, like the distinction between form and matter, is perhaps not so ultimate as Brunner, at times, seems to suggest. For the fact that in practice conflicts do arise between science and faith should caution us against holding too firmly to any theoretical solution. Brunner's treatment of the problem posed for theology by modern science in terms of a distinction between a dispensable form and a permanent matter assumes that the narrative itself is quite transparent. This solution will be effective only if it is possible to state the substance of the narrative independently of the form in which it is cast.

d. "Myth" and a Historical Reference

Brunner's term for the literature involved in Genesis III is "Myth".¹ This term is preferred because of its lack of historical reference. "The word 'myth' is to be preferred (in spite of its ambiguity) to 'legend' (which Barth suggests), because 'legend' refers to historical fact."² Yet Brunner is by no means unappreciative of the narrative of Genesis III. He criticizes Ludwig Köhler, who interpreted the narrative as a primitive attempt at an aetiological explanation of certain peculiarities and hardships of life, for "playing with a great thought which was the foundation for the faith for the most powerful spiritual leaders of the West - from Augustine through the Reformers to Pascal and Kierkegaard ..."³ Perhaps the key word here is "thought". It will be recalled that in setting forth Brunner's estimation of the legitimacy of the doctrine of the Fall, his reasoning was that "we cannot believe in Christian and Biblical terms, without holding firmly to the distinction between Creation and Sin, and therefore the idea of a Fall."⁴ Again, it may be that the key word here is "idea". Perhaps the best way to

¹ DII p. 89. E.T. p. 74. ² Ibid. p. 89n. E.T. p. 74n.

³ "Die Erde dreht sich", Kirchenblatt für die ref. Schweiz, 41, No. 29 (1926), p. 113.

⁴ DII p. 59. E.T. p. 51.

understand Brunner's conception of the status of Genesis III is to take him at his word. "The image of our original parents (Adam and Eve) is only a vivid way of representing an abstract idea, namely, that we are indeed all responsible, but that our guilt is always regarded collectively."¹

In short, it is extremely difficult to resist the conclusion that for Brunner Genesis III represents certain "ideas" which are eternally applicable. Certainly, as Brunner notes,² the Fall story plays a very minor role in the Bible itself, at least in terms of explicit reference. Yet this may merely indicate that it was generally taken for granted and assumed when the subject of discussion was not the origin of man's predicament but the salvation from this predicament. In any event, the fact that the narrator of Genesis III and Paul regarded this event as an "historical" fact should make us cautious about accepting a simple dualism of form and matter such as Brunner suggests. The conflict with science cannot be avoided so easily. If we retreat to a sphere of faith where our formulations remain immune from the attacks of science, we can also be prepared to discover that our formulations will be irrelevant to science and to the world which it knows. That Brunner appears to do this is obvious. Whether, in fact, he does do it must be determined through an examination of two of the key concepts of his presentation which have been neglected in this formal analysis of the status of the Genesis narrative - the origin of sin and Urgeschichte.

B. THE ORIGIN OF SIN

The rejection of the literal interpretation of Genesis III compels

¹ Mitt. p. 120. E.T. pp. 144-5.

² DII p. 103. E.T. p. 90.

Brunner to seek an alternative explanation for the reality involved in the Fall story. Although, at least once, he conceded that the narrative itself is primarily concerned with "the origin of sin",¹ Brunner's programme is much less ambitious. His concern is not to describe the origin of sin, but rather to affirm the reality of sin. "Thus we are confronted by the very difficult theological task of formulating the distinction between the nature of man in accordance with Creation, and as sinner, and the idea which this involves of the Fall of man, without using the thought-form of an historical 'Adam in Paradise' and of the Primitive State."² His reason for this procedure is the assumption that sin must be affirmed only within the context of freedom. From this he concludes that any attempt to explain sin in terms of its origin amounts to a denial of the reality of sin. Sin must be allowed to retain its enigmatic character as a fact which is only meaningful within the context of freedom. The content of this general position consists in the denial of any possibility of denoting either a causal origin or a temporal origin of sin.

a. Rejection of a Causal Explanation of Sin

Brunner's opposition to the causal explanation of sin is illustrated in his reaction against Schleiermacher's identification of sin with a theory of evolution - "the whole Schleiermacherian doctrine of inherited sin extends to the triviality that the sensual is an inherited presupposition of the human spirit-life, and to the questionable, anti-spiritual affirmation that in it the origin of sin must be sought."³ Schleiermacher's acceptance of the dualism of spirit and nature led him to define original sin in terms of the bondage of the sensual from which the spiritual must progressively emancipate itself. On this view, the distinction between Creation and Sin disappears

1 "Die Erde dreht sich", p. 114.

2 DII p. 60. E.T. p. 52.

3 MIW p. 242.

in the distinction between the natural and the spiritual. Sin did not enter with the Fall of Adam, but rather erupted from the innate sinfulness which is inherent in man's natural existence. "If, then, on the one hand, we discard the view that a change took place in human nature itself, but, on the other hand, still maintain that an incapacity for good is the universal state of men, it follows that this incapacity was present in human nature before the first sin, and that accordingly what is now innate sinfulness was something native also to the first pair."¹ Schleiermacher is guilty of reducing original sin to the level of a natural phenomenon, and thereby discarding any significant concept of the Fall. "Development in the sense of the causal process, or in the sense of ideal development: these are the two categories with which rational thought tries to master history. Both omit the essentially historical element in history: the deed, the decision."² Brunner's objection to the causal explanation of sin is motivated by his desire to ensure the freedom of sin in terms of which responsibility can be predicated of man. If sin is an effect of a determining cause, then it can hardly be charged to man's responsibility. In essence, this is the Kantian opposition to any minimizing of the responsible freedom which is regarded as the essential characteristic of human life, and, as such, can best be presented in Kant's own words. It is Kant's contention that the actual transgressions of human life must be rooted in a "subjective ground" which precludes every form of determinism.

But this subjective ground, again, must itself always be an expression of freedom (for otherwise the use or the abuse of man's power of choice in respect of the moral law could not be imputed to him nor could the good or bad in him be called moral). Hence the source of evil cannot lie in an object determining the will through inclination, nor yet in a natural impulse; it can only lie in a rule made by the will for the

¹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Edinburgh, 1928), p. 301.

² MiW p. 427. E.T. p. 436.

use of its freedom, that is, in a maxim. But now it must not be considered permissible to enquire into the subjective ground in man of the adoption of this maxim rather than of its opposite. If this ground itself were not ultimately a maxim, but rather a mere natural impulse, it would be possible to trace the use of our freedom wholly to determination by natural causes; this, however, is contradictory to the very notion of freedom. 1

This Kantian assertion of the impossibility of reducing the freedom which is assumed to be the subjective ground of human action, and the distinctive feature of humanity, would seem to foreshadow Brunner's strictures against the causal explanation of sin embodied in his criticism of Schleiermacher. In short, the contention is that sin cannot be explained from an analysis of the subject, the sinner, but must retain its enigmatic quality as a product of that freedom which is the essential characteristic of human life.

b. Rejection of a Temporal Explanation of Sin

But now the argument moves a step further. Just as sin cannot be explained causally in terms of an analysis of the subject, so too, it is maintained, it cannot be explained objectively in terms of an analysis of history. Because sin is to be seen only within the context of freedom, it is impossible to derive it from a first cause either in any individual or in terms of the race. "... the question of When and How of the Fall is one which cannot be answered from the standpoint of human history, either by the individual or by humanity as a whole."² Once again the Kantian antecedents are clear in terms of Kant's distinction between a rational and a temporal origin.

In the former sense [i.e. a rational origin], regard is had only to the existence of the effect; in the latter [i.e. a temporal origin], to its occurrence, and hence it is related as an event to its first cause in time. If an effect is referred to a cause to which it is bound under the laws of freedom, as is true in the case of moral evil, then the determination of the will to the production of this effect is conceived of as bound up with its

1 Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, pp. 16-7.

2 DII p. 116. E.T. p. 100.

determining ground not in time but merely in rational representation; such an effect cannot be derived from any preceding state whatsoever. Yet derivation of this sort is always necessary when an evil action, as an event in the world, is referred to its natural cause. To seek the temporal origin of free acts as such (as though they were operations of nature) is thus a contradiction. 1

That this denial of the possibility of affirming a temporal origin of evil provides the essential background for understanding Brunner's strictures against all attempts to define the origin of sin, is affirmed by Brunner's appreciative comments on the Kantian analysis. Not only does Kant locate the origin of evil in the 'tendency to evil' which is predicated of every individual, but "likewise he recognizes the impossibility of discovering a temporal beginning of this tendency, of this evil personal quality in the empirical life of the individual, or indeed of even thinking of any such; for every beginning would indeed presuppose this tendency."² The origin of sin is thus transferred from the temporal, which is defined as the sphere of causality, to the rational, which is defined as the sphere of freedom. Once again, we may venture to employ Kant's formulation as a summary of the position which is here affirmed.

We must ... not look for an origin in time of a moral character for which we are to be held responsible; though to do so is inevitable if we wish to explain the contingent existence of this character (and perhaps it is for this reason that Scripture, in conformity with this weakness of ours, has thus pictured the temporal origin of evil). But the rational origin of this perversion of our will whereby it makes lower incentives supreme among its maxims, that is, of the propensity to evil, remains inscrutable to us, because this propensity itself must be set down to our account and because, as a result, that ultimate ground of all maxims would in turn involve the adoption of an evil maxim (as its basis). 3

It is in this setting that we must see Brunner's refusal to consider the origin of sin, and his corresponding contention that such a procedure only serves to minimize the present reality of sin which is the proper concern of theology.

1 Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, pp. 34-5.

2 MiW p. 127. E.T. p. 126.

3 Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, p. 38.

Brunner's intention in denying the justification of speculation on the origin of sin is clear. In order to maintain the reality of personal responsibility he is compelled to stress the fact that sin is only conceivable in terms of freedom. Thus the result of his analysis is the same as that achieved by Kant and Søren Kierkegaard before him, namely, that sin can be explained only in terms of itself.¹ Kierkegaard, whose development of this theme is applauded by Brunner,² has presented this formulation as the "whole substance" of the Adam story.

Sin came into the world by a sin. If this were not so, then sin would have come in as something accidental, which man would do well not to try to explain. The difficulty for the understanding is precisely the triumph of the explanation, its profound consistency in representing that sin presupposes itself, that by the fact that it is, it is presupposed.³

The common feature in all these accounts of the inexplicability of sin in any way other than in terms of sin itself, is the recognition that sin is only intelligible within the context of freedom. But within this common concern to protect the doctrine of sin from every causal determinant, there is an equally significant divergence between the Kantian and the Kierkegaardian presentations. In Kant's analysis the necessity for defining sin within the context of freedom leads not only to a denial of any causal origin of sin, but to a denial of any temporal origin as well. In Kierkegaard the position is different. Sin is only to be defined within freedom - it is "the sudden", "the leap", the "qualitative" rather than the "quantitative"⁴ - but this does not exclude the necessity for speaking of a temporal origin of sin. In fact, Kierkegaard speaks quite definitely of Adam as "the first man",⁵ and distinguishes him from subsequent men by quantitative determinants as opposed to the qualitative leap which he shares with all men. That is, "the sinfulness of

1 Mitt. p. 120. E.T. p. 144; WGM p. 39; MiW p. 242.

2 MiW p. 393. E.T. p. 401.

3 Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, tr. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1944), p. 29.

4 Ibid. 5 Ibid. p. 36.

the race acquires a history. This however proceeds by quantitative determinants, while the individual by the qualitative leap participates in it." ¹ Thus for Kierkegaard the leap, the fact that sin can be conceived only in terms of freedom, does not preclude all reference to the temporal, to the quantitative background, and therefore to the temporal origin of sin.

The difficulty in Brunner's presentation consists in its affinity with the Kantian 'rational' explanation, an affinity which seems to overlook that element of 'history' and 'origin' which finds a place in Kierkegaard's analysis. Brunner's affinity with Kierkegaard seems to be confined to his appreciation for the definition of sin as a 'leap', an act of freedom which transcends all causal determination. This is the absurdity of sin. "For sin which is not break, irrational choice, absolutely incomprehensible riddle, grounded in nothing than the absurdity of the disobedience of the creature against the Creator, is not sin." ² Therefore sin precludes all causal explanation. It is to be seen only within the context of freedom. This is the great merit of Brunner's doctrine of sin, for the exposition of which he owes a considerable debt to both Kant and Kierkegaard. Nevertheless, the denial of every causal explanation of the origin of sin does not automatically imply the illegitimacy of every concrete affirmation concerning the beginning of sin, as Kierkegaard's analysis shows. The difficulty in Brunner's account, which follows very closely on Kant's analysis, consists in the fact that this implication seems to be uncritically assumed. Kant's analysis is pervaded by the dichotomy of the noumenal and phenomenal worlds in which the former is defined as the sphere of freedom and the latter as that of cause and effect. Now if the temporal is defined as the sphere of cause and effect, and sin is located within the sphere of freedom, then obviously it

¹ Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 31.

² M&W p. 242.

is ridiculous to speak of a temporal origin of sin. This we take to be the essence of Kant's distinction between the temporal and the rational origin. On this account, sin can only properly be dealt with in terms of the rational, the sphere of freedom which transcends the causality of the temporal, the sphere of the noumenal world. But this position is more reflective of idealistic dualism, than of the "historical" faith of the Old and New Testaments. It is impossible, therefore, to accept Brunner's contention that the attempt to present the doctrine of the Fall as an explanation of the origin of sin shows that one has "confused the existential 'whence?' with the causal-metaphysical 'whence?'.¹" This emphasis on the 'existential' to the neglect of the 'historical' represents a serious defect in Brunner's doctrine of sin. It is not wholly true that: "The theme of the Bible is not the historical origin of sin, but the universal and irresistible power of sin as affecting man's being."²

Having accentuated this strand in Brunner's thought, we must hasten to add that his position is not quite as simple as this analysis would suggest. It is not the case that he simply equates the temporal and the causal, although this often seems to be the case. He expressly criticizes: "Schlatter's abandonment of all attempts to construct any doctrine of Original Sin or of the Fall is a far too summary empiricism."³ A further indication of his divergence from the position outlined above is suggested in his references to the importance of the tempter in the Genesis narrative.

Man does not sin like Satan himself, purely out of defiance and rebellion. He is led astray by sin. Evil forces were already there before him; man is not great enough to discover sin and introduce it into the world. But man is led astray

¹ Mitt. 115n. E.T. p. 140n. The criticism here is of Schlatter's "erroneous view that in the doctrine of the Fall there is an attempt to explain the origin of Evil", but it leaves no doubt that Brunner directs this criticism against the procedure of defining the origin of sin in general.

² MiW p. 121n. E.T. p. 120n.

³ Gu0 p. 585. E.T. p. 606.

in such a way that once desire is aroused, it militates against confidence in God. The sin of man is no purely spiritual matter, but it always takes place through the medium of the desires of the senses. 1

This concern to appreciate the sensual element in sin may be an indication of Brunner's superiority to the noumenal-phenomenal dualism in which sin is defined wholly in terms of the supra-sensual character of man. In any event, the parallel between the Kantian "rational" doctrine of sin which refuses to consider anything but a "rational origin" of sin, and Brunner's doctrine of the inexplicable nature of sin, is not as close as our previous analysis has suggested. Yet it may be too close to do justice to the "historical" perspective of the Old and New Testaments. The final decision on the success of Brunner's formulation of the doctrine of the Fall will depend upon an analysis of the concept by which he apparently avoids a causal explanation of the origin of sin, and an idealistic freedom explanation of the origin of sin, the concept of Urgeschichte.

C. URGESCHICHTE AND HISTORY

a. Brunner's Change of Position

Part of the difficulty encountered in the preceding analysis of Brunner's refusal to contemplate an "origin of sin" stems from the fact that he has changed his position regarding the reality involved in the Christian doctrine of the Fall. He has acknowledged that his early discussions of the Fall doctrine dealt with a transcendental Adam and a Fall which is more Platonic than Christian.

Those who take this view posit a "pre-existent" Adam, and a meta-historical, or transcendental Fall of this "Adam", thus combining Platonist and Kantian ideas with the Biblical truth of the first

1 MiW pp. 132-3. E.T. p. 131; Cf. also DII pp. 125-6, 162f. E.T. pp. 107-8, 139f.

human being, created by God and fallen away from God. In so doing they wipe out the difference between such a transcendental view of Adam and the Augustinian, historical, view by describing the Genesis story as a "legend", or something of that kind. The gain is evident: all the impossibilities connected with a view of "Adam" as an historical figure have been eliminated, and this view does not clash with the modern view of time and space. But the price which we pay for this solution is too high: it leads us into a "platonizing" view of Creation as a whole, which must have a disastrous effect on the doctrine of Sin and the Fall.

.... In any case, this metaphysical theory cannot base itself upon the Bible, for the Bible certainly does not mean such a transcendental figure of Adam - neither in the version in Genesis nor in the teaching of St. Paul - nor a transcendental Fall of man. Some of us for a time followed this bypath; but we must describe it as a speculation which is foreign to the message of the Bible as a whole, and in essentials it contradicts it. 1

At first sight it might seem as though this change of position solves the basic issues raised in the preceding analysis. However, before we assent to such a conclusion, we must see the alternative Brunner proposes as a replacement for the concept of a transcendental Fall.

b. Urgeschichte and the "Fall"

The key concept in Brunner's presentation of the doctrine of the Fall is the concept of Urgeschichte, primal history, which apparently avoids a supra-historical doctrine of a transcendental Fall into history by affirming a dialectical relationship between time and eternity. "The Old Testament begins its account of the Prophetic revelation of the Covenant in Israel with an 'Ur-geschichte' or primal history, which precedes that of Israel, and the revelation of the Covenant."² Primal history is that twilight-zone preceding history proper. It is also the continual source of history, the invisible background behind the visible actions which history records.³ As such it is the logical correlate of general revelation.⁴ It is the sphere of man's relation to God, as opposed to the merely historical, the temporal.

1 DII pp. 59-60. E.T. pp. 51-2; Cf. also p. 117. E.T. p. 101.

2 DI E.T. p. 17.

3 "Der Sündenfall", p. 997.

4 DI E.T. p. 17.

The term, Urgeschichte, has enjoyed a prominence among German theologians as a concept which preserves the super-natural character of the events of faith, and at the same time firmly anchors these events in the historical sphere.

By Urgeschichte is meant that point in actual and empirical history where reality in its approach to man, as it were, definitely arrives, where it speaks to man, makes him the subject of address, and elicits from him that response of faith in which his whole being is involved in crisis. Thus revelation is urgeschichtlich, super-historical. It is not historical in the ordinary sense, for no piece of history as such can be revelation. Nevertheless it is in history, for revelation is no mere mystical experience but a real coming of God, a divine event which is a world event. 1

This would seem to define the basic intention and meaning of Urgeschichte as Brunner employs it.

This category of Urgeschichte is unknown to the present day inquirer in so far as he approaches the Bible with mere humanistic, not with Christian, assumptions. For the humanistic there is only the alternative: thought-truth (idea) or perceived-truth (appearance). But the basic Christian category is precisely the annulment of this antithesis: the Logos, the 'become flesh', the revelation reality as one which can be neither seen nor thought, but only believed. 2

It is Brunner's contention that through the mighty act of God in history, the Incarnation, we are given a perspective from which we can perceive the dimension behind history as we know it, the dimension of Urgeschichte. "It is this third, 'middle' point of the Urgeschichte, the revelation of God in Christ, this event, open not to observation but to belief, between Creation and Fall on the one hand and a redemption out of history on the other - it is this through which it becomes possible for us to speak of 'Urgeschichte' at all."³ Through the Incarnation in which the Urgeschichte is revealed in history, it becomes possible to speak of that invisible background behind all history. On this basis, the concept of Urgeschichte is expanded to

1 F.W. Camfield, Revelation and the Holy Spirit (London, 1933), p. 217.

2 "Der Stündenfall", p. 998.

3 RPh p. 64. E.T. pp. 126-7.

include both the beginning and end of history, Creation and Fall on the one hand, and the consummation on the other. Brunner delineates four specific points in the Christian faith - the Creation, the Fall, Reconciliation and Redemption. The concept which unites all four is that of Urgeschichte.

"These four points belong to the same 'dimension': they all refer to the dividing line between time and eternity; not, however, as a static relation, but as an actual event."¹

This presentation of the four main points of the Christian faith raises many problems. The most important of these is the question of the adequacy of the concept of Urgeschichte as a category for the Incarnation. But the problem which concerns us at present is the question of the adequacy of the concept of Urgeschichte as a category for the Fall. The initial difficulty which the concept raises is that of its ability to distinguish between Creation and Fall. Obviously the agents of Creation and of the Fall are different. Creation is God's act; the Fall is man's act. Brunner makes this distinction in terms of the affirmation that the Fall is primal history because it cannot be reduced to historical explanation.

Fall and primal state belong to primal history because what is involved therein is an event between God and human personality, which as such cannot be observed historically. Only its operation belongs to the empirical world of perception - the primal event itself lies in another dimension. 2

On this rendering Creation and Fall can be said to be on the same plane, but we are still left with the problem of stating how this plane is related to the historical plane as we know it. It is this problem which is most difficult in any account of the Fall.

1 Mitt. p. 348. E.T. p. 388.

2 "Der Sündenfall", p. 997.

c. The Fall and "History"

When we turn to the question of the relation of the urgeschichtlich Fall to the historical plane as we know it, we encounter what appears to be a contradiction in Brunner's presentation. On the one hand, Brunner speaks of the Fall as a supra-temporal event - "Guilt knows no temporal beginning. Guiltlessness lies on the other side of time."¹ On the other hand, he asserts:

The temporal is just as much part of our creaturely existence as the finite. ... it would be a great error to equate the temporal with that which passes away, and hence to say that the temporal is a consequence of the Fall - that owing to the Fall, through sin, man falls into a temporal existence. The temporal is the essence of that which is created; as creatures we are temporal, all is temporal. 2

The same contradiction can be illustrated from Brunner's writings in terms of the concept of history. On the one hand, the Fall is described as pre-historical.

The symbol of all actual - but not true - creation of culture is the tower of Babel. It is the repetition in history of that process which precedes all history as a real a priori: the event which is known as the Fall. In the Tower of Babel the Fall became historically concrete. 3

On the other hand, Brunner acknowledges that history is a predicate of Creation, and not of the Fall.

Although the whole of the historical life of man stands under the shadow of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, yet the fact of being historical is not regarded as a result of the Fall. The Bible makes none of those suggestions which later on became the subject of theological speculation, which were secretly inspired by the Platonic myth of the Fall. Historicity belongs to the nature of the Humanus, for it is part of his nature that he must make his own decisions, and that he can do so, that he shapes his own life and does not vegetate. 4

Two comments may be made on this apparent contradiction in Brunner's presentation of the Fall as primal history. First, it may be seen as an effort to distinguish between 'history' as God intended and 'history' as we

1 Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube, p. 110.

2 DII p. 19. E.T. p. 15. 3 GuO p. 475. E.T. p. 488.

4 DII p. 231. E.T. p. 196.

know it from this side of the Fall.

Faith has to do with the "false" world that corresponds with the falsehood of sin. We do not know what a true creation would be like, any more than we know what a true man would be like. ¹

On this rendering, the Fall could be considered to be historical, but it cannot be defined in terms of history as we know it because "the historical world which we know and call such begins this side of the origin-condition as a result of the Fall and is concluded through the redemption."² This would seem to indicate that the apparent contradiction involved in the affirmation of a pre-historical Fall and the denial of a Fall into history is only an apparent, and not a real, contradiction. The Fall is pre-historical in that it precedes history as we know it, but it is not a Fall into history because the history which we know is a result of the Fall, and not history as it was before the Fall and would still be had the Fall not happened.

Unfortunately, Brunner's concept of Urgeschichte cannot be reconciled with history as we know it quite so easily as this. For in spite of what one may say about the impossibility of comprehending pure history, history untainted by the Fall, one fact must be affirmed, namely, that history in any form, pre-Fall or post-Fall, involves extension in time. Brunner himself applauds Augustine's foresight in anticipating the modern conception of time in his assertion that time was created with the world.³ If we accept this, as we must, then pre-Fall history must share this temporal extension with what we know as history from this side of the Fall, regardless of the other differences we may be compelled to acknowledge. But this is precisely the difficulty in Brunner's presentation. "The Primitive State is not an historical period, but an historical moment, the moment of the Divinely

¹ RPh p. 41. E.T. p. 84.

² "Die Erde dreht sich", p. 114.

³ "The Christian Understanding of Time", SJofTh, 4, No. 1 (1951), p. 6.

created origin, which we only know in connexion with its contrast, with sin."¹ Therefore primal history is not distinguished from the history which we know simply because of the absence of sin in it, but also because of the absence of time. Brunner does make some concession to the "historical" in his description of the Fall as a "moment". But it is questionable whether this concession is adequate. Undoubtedly, in dealing with the Fall we are dealing with a reality which transcends the historical as we know it. Not only is it urgeschichtlich in the same sense as the Exodus, or even the Incarnation, but it is also urgeschichtlich in that it is "non-historical". Yet it is "non-historical" because we do not know what is involved, and not because it does not concern the historical plane as we know it. Thus while we cannot define "the Fall", we must affirm its reality as a "historical" event. Something has happened between us and the Good Creation which has inverted the divine economy. The designation of this "something" as an urgeschichtlich moment may not be an adequate concession to the historical reality of the reversing event. For this designation seems to suggest a "value judgment" rather than a historical event. This is the problem of the "two histories" which enjoys such prominence among German theologians, a problem which has been curtly summarized by the British theologian, Alan Richardson.

It is sometimes said that it is a defect of the English language that it has only one word to do duty for the two German words, Historie, the merely historical, and Geschichte, the significantly historical. But at least the English usage helps to remind us that there is only one history and to prevent us from thinking of an abstract history, in which facts have no existential significance, alongside a supra-historical sphere which lies outside the scope of historical scholarship. 2

We have seen that Urgeschichte, by definition, involves the sphere of Historie,

1 MiW p. 113. E.T. p. 111.

2 Alan Richardson, History Sacred and Profane (London, 1964), p. 155nl.

but the designation of this reference as a "moment" may not be sufficient to indicate the historical nature of the Fall. "This history [i.e. primal history] is not historically tangible, is not extended historically in time, but ... constitutes the invisible element in this definite historical element."¹ Therefore we are led to the second comment which must be made with regard to the apparent contradiction in Brunner's presentation of the Fall as primal history. This comment is that there is involved here not only an apparent, but a real, contradiction. It is instructive to note the occurrence of these respective elements in the contradiction in the corpus of Brunner's writings. The quotations which describe the Fall as pre-temporal and pre-historical occur prior to the disavowal of any attempt to construct a theory of a transcendental Fall in Dogmatik II. The quotations which link temporality and historicity with Creation occur in Dogmatik II itself. It would be very easy to overestimate the importance of this distinction, but, realizing this, we might venture the suggestion that it represents a suspicion on Brunner's part with regard to the legitimacy of the concept of primal history as a category for denoting the Fall.

d. Brunner's Change of Position and Urgeschichte

In Dogmatik II Brunner confessed to having presented a Platonic doctrine of a transcendental Fall in his previous writings. We have also seen that there is a difference in emphasis between his earlier utterances with regard to the "historicity" and "temporality" of the Fall, and those in Dogmatik II. One further fact must now be noticed. The term Urgeschichte does not occur in Volumes II and III of the Dogmatik. This means that it does not occur after Brunner's disavowal of any attempt to construct a

¹ Mitt. p. 349n. E.T. p. 389n.

doctrine of a transcendental Fall. This would seem to suggest that Urgeschichte is to be regarded as a concept associated with that concept of the Fall which Brunner has rejected. However, a very similar concept is to be found in Dogmatik II in terms of Brunner's presentation of the doctrine of Creation. His emphasis on the creatio continua as the invisible background of evolution bears a striking resemblance to the concept of Urgeschichte as the invisible background of visible history.

The Creation is the invisible background of Evolution; Evolution is the visible foreground of Creation. Faith alone grasps that invisible aspect; science grasps this visible aspect. Evolution is the mechanism of creation; creation is the spiritual source and the Final Cause of Evolution. 1

Disregarding for the moment the aspects of this formulation which distinguish it from the concept of Urgeschichte, we may note the striking parallel between the two conceptions. The definition of Creation as the invisible background of evolution bears an unmistakable parallel to the definition of Urgeschichte as the invisible background of history. "The Creation and the Fall both lie behind the historical visible actuality, as their pre-suppositions which are always present, and are already being expressed in the historical sphere."² This is the essential meaning of the concept of Urgeschichte as it is presented in Brunner's writings prior to Dogmatik II. But the similarity between the concept of Urgeschichte and the notion of creatio continua does not seem to extend beyond the subject of Creation. We might say that the parallel between Urgeschichte, as it is employed in the pre-Dogmatik II writings, and the notion of creatio continua in Dogmatik II seems to be both positive and negative. The positive parallel consists in the form which both concepts share. Both Creation and Urgeschichte involve a basic reality which

1 DII p. 48. E.T. p. 40.

is inscrutable from the observation of its external workings in the historical world. The negative parallel consists in the matter which is involved in the respective concepts. We can equate the concept of Creation in Dogmatik II with the concept of Urgeschichte in so far as Urgeschichte is employed to expound the doctrine of Creation in the pre-Dogmatik II writings, but we can find no content for the concept from Brunner's post-Dogmatik II writings which suggests a parallel to Urgeschichte as it was employed in the pre-Dogmatik II writings to define the Fall. This means that Brunner's rejection of all attempts to construct a theory of a transcendental Fall does involve the rejection of the concept of Urgeschichte. Nevertheless, the rejection of the concept of Urgeschichte to denote the Fall is not absolute. That is to say, there is a remnant of the concept to be seen in Dogmatik II in terms of Brunner's concept of "Ur-Sunde", primal sin.¹ Apparently we are not to conceive of this primal sin in terms of the primal Fall as it was presented in the pre-Dogmatik II writings, but just how we are to conceive it otherwise is not at all clear. The situation seems to be that Brunner has rejected the concept of Urgeschichte as inadequate to denote the Fall, but has not replaced it with a clear alternative.

The problem which we encountered in discussing Brunner's refusal to consider the origin of sin was there presented as an uncritical assumption of the Kantian dualism of the noumenal and phenomenal worlds whereby causality was identified with temporality, so that in denying a causal origin of sin a temporal origin was thereby denied as well. Brunner now seems to recognize something of the problem in this position, in his recognition of the impossibility of affirming a transcendental Fall, in spite of its attractiveness.

¹ DII pp. 128, 130. E.T. pp. 109, 111.

This theory has the great advantage of making us independent of limitations of time and space. The Fall is then on the borderline of this historical world of ours. Moreover, through sin, humanity has "fallen" into this concrete historical world. Thus it is not necessary to ask the question "When?" since this belongs to the temporal sphere already, any more than it is necessary to ask the question "How?" Thus an intelligible meta-historical metaphysical "Fall" would correspond to the intelligible concept of the person. 1

In spite of this recognition, it seems that no new position is here involved. What is involved is the recognition of the inadequacy of the old position. The problem is still with us. The discrepancy between the Good Creation and the fallen world which needs redemption forces to speak in terms of a "Fall", but what we mean when we say this is open to speculation.

We cannot speak of sin without speaking of the Fall, that is, without understanding sin as apostasy and rebellion. ... But the question of When and How of the Fall is one which cannot be answered from the standpoint of human history, either by the individual or by humanity as a whole. 2

Brunner recognized the necessity for affirming a "reversing event" within the created world. He also recognized the difficulties which this required affirmation involves because of its inaccessibility in the childhood of the race, and also because of the fact that we stand on this side of the event itself. But his acceptance of a transcendental Fall into history in the formidable period of his authorship did not permit him to explore the real difficulties which the Fall doctrine presents.

II. ORIGINAL SIN

The result of the analysis of Brunner's presentation of the Fall would seem to demand the conclusion that Brunner recognized the necessity for affirming a "reversing event" late in his theological career. Another way of stating the same conclusion would be to recognize that Brunner's

1 DII p. 117. E.T. p. 101.

2 Ibid. p. 116. E.T. p. 100.

concern throughout the whole corpus of his writing has been the affirmation of the "fallenness" of humanity, rather than a concern to affirm the origin of this fallenness, i.e. a doctrine of the Fall, as such. As a result, the doctrine of Original Sin plays a much more prominent role in Brunner's writings than does the doctrine of the Fall, at least in terms of explicit reference.

We may note two facts about the doctrine of Original Sin, as Brunner conceives it, by way of introduction. First, it is not a Biblical doctrine in the strict sense of the word. "The theory of Original Sin which has been the standard one for the Christian doctrine of man, from the time of St. Augustine, is completely foreign to the thought of the Bible."¹ The basis of this assertion is the conviction that the Bible emphasizes the solidarity in sin, whereas the Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin presumes to explain this solidarity in terms of natural heredity.

In Adam all have sinned - that is the Biblical statement; but how? The Bible does not tell us that. The doctrine of Original Sin is read into it. 2

This leads to the second fact which must be noted, namely, that in spite of its weakness, the doctrine of Original Sin is an expression of an essential element in Christian theology.

In the Christian religion man knows that he has fallen away collectively from God, and that this Fall, as a sinful and guilty act, is perpetually and inevitable repeated. Neither the responsibility nor the necessity are denied; on the contrary, here alone is sin fully personal, and at the same time grasped in all its unavoidable force. 3

This, then, is essentially the concern of the doctrine of Original Sin - the inevitability of sin on the one hand, and the responsibility for sin on the other. Brunner's dissatisfaction with the traditional Augustinian

¹ DII p. 119. E.T. p. 103.

² MIW p. 143. E.T. p. 142.

³ Mitt. pp. 122-3. E.T. p. 147; Cf. also WGM p. 41.

presentation of this double-sided doctrine compels him to reformulate its essential content. Our task, therefore, is to examine his reformulation with a view to assessing its adequacy in presenting both aspects of the doctrine.

A. INEVITABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

a. Brunner's Dissatisfaction with the Augustinian Doctrine

Since Brunner has concerned himself with the doctrine of Original Sin throughout his whole authorship, we cannot expect to find any dramatic reversal of position with regard to the doctrine such as we have found in his treatment of the doctrine of the Fall. Quite the contrary, Brunner has consistently affirmed the two-fold content of the doctrine of Original Sin - the inevitability of sin and the responsibility for sin.

The Biblical revelation ... shows us both in one, since it tells us that we are sinners, that means human beings who not only sin now and then, occasionally - that is, every time we do not do the good - but whose very being is defined as sin; but this also means human beings who are fully responsible for all the evil they do, and for the evil in their nature as well. ¹

Indeed, Brunner's refusal to render this contradictory doctrine intelligible, by a clear definition of the relationship existing between inevitability and responsibility, makes his presentation very unsatisfactory from a logical point of view, and frustrating in the extreme for anyone who desires a simple harmonization of these two contradictory affirmations. Yet we must accept Brunner's contention that both inevitability and responsibility must be affirmed, in spite of the logical contradiction which this involves. In spite of this contention, however, a change of emphasis is discernible in Brunner's presentation of these two aspects of the doctrine of Original Sin. This

¹ MiW p. 118. E.T. p. 116.

change is perceptible in at least two respects. First, there is a change from a concern for totality 'in Adam' to a concern for individual responsibility. In his early writings Brunner emphasizes the solidarity in Adam's sin, and asserts that it is only in the recognition of this solidarity that the seriousness of sin is truly perceived. "Therewith is sin first grasped as wholly inconceivable, and at the same time as wholly serious, as indivisible common guilt which precedes every historic moment of the individual as the totality always already present as its 'a priori'."¹ In contrast to this Augustinian-like pronouncement, Brunner's more developed position, as reflected in Der Mensch im Widerspruch, reveals a definite dissatisfaction with this "wholly serious" aspect of the doctrine of Original Sin. "The stumbling-block of the ecclesiastical doctrine ... consists in this, that we are made responsible for a sin which someone else has committed."² No longer does faith grasp the solidarity 'in Adam'; rather this is now the stumbling-block to faith. This predicating of responsibility for the act of another is what we might describe as an ethical stumbling-block. It is a central maxim of the moral that responsibility can be predicated only in terms of avoidability. Moral responsibility implies the free choice of that for which one is held responsible. Brunner contrasts this ethical stumbling-block with the stumbling-block of the New Testament, which is always "the desire to evade responsibility towards God, or the evasion of complete dependence upon His action."³ It is Brunner's contention that the traditional doctrine of Original Sin transposes this stumbling-block of the New Testament, which proclaims man's responsibility towards God, into the ethical stumbling-block of an unjust accusation of responsibility for the sin of another. The result is that the just accusation of the New Testament can be dismissed as

1 "Die Erde dreht sich", p. 115.

2 MiW p. 144. E. T. p. 143.

3 Ibid.

an unjust accusation by an appeal to the traditional doctrine.

The change in emphasis is evident also in another aspect of the doctrine, namely, in terms of the 'freedom of sin'. In Gott und Mensch Brunner seems to be more impressed by the 'compulsion of sin' than by the 'freedom of sin'.

Just because sin changes the essential being of man [his relation to God] freedom in the original sense is lost through it. The sinner is a man who is no longer able not to sin. Thus freedom is indeed the presupposition of every sin, but of no sin can it be said that it happens in freedom, but only that it happens under the compulsion of sin. 1

This emphasis is reversed in the course of Brunner's writings, so that in Dogmatik II he can say: "the sinner is in principle capable of avoiding every particular sin. But what he cannot do is this: he cannot not be a sinner."²

The explanation for this change in emphasis is to be found in Brunner's increasing dissatisfaction with the traditional Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin. Brunner's assessment of Augustine's doctrine is both positive and negative.

... his contribution to the solution has no rival. But his solution can no longer satisfy us, once our feeling for personal responsibility has been awakened. 3

On this basis, Brunner criticizes the Augustinian doctrine as a naturalization of sin, consisting in the transposition of sin from the personal sphere of responsibility to the natural sphere of heredity. "The idea of inherited sin is ... a most inadequate expression ... [because] ... it leads to the mistaken view of Sin as something which can be described in naturalistic, deterministic terms, and therefore as something which cannot be avoided."⁴ The 'avoidability' of sin is thus the crucial concept in Brunner's criticism

1 GuM p. 85. E.T. p. 157.

2 DII pp. 130-1. E.T. p. 111.

3 MiW pp. 122-3. E.T. p. 121.

4 DII p. 123. E.T. p. 106.

of the Augustinian doctrine, and in his reformulation of the doctrine of Original Sin.

However, Brunner's assessment of the Augustinian doctrine also has a positive side. It will be recalled that he describes Augustine's solution as "unrivaled", until the feeling for personal responsibility has been awakened. The content of this positive appreciation of the Augustinian doctrine consists in the appreciation for that hereditary element in it which he so strenuously opposes. It is not the case that Brunner simply dismisses the Augustinian doctrine in the interests of personal responsibility. On the contrary, he demonstrates positive appreciation for the hereditary factor in the doctrine of Original Sin.

The peccatum originis is certainly also inherited sin. The solidarity of being involved in sin manifests itself also in 'inheritance'. What we reject is this: the one-sidedness with which this one element is made the prevailing and finally, the only element in the doctrine. 1

The problem involved here is the question of the relation between heredity and freedom. The term heredity implies a determination over which man has no control. Brunner wishes to maintain the fact of heredity as a legitimate ingredient in the doctrine of Original Sin, without affirming the unavoidable determinateness implied therein. It is his concern to affirm both solidarity in sin and personal responsibility, and to do this in such a way that the responsibility is in no way minimized.

b. Brunner's Concern for "Responsibility"

In the light of his dissatisfaction with the Augustinian doctrine, we can appreciate Brunner's emphasis on the freedom of sin and the responsibility for sin. In order to avoid a deterministic doctrine of Original Sin,

1 MiW p. 124. E.T. p. 123; Cf. also p. 145. E.T. p. 144.

in which the inevitability of sin undermines every real possibility of seriously affirming the responsibility for sin, Brunner makes it his goal to reinstate the concept of responsibility for sin. He does this by defining sin as "act",¹ so that even the 'state' of sin must be seen as "act",² the act of continual rebellion against God and against His purpose for man. Consequently, the emphasis falls upon the guilt of the individual³ as opposed to the "indivisible common guilt",⁴ and on the freedom wherein "every particular sin in itself can be avoided"⁵ as opposed to the "compulsion of sin".⁶ The service which Brunner has thus rendered Christian theology in his re-appraisal of the doctrine of Original Sin is by no means inconsiderable. One might venture to suggest that he has provided us with new insight into the "just" condemnation which Scripture pronounces on us, and thereby has barred from the realms of possibility every attempt at evasion of responsibility by hiding behind the cloak of Adam's sin as though we were the innocent victims of circumstance.

If there is one element in the Biblical message which from time immemorial has been clear and beyond all doubt, it is this: sin and responsibility are inseparably connected, and there is no ascription of responsibility, no verdict of guilt, without accusation and proof of responsibility, that is, no one is pronounced guilty for something which he has not done. This is the postulate which clearly emerges from our survey of the history of the problem. 7

The insistence on affirming responsibility only within the context of freedom thus represents Brunner's particular contribution to the understanding of the doctrine of Original Sin.

At this point, however, we must qualify our analysis of Brunner's presentation. For just as the concern for responsible freedom represents the particular contribution of Brunner's thought on the doctrine of Original Sin, so also it represents the particular difficulties which his thought on

1 MiW pp. 118n2, 148-9. E.T. pp. 116n2, 148; DII p. 127. E.T. p. 109.

2 MiW p. 119. E.T. p. 117; WaB p. 104. E.T. p. 152. 3 DII p. 124. E.T. p. 106.

4 "Die Erde dreht sich", p. 115. 5 DII p. 131. E.T. p. 111.

6 GuM p. 85. E.T. p. 157. 7 MiW p. 130. E.T. pp. 128-9.

the doctrine raises. The assertion that Brunner refuses to reduce the two elements of the doctrine, inevitability and responsibility, to a logically palatable formula, and the assertion that his particular concern is to see responsibility in terms of freedom, suggest the difficulty with which his formulation is contending. To stress the freedom of sin whereby responsibility is justly predicated, without thereby weakening the contrary assertion of the inevitability of sin, is by no means a simple task. Consequently, Brunner's formulation of the doctrine presents certain difficulties which suggest that it is not entirely successful in maintaining the two aspects of the doctrine. The two most obvious difficulties are those which have been suggested in the reference to the change of emphasis detectible in Brunner's development of the doctrine. On the one hand, the transition from the concern of faith with Adam's guilt to the moral concern with the freely incurred guilt of the individual suggests an individualizing of that concept of solidarity which is an essential aspect of the traditional doctrine. On the other hand, the transition from the concern for the compulsion of sin to the moral concern for the freedom of sin whereby responsibility can be justly predicated of the individual suggests an atomization of that concept of totality which has also been an essential aspect of the traditional doctrine.

In both cases, the transition appears as one from faith to morality. The concern for responsibility, therefore, would seem to be essentially a moral concern. Viewed in this light, the Kantian antecedents loom large once again. It is hardly questionable that Brunner's "feeling for personal responsibility"¹, which prompts his dissatisfaction with the traditional

¹ MIW p. 123. E.T. p. 121.

Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin, has been awakened in large measure by the Kantian doctrine of moral responsibility. But the Kantian moral responsibility is essentially individualistic. It is no accident that, as Brunner notes, "the final motive ... in legal morality is self-respect."¹ The concept of responsibility which Kant presents is based on self-respect at the outset. It is a responsibility which presupposes the autonomy of the individual. That which Kant regards as the Good, is really the essence of the Christian doctrine of sin.

... his [i.e. Kant's] 'radical evil' is only one manifestation of sin, whose far more dangerous manifestation is precisely that which in the thought of Kant is regarded as the Good: the fact that man does good by his own efforts. 2

The difficulty in Brunner's whole presentation of the concept of responsibility is that, while recognizing that this Kantian concept of responsibility represents the antithesis of the Augustinian concept, he nevertheless accepts the Kantian concept as legitimate in the sphere of morality. "Responsibility is that which sets the individual as individual apart and makes him independent."³ The corollary of this is: "This responsibility is the basis of our freedom."⁴ As a result, Brunner can pass quite naturally from moral responsibility to responsibility towards God. Man's moral responsibility for sins becomes his responsibility for guilt.

Sin and guilt are inseparable. ... Sin and guilt are co-extensive. Now this is the paradox of sin, that man can, it is true, "do something about it" and thus he is guilty, but he cannot alter the fact that he is sinner. 5

The implication seems to be that man somehow transcends the bondage of sin. The significance of this continuity between moral responsibility and responsibility towards God will concern us in the next chapter when we consider

1 MIW p. 159. E.T. p. 158.

2 Ibid. p. 129. E.T. p. 128.

3 Ibid. p. 275. E.T. p. 279.

4 Ibid. p. 281. E.T. p. 286.

5 DII p. 124. E.T. p. 106.

the transition from sin to faith. For the present we may attempt some general observations on the implications of this "moral" background of Brunner's thought for his doctrine of Original Sin.

c. The General Tenor of Brunner's Approach

The general impression conveyed by the whole of Brunner's presentation of the doctrine of Original Sin is that his concern to emphasize responsibility is prohibitive of an adequate expression of the element of "totality" - both the totality of the race and the totality of the individual - traditionally affirmed in the doctrine of Original Sin. In terms of the totality of the race, the general impression is that the solidarity in Adam's sin is neglected in the interests of the guilt of the individual; that the Fall is neglected in the interests of my fall. In the concern to avoid the determinism which he detects in the traditional doctrine, Brunner apparently neglects the social significance of the Fall. Because sin involves a concept of solidarity as well as a concept of individuality, one would expect that responsibility for this situation should be in some way a shared responsibility. Indeed, Brunner affirms this.

In the Presence of Christ we cease to particularize sin and to apportion to each his share in the blame for sin. In Jesus Christ we see that this individualizing calculation of sin is Pharisaism, and therefore a lie. 1

Brunner recognizes that this refusal "to apportion to each his share in the blame for sin" is what distinguishes the Christian concept of the solidarity of sin from "the universality of sin as a numerical totality."² In spite of this recognition, however, Brunner apparently insists on establishing the Christian doctrine of responsibility on an individualistic basis, without seriously taking into account the significance of the social involvement of

1 DII p. 111. E.T. pp. 96-7.

2 Ibid. p. 110. E.T. p. 96.

individuals with one another for the concept of responsibility. In his concern to establish the fact that "no one is pronounced guilty for something which he has not done",¹ Brunner sees no alternative to "individual responsibility" other than "collective responsibilities", which in turn "are based upon the responsibilities of individuals".² It is paradoxical in the extreme that one who opposed both individualism and collectivism in the interests of the communal emphasis of the Christian faith, and to this end developed the I-Thou framework as the most adequate expression of the Christian conception of the solidarity of human life, should have failed to incorporate this in his concept of responsibility. For, as E. La B. Cherbonnier has noted, the concept of the communal nature of human life must certainly imply a concept of communal responsibility.

If man only becomes man in community, then it is not unreasonable to speak, as the Bible always does, of his communal destiny. This conception emphatically does not transfer all responsibility from the individual to an abstract entity like "the state". This would only make the state a scapegoat for sin which belonged properly to you and me. The point is rather that they are shared sins. Each individual bears responsibility but not an exclusive responsibility. ³

On occasion, Brunner refers to a communal responsibility which seems to approximate this position, but this is not integrated with the moral responsibility which represents his more fundamental concern. Therefore, the general impression conveyed by Brunner's treatment of the totality of sin in terms of the race is that his recognition that "in Jesus Christ we see that ... individualizing calculation of sin is Pharisi-ism, and therefore a lie"⁴ suggests the condemnation of his own system.

As the emphasis on responsible freedom presents difficulties for the concept of Original Sin in so far as it involves a concept of the totality

1 MiW p. 130. E.T. pp. 128-9.

2 Ibid. p. 275. E.T. p. 279.

3 E. La B. Cherbonnier, Hardness of Heart (New York, 1955), p. 138.

4 DII p. 111. E.T. pp. 96-7.

of the race, so the position is no less difficult with regard to the totality of the individual. Brunner affirms the Reformation concept of the totality of sin in terms of the individual in his assertion that "the meaning of sin, by its very nature affects the whole, because it aims at making the whole man free."¹ But this totality of sin does not destroy the freedom of sin, so that man is seduced into sin out of mere weakness of will. On the contrary, "man never sins purely out of weakness but always also in the fact that he 'lets himself go' in weakness."² Even in sin man remains the master. Sin is basically active. "Even in the dullest sinner there is still a spark of decision, of active positive negation which is not merely 'negative'."³ In his opposition to the doctrine of sin which emphasizes the natural fact of heredity, Brunner emphasizes the "rational" nature of sin whereby sin is seen as arising from the supra-natural nature of man.

Human sin always contains an element of frailty, of the non-spiritual, of the sense-element. ... But the more genius a man has, the closer his sin approaches the demonic. 4

The difficulty in this presentation is that it interprets totality in terms of the supra-natural, as the other doctrine interpreted totality in terms of the natural. This lends to Brunner's presentation a certain air of unreality in that it seems to suggest that all sin is "sin with a high hand", sin done in some measure of consciousness of sin. Kierkegaard has referred to the element of unreality in speaking of sin as though it were a general predicate which applied to all men in all circumstances. "The lives of most men, being determined by a dialectic of indifference, are so remote from the good (faith) that they are almost too spiritless to be called sin, yes, almost too spiritless to be called despair."⁵ This raises the whole question of the relation

1 DII pp. 107-8. E.T. p. 94. 2 MIW p. 132. E.T. p. 130.

3 Ibid. 4 DII p. 126. E.T. p. 108.

5 Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, tr. Walter Lowrie (New York, 1954), p. 232.

between sins and sin, between morality and faith. The general impression conveyed by Brunner's presentation of totality in terms of the totality of 'decision' suggests that consciousness of sin is not peculiar to the Christian faith, but is also a legitimate predicate of the moral.

The general impression, therefore, conveyed by Brunner's presentation of the doctrine of Original Sin is that in his concern to emphasize responsibility he has neglected the other aspect of the doctrine, the inevitability of sin. This appears in the apparent weakness of his concepts of the totality of the race and the totality of the individual as there are involved in the concept of sin. It is now our task to substantiate this general impression through an examination of these two aspects of totality -- the nos toti, the relationship between the individual and the race, and the ego totus, the relationship between sins and sin.

B. ADAM AND HUMANITY

a. Brunner's Reversal of Kierkegaard's Formula

Brunner's dissatisfaction with the emphasis on inheritance in the traditional doctrine of Original Sin leaves him with the problem of restating the essential content of the doctrine. The solution which he proposes consists in an application of the Kierkegaardian maxim that "it is part of the nature of man, that each of us is both 'the individual' and humanity."¹ In Brunner's estimation, this formulation provides the link between the good Creation and fallen humanity. It is a statement of both the solidarity in Creation and the solidarity in sin.² Therefore, it transcends the hereditary definition of the traditional doctrine of Original Sin. Sin is "transmitted" because

1 DII p. 112. E.T. p. 97.

2 MIW p. 142. E.T. p. 141.

of the solidarity of the race, but it can never be reduced to the terms of a hereditary principle. The doctrine of Original Sin is not to be formulated in terms of a biological process. Rather it is grounded in the very nature of human life as it has been created. The solidarity of creation is the basis for understanding the solidarity of the Fall.

The first observation which must be made about this formulation is that it is logically suspect. If "each of us is both 'the individual' and humanity", then apparently humanity, the race, is submerged in individualism. What the formula seems to be saying is that A is both A and B. Thus B (humanity) is a foreign element, and must be accounted for in A (each of us, or 'the individual'). Indeed, Brunner has charged Kierkegaard's re-interpretation of the doctrine of Original Sin, in which context this formula occurs, with precisely this weakness. "The fresh formulation of the doctrine of Original Sin which Kierkegaard has attempted in his work: Begriff der Angst, is too individualistic to be satisfactory ..." ¹ In the light of Brunner's extensive use of the formula, however, we suspect that this criticism is not directed specifically against the formula itself, but against Kierkegaard's employment of it. This is confirmed by a further reference to Kierkegaard's failure to escape individualism in which his weakness is traced to the neglect of that concept which is the antithesis of individualism, the concept of community. "It is true that in the thought of Kierkegaard the idea of 'community' does not get a fair deal, but in principle it is included in his category of 'the individual'." ² On the surface this seems to confirm the logical suspicion suggested by the formula - "the idea of 'community' .. [is] .. in principle ... included in his category of 'the individual'." This

¹ Gu0 p. 585. E.T. p. 606.

² M1W p. 281n. E.T. p. 286n.

certainly suggests the submergence of humanity in individualism. But Brunner's extensive employment of the formula, in spite of this charge of individualism against Kierkegaard's doctrine of Original Sin, should caution us against a facile dismissal of the formula itself. This caution should cause us to question the basis on which we have suggested that the formula is logically suspect. Obviously this basis has been the equation of 'the individual' with 'each of us'. Interpreted in this way, the charge of individualism is unavoidable. On the other hand, if we take seriously the contention that "the idea of 'community' .. [is] .. in principle ... included in his category of 'the individual'", then 'the individual' means something very different from 'each of us'. 'The individual' is then a concept which encompasses both our peculiar individuality and our solidarity in the community of creation and sin. Thus the logic of the formula is not A (each of us) is A (the individual) and B (humanity), but A (the individual) is a_1 (himself) and a_2 (humanity). Kierkegaard describes this as "the essential characteristic of human existence, that man is an individual and as such is at once himself and the whole race, in such wise that the whole race has part in the individual, and the individual has part in the whole race."¹

However, far from solving the problem of individualism, this re-interpretation of the formula reveals a depth of complexity formerly unperceived. For, if this latter formula escapes the charge of individualism in the definition of A (the individual) as encompassing both a_1 (the individuality of 'each of us') and a_2 (the solidarity of humanity), the former formula demands the charge of individualism in its equation of A (each of us) with A (the individual). Thus we may re-state the formula, A is A and

¹ Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 26.

B, as a_1 (each of us) is A (the individual) and a_2 (humanity). The difficulty here consists in the fact that this is precisely the formula which Brunner presents - "each of us is both 'the individual' and humanity."¹ In this representation the decisive concept is not 'the individual', but 'each of us'. Thus we are left with the peculiar situation that Brunner recognizes that "the idea of 'community' .. [is] .. in principle ... included in .. [Kierkegaard's] .. category of 'the individual'";² and yet subsumes this two-fold category, 'the individual', under the concept 'each of us'. Nor is this merely a slip of the pen on Brunner's part. He is quite consistent in his presentation of the formula. In spite of a direct reference to Kierkegaard's formula, as quoted above, in which Kierkegaard subsumes both individuality and community under the category of 'the individual', Brunner explicitly reverses the formula in saying: "'man whom God created is always both this individual and humanity' (Kierkegaard)."³ One further indication of the consistency in Brunner's reversing of the formula may be noted from his later writings, Dogmatik II, where he presents Kierkegaard's formula as the "statement that man is always both the individual as well as the species (Begriff der Angst, par. I)."⁴ The consistency with which Brunner presents this reversal of the formula suggests that there is more involved here than simply a question of terminology. One could conceivably defend this latter thesis, however, by contending that Brunner means by 'each of us' and by 'man whom God created' what Kierkegaard meant by 'the individual'. But on this interpretation, one would be required to explain why Brunner has

1 DII p. 112. E.T. p. 97. 2 MIW p. 281n. E.T. p. 286n.

3 MIW p. 141. E.T. p. 140. In a footnote, Brunner quotes Kierkegaard - "... die wesentliche Bestimmung menschlicher Existenz, dass der Mensch Individuum ist und als solches zugleich er selbst und das ganze Geschlecht, so dass das ganze Geschlecht an dem Individuum partizipiert und das Individuum an dem ganzen Geschlecht ..." - and yet in the body of the text he asserts: "'der Mensch, den Gott schuf, immer zugleich dieser Einzelne und die Menschheit' ist (Kierkegaard)."

4 DII p. 134. E.T. p. 117.

transferred the meaning of Kierkegaard's concept of 'the individual' to these other concepts. A more fruitful approach is to be found in terms of an analysis of Brunner's understanding of solidarity. This is not to abandon the problem here presented, but merely to postpone it until an appreciation of the intention behind Brunner's concept of the relationship between individuality and humanity is achieved.

b. Brunner's Intention is the Same as Kierkegaard's

If the charge of individualism can be directed against Brunner's formula for the relation between individuality and humanity, it certainly cannot be directed against the intention behind his adoption of this formula. Brunner's intention is precisely to oppose individualism by an emphasis on the communal nature of human life. This is clearly demonstrated in the remainder of one of the paragraphs in which Brunner reverses the Kierkegaardian formula.

The isolated individual is an abstraction, conceived by the reason which has been severed from the Word of God. 'The other' is not added to my nature after my nature, after I myself, as this particular individual, have been finished. But the other, the others, are interwoven with my nature. I am not man at all apart from others. I am not 'I' apart from the 'Thou'. As I cannot be a human being without a relation to God, without the Divine 'Thou', so also I cannot be man without the human 'Thou'. 1

A more definite rejection of individualism could hardly be imagined than that which is involved in this communal understanding of humanity. The content of Kierkegaard's 'individual' is here presented with the aid of the I-Thou framework of Ebner and Buber. 'The individual' who is both himself and the race is represented as the 'I-Thou' who is both the I and the Thou. Here, as in Kierkegaard's concept, individualism is precluded by definition, - "I

1 MLW p. 141. E.T. p. 140.

am not 'I' apart from the 'Thou'". Otherwise expressed, this means that personality is not a predicate of the I, but of the I-Thou. Personality is not synonymous with individuality, but rather embraces both individuality and humanity.

As we earlier said of the divine Thou, we must now say also of the human thou - man receives his true self only from the thou. ... Thus personality is not something individual, but it is real only in mutuality, in fellowship. Personality and fellowship are correlates, i.e. the one is not either thinkable or actual without the other. 1

Thus Brunner's concept of personality, and his concept of the I-Thou relation inherent in human life, are direct parallels to Kierkegaard's concept of 'the individual'. All three concepts include individuality and community by definition.

c. Explanation for the Reversal

We now return to the question of Brunner's reversal of Kierkegaard's formula for the relationship between individuality and humanity. An explanation for this reversal is demanded because of the conclusion that Brunner is really saying the same thing as Kierkegaard. In his representation of Kierkegaard's formula, 'the individual' (A) is both himself (a_1) and the race (a_2), Brunner reverses the terms by saying, each of us (a_1) is 'the individual' (A) and humanity (a_2). In his concept of personality, on the other hand, Brunner approximates Kierkegaard's formula by saying, personality (A) is individuality (a_1) and community (a_2). Obviously the two formulae are mutually exclusive. Either we have misrepresented Brunner in the first formula, or he is, in fact, maintaining two contradictory concepts of the relation between individuality and humanity. The latter alternative seems

1 GuM p. 88. E.T. pp. 161-2.

to offer the more promising avenue of investigation.

Brunner has made statements about personality which do not lend themselves to the formula indicated. For example, he has distinguished between "personality" and the "personal" in such a way as to suggest that there is some personal status apart from the concept of personality indicated. "The fact that this responsible personality 'before God' is one of human solidarity does not alter its personal character."¹ This seems to indicate that solidarity and personality are contradictory. The most obvious interpretation of the statement is that the personal is the individual, but because there are many individuals involved the responsibility is no less personal. This raises two questions - the question of the relationship between solidarity and universality, and the question of the relationship between the subject of responsibility and the source and object of responsibility. The latter is the topic of the next section, the question of the relationship between sins and sin, in which we shall have to consider the relationship between morality and faith. But because of its relation to the former, we must consider it briefly here.

Responsibility is a formal concept. It is meaningful only in terms of an explanation as to who is responsible, to whom he is responsible, and for what he is responsible. The immediate answer to all three questions is that every man is responsible for his fellowman before God. For "not to our fellow men are we responsible, but for them we are responsible to God."² This, then, is the solidarity of creation. As such it may be taken as the correlate of the concept of personality which embraces both individuality and community. Responsibility, like personality, is essentially a social

¹ DII p. 121. E.T. p. 104.

² "Freiheit als Verantwortlichkeit", p. 361.

concept. But the situation is complicated by the fact that this is really an abstract explanation of the human situation. Real humanity is not characterized by the solidarity of creation, but by the solidarity of sin. But in the solidarity of sin man denies his solidarity. "In sin we are bound together as a united body, just as we are bound together in the Creation, only with this difference, that - and this belongs to sin - we deny this solidarity in sin."¹ The problem now is that man no longer lives responsibly, but, in fact, denies his responsibility. As a result he is no longer personal, but wavers between an impersonal individualism and an impersonal collectivism. He makes himself the origin and goal of responsibility. In contrast to the responsibility of Creation, where every man is responsible to God for his fellowman, in the responsibility of sin every man is responsible to himself for himself. Thus responsibility has become irresponsibility. Herein, we reach the central difficulty in Brunner's formula, and, indeed, perhaps in his whole theology. In spite of the irresponsibility of sin, Brunner insists that man is still responsible. The fact that man is not responsible is overshadowed by the consideration that he should be responsible. As a result, the emphasis changes from the solidarity of human life to the individuality of human responsibility. The questions of the source and the object of responsibility are relegated to second place alongside the question of the subject of responsibility. Therefore the concept of responsibility changes. "Responsibility is that which sets the individual as individual apart and makes him independent."² The significance of this concentration on the subject of responsibility for the concept of the object of responsibility which Brunner develops must

¹ MiW p. 142. E.T. p. 141.

² Ibid. p. 275. E.T. p. 279.

await the next section when we consider the question of the relationship between morality and faith. The immediate problem is the significance of this concentration on the subject of responsibility for the question of solidarity.

We can now return to the question of the apparent abstraction of the personal from the previously defined sphere of personality. Personality is defined as a social reality, and yet Brunner says, "the fact that this responsible personality 'before God' is one of human solidarity does not alter its personal character."¹ The personal character, then, refers to the individual character of responsibility. The universality of sin is not explained by the solidarity of sin. In fact, there is no explanation of the doctrine of Original Sin at all. The inevitability of sin, and the responsibility for sin, are simply affirmed as two contradictory assertions. It will be recalled that this is what the Bible asserts, according to Brunner, - the universality of sin and the responsibility for sin, without explaining how the two are to be conceived together.

[The Bible] ... conceives sin, the contradiction, wholly ontologically, so that the whole nature of the individual human being, as well as the numerical totality of all human beings, is affected by it, and it is quite impossible to isolate the individual moment, or act, or individual human being; at the same time it conceives it as wholly personal and deliberate, so that nothing neutral, no natural element, is admitted as a ground of explanation. 2

It is not to be denied that we are here confronted with a real problem, the problem of the reconciliation of the inevitability of sin and responsibility for sin. But it seems that Brunner increases the problem, instead of illuminating it. The key term here is "the numerical totality of all human beings". Ultimately the solidarity in sin is reducible to the question of

1 DII p. 121. E.T. p. 104.

2 MW p. 119. E.T. p. 117.

the universality of sin. As such it must remain inexplicable. This clearly contradicts Brunner's recognition of the distinction between the Christian concept of the solidarity of sin and "the universality of sin as a numerical totality"¹. The real difficulty is that one wonders why Brunner bothered to appropriate Kierkegaard's formula for the relationship between individuality and humanity, and, in spite of his reversal of this formula, to approximate it in his concept of the 'I-Thou' relationship inherent in the nature of human life and in his concept of the social nature of personality.

d. Adam and Humanity

It is instructive to note the different uses of the formula as represented by Kierkegaard and Brunner. Kierkegaard developed the formula to account for Adam.

The prose of common sense is that the race is resolved numerically into a "one times one". The fantastic is that Adam enjoys the well-meant honour of being more than the whole race, or the ambiguous honour of standing outside the race. 2

To resolve this problem, Kierkegaard defined man as 'the individual', and included in that concept both individuality and solidarity. When Brunner employs the concept, however, it is not Adam with whom he is primarily concerned, but "the human beings who follow him". He describes Kierkegaard's formula as a reaction against the traditional doctrine whereby humanity is made responsible for the sin of Adam.

This led to the fact, as Kierkegaard points out, that the first man is singled out in a fantastic way from the series of all the human beings who follow him, and - what is far worse - the human beings who follow him in the course of history are in a fantastic way de-humanized. 3

The key phrase here is "what is far worse". The isolation of Adam from the

¹ DII p. 110. E.T. p. 96.

² Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 26.

³ MIV pp. 144-5. E.T. pp. 143-4.

rest of the race is secondary to the de-humanization of the rest of the race. This was not so for Kierkegaard. His primary concern was the singling-out of Adam. The difference in emphasis is thoroughly compatible with Brunner's reversal of Kierkegaard's formula. The difference between the formula, 'the individual' (A) is both himself (a_1) and the race (a_2), and the formula, each of us (a_1) is 'the individual' (A) and humanity (a_2), is the difference between solidarity and universality.

In discussing Brunner's difficulty in distinguishing a causal origin from a temporal origin, we suggested that he neglects the "historic" element in sin which Kierkegaard accounts for in his concept of the "quantitative determinants", as opposed to the "qualitative leap". This neglect also involves his refusal to consider Adam as in any way reflective of a temporal origin of sin. The result is that Kierkegaard's Adam, who is "the first man", becomes in Brunner the concept for the race. "'Adam' ... in the meaning of Christian theology, is the unity of humanity, not in the zoological sense, but in the sense of humanitas."¹ This would seem to indicate that Adam could be set in the third bracket of our formula, so that he may be symbolized by (a_2), giving us the equation - Adam (a_2) is the race (a_2). But Brunner does not simply equate Adam and the race. It is not the race as a unity which Brunner means here, but the race as a collective totality of individuals. He has explicitly stated elsewhere that "'Adam' is both the individual and humanity."² Thus Adam is to be set in the first bracket of our formula, so that he may be symbolized by (a_1), replacing 'each of us', and giving us the equation - Adam (a_1) is the individual (A) and the community (a_2). Thus with Adam, as with 'the individual', Kierkegaard's

¹ DII p. 96. E.T. p. 82.

² GuO p. 139. E.T. p. 155.

formula is reversed. Adam is not 'the individual' (A) and, as such, both himself (a_1) and the race (a_2); but he is each of us (a_1) and, as such, 'the individual' (A) and the community (a_2). The result is precisely what Kierkegaard sought to avoid. "He [i.e. Adam] is not essentially different from the race, for in that case there is no race; he is not the race, for in that case there is no race: he is himself and the race."¹ Brunner's Adam corresponds to this second alternative; he is the race, and the race as a numerical totality of individuals; he is each of us. As 'the individual' is subsumed under 'each of us', so Adam is divested of 'himself'. There is no Adam, except as 'each of us'. The final result is that the individual and the race are irreconcilable concepts.

e. The Significance of "Adam"

The discrepancy between this result and Brunner's intention demands an explanation. It is Brunner's intention to understand the individual and the race so that one is unthinkable without the other. Why, then, have they become unthinkable with each other? We might seek the answer to this question in Brunner's dissatisfaction with the traditional doctrine of Original Sin. It will be recalled that his reason for attempting a reformulation of the doctrine consists in the contention that Augustine reduced his explanation to the level of natural heredity, thereby propounding a determinism which destroys individual freedom and therefore individual responsibility. The contention is that Augustine's doctrine rests on a false exegesis of Romans 5:12ff. in which Augustine defined the $\epsilon\phi\tilde{\omega}\tilde{\nu}$ from the Latin in quo ("in whom" all have sinned) in terms of the hereditary fact of Adam's position as the head of the race (in lumbis Adami).² The exegetical question involved

¹ Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 27.

² MiW p. 121n. E.T. p. 119n.

here is well described by Brunner as "one of the most difficult tasks of Biblical theology."¹ But at least two things about the passage seem to be quite clear. On the one hand, Brunner's accusation of a false exegesis is entirely credible. The phrase ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον is more accurately translated "in that" (or "for that" or "inasmuch as") "all have sinned", rather than as the Latin suggests, "in whom all have sinned". The meaning of the passage is then, as Brunner suggests, "that each of us becomes a sinner by his own act."² On the other hand, the significance of Adam as the one man by whom sin entered the world is also clearly expressed in the text (ὡς δι' ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν). Herein lies the problem in Brunner's reformulation of the doctrine. He regards this reference to the origin of sin as a deviation from the consistent emphasis on the power of sin which is the essential Biblical conception. "The theme of the Bible is not the historical origin of sin, but the universal and irresistible power of sin as affecting man's being."³ On this basis, the historical significance of Adam is dissolved into a didactic significance, whereby Adam is not the originator of sin, temporally considered, but rather an illustration of the universal power of sin. "The story of Adam is one of the means by which Paul interprets the universality and the power of sin."⁴ The obvious conclusion, or rather the presupposition, is that each of us by our own actions is Adam.

Science stimulates us to find a positive and adequate form for the Biblical message of the origin of Creation and the Fall of man. Only thus, too, will it be possible to clarify and intensify our opposition to metaphysical evolutionism. Above all, by this new formulation it will become clear that when we talk about the origin of man we are not speaking of a certain man called Adam, who lived so many thousand years ago, but of myself, and of yourself, and of everyone else in the world. 5

1 MiW p. 12ln. E.T. p. 119n.

2 DII p. 114. E.T. p. 99.

3 MiW p. 12ln. E.T. p. 119n.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid. p. 91. E.T. p. 88.

The opposition to "metaphysical evolutionism", as we saw in considering the doctrine of the Fall, is Brunner's opposition to Schleiermacher's definition of sin as essentially connected with the sensual element of life, and its impeding of the development of the spiritual. We now see also that it is an opposition to the Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin. In terms of his opposition to Schleiermacher, we identified Brunner's concern with his rejection of a causal explanation of sin. This may also be said of his opposition to Augustine. In both cases, a causal explanation means a natural explanation. The difficulty, however, as often happens in a formulation which emerges in a polemical context, is that Brunner not only denies a causal explanation, but denies the significance of the natural as well. In considering Brunner's rejection of every attempt to speak of an origin of sin, we suggested that he appears to confuse the temporal with the causal, so that in denying a causal origin of sin a temporal origin was thereby denied as well. In the present consideration, we seem to be moving toward the conclusion that there is a confusion of the causal with the natural. Not only is the Fall divested of all temporal significance, but Original Sin suffers a similar fate as well in that each man is his own Adam. Not only does Brunner reject "the one-sidedness with which this one element [i.e. inheritance] is made the prevailing and, finally, the only element in the doctrine",¹ but rejects this element in itself in his rejection of Adam. Of course, Brunner cannot maintain this existentialized conception of Adam consistently. In fact, he specifically contradicts it on at least one occasion.

The stream of death has its origin in the fall of the first man. His fall is the fall of all, his death the death of all. Mankind is a unity, and over humanity rules the inexorable law

¹ MIW p. 124. E.T. p. 123.

of God that death is part of sin. So it was according to the story on the first pages of the Bible. In the second chapter of the book "In the beginning" (i.e. Genesis) the first man was told by God: You will die if you eat of the forbidden fruit. He did not obey the command, he wantonly laid hands on what God has reserved for himself. The fall was followed by the curse and the curse in turn by corruption. 1

The contrast between this thoroughly naive picture of Adam and the sophisticated picture of Adam as the unity of the race, is most striking. It is instructive to note that this naive interpretation occurs in Brunner's The Letter to the Romans, which was originally written for lay readers. Possibly this is the real test of a theologian's formulations.

Our conclusion, then, must be that Brunner fails to clarify the doctrine of Original Sin in terms of his definition of the relationship between Adam and humanity. The result is that Adam is humanity, and therefore the collectivism and individualism which he so strenuously wishes to deny remains the context of his own solution. In the end, the fact that we are 'sons of Adam' pales to insignificance beside the contention that we are, each one, 'Adam'. The irony of the whole situation is that Brunner reaches this impasse for precisely the same reason that Augustine's doctrine supposedly reached the conclusion that heredity is the determinative factor in the doctrine of Original Sin. That reason is the suspicion of the sensual. Presumably, in Augustine sin is considered to be inherent in sexuality, and in procreation. Therefore the "transmission" of sin through procreation is the dominant factor in the doctrine of Original Sin, and, as such, overshadows the opposite truth that man becomes a sinner by his own act. In Brunner, sin is divorced from the sensual in that the important consideration is the "decision" by which man becomes a sinner. Therefore

1 The Letter to the Romans, tr. H.A. Kennedy (London, 1961), p. 44.

the fact that man becomes a sinner by his own act is the dominant factor in the doctrine of Original Sin, and, as such, overshadows the opposite truth that man is bound in solidarity with all the sons of Adam.

C. SINS AND SIN

a. The Bondage of Sin: Ego Totus

The aspect of the doctrine of Original Sin which has concerned us thus far has been that of the totality of sin in terms of the race, the universality of sin and the solidarity in sin, the nos toti. We now turn to the other aspect of the totality of sin, the totality of sin in terms of the individual, the ego totus. Turning to the question of the ego totus, we find that Brunner affirms the concept in an uncompromising manner. "The meaning of sin, by its very nature, affects the whole, because it aims at making the whole man 'free'."¹ This would seem to indicate that we can refer to the sinner as being in a "state" of sin. Indeed, Brunner confirms this - "because it [i.e. sin] concerns God, the fact that this act takes place means that it has already become 'fate', something which 'we can do nothing about'."² Sin necessarily involves a new state of existence for man. Because sin involves man's relation to God, it means that once it takes place, it is unalterable from man's side, it becomes guilt. Man's self-chosen freedom becomes bondage. He becomes the slave of sin, doomed to be his own god. But all this can be said only as a secondary affirmation. The primary affirmation must always be that sin is act. "Sin never becomes a quality or even a substance. Sin is and remains an act."³ Indeed, "Sin, even as Original Sin, is always actus ..." ⁴ It is Brunner's contention that sin is

1 DII pp. 107-8. E.T. p. 94.

2 Ibid. p. 127. E.T. p. 109.

3 MIW p. 149. E.T. p. 148.

4 Ibid. p. 119n. E.T. p. 117n.

conceived in the Bible primarily as act, and only on that basis is it conceived as a 'state' or a force.

... both the Old Testament and the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels always speak of sin (or, more correctly, of sins) in the sense of act, and scarcely ever in the sense of state of being. ... Only against this background can the Johannine, and still more the Pauline, doctrine of sin be rightly understood, in which sin is mainly spoken of in the singular, as a state of being, as a force which dominates man. 1

The contention that the state of sin must be seen in the context of sin as act raises the question of the relation between sins and sin. The immediate reaction to Brunner's observation is that there is involved here a reversal of the traditional order in which sins proceed from the state of sin. Brunner's emphasis on the 'act' of sin reverses the order so that sin proceeds from sins. We have seen the difficulty which this involves in terms of the traditional emphasis on the solidarity of the race, namely, that Brunner minimizes the significance of the 'acts' of sin committed by others before me. The present concern is the totality of the individual, that aspect of the doctrine of sin which has traditionally been termed 'the bondage of sin'. Once again, the concern behind Brunner's presentation is the preservation of responsibility for sin against a causal explanation which reduces sin to a mechanical determinism. "The statement, 'man is a sinner', is neither the major term for the logical conclusion: thus all his acts are sinful, nor is the fact which it describes, the fact of being a sinner, the cause of his individual sinful actions."² The implication of this rejection of a logical or causal connection between sin and sins might seem to be that there is no definable relation between being a sinner and committing sins, but such is not the case. The logical and causal explanations are ruled out

1 MiW p. 118n. E.T. p. 116n.

2 Ibid. p. 147. E.T. p. 147.

in the interest of responsibility. The sinner is responsible because he himself sins freely, but he sins freely as a sinner. "A sinner is not a human being who has sinned a certain number of times; he is a human being who sins whatever he is doing."¹ On the surface, this statement might appear very susceptible to a causal interpretation. This is only a surface possibility, however, because Brunner does not say that being a sinner causes sins. Although a sinner "sins whatever he is doing", Brunner apparently reserves for him the right to choose his sins, - "the sinner is in principle capable of avoiding every particular sin. But what he cannot do is this: he cannot not be a sinner."² On this explanation, it is difficult to see why Brunner charges Ritschl with presenting "simply a form of Pelagianism, intensified by social psychology ... [in that he] ... allows for the possibility of resisting temptation, and in so doing he eliminates the main element from the Christian doctrine, that of totality."³ The contention is that "he applies the psychological theories of 'environment' to the problem of sin",⁴ and thus employs his concept of the 'kingdom of sin' in this socio-psychological sense as "the true content of the doctrine of Original Sin."⁵ Brunner's interpretation of Ritschl is that his doctrine "could equally well be expressed by the proverb: 'evil communications corrupt good manners'."⁶ One can appreciate that there is some justification for Brunner's assessment of Ritschl's doctrine. It is Ritschl's basic maxim that sin "has its sufficient ground in the self-determination of the individual will."⁷ But, on this basis, he defines a concept which seems to come very near to what Brunner means by the totality of sin - "'the law of sin' in the will is a

1 Mitt. p. 117. E.T. p. 142. 2 DII pp. 130-1. E.T. p. 111.

3 MiW p. 126. E.T. p. 125. 4 Ibid. p. 126. E.T. p. 124.

5 Ibid. p. 126. E.T. p. 125. 6 Ibid.

7 Albrecht Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, tr. H.R. Mackintosh and A.B. MacAulay (Edinburgh, 1900), p. 349.

result of the necessary reaction of every act of the will upon the direction of the will-power. Accordingly, by an unrestrained repetition of selfish resolves, there is generated an ungodly and selfish bias."¹ This certainly seems to be saying essentially what Brunner says in his reversal of the traditional order of sin and sins. A distinction may be attempted in terms of Brunner's phrase "in principle", when he says, "the sinner is in principle capable of avoiding every particular sin." This would then be seen as a theoretical representation designed to preserve the reality of responsibility. What it would then mean is that the sinner 'should be' capable of avoiding every particular sin, hence he is responsible, but in fact he is not capable of avoiding every particular sin. This possibility is excluded, however, by the subsequent assertion that "to be a sinner does not necessarily bring with it the particular sins; every particular sin in itself can be avoided."² The difficulty in distinguishing this from Ritschl's contention that "by an unrestrained repetition of selfish resolves, there is generated an ungodly and selfish bias"³ is increased immeasurably by the explanation as to what is involved in this possibility of avoiding sins.

If it [i.e. a particular sin] is committed this increases the compulsion to sin. If it be avoided, moral freedom is increased. But the sinful tendency never becomes absolute un-freedom, and moral freedom never becomes the freedom of not being a sinner. 4

The distinction between this and the Ritschlian position, so severely censured by Brunner, is not easily discernible. The essential difficulty seems to consist in the fact that Brunner, as well as Ritschl, is "a good Kantian".⁵ Both are working with a concept of freedom which is essentially moral. As a result, the explanation of the independence of sins from sin has the advantage of being able to account for the virtues of the natural man. The moral

1 Ritschl, p. 349. 2 DII p. 131. E.T. p. 111. 3 Ritschl, p. 349.
4 DII p. 131. E.T. pp. 111-112. 5 MW p. 125. E.T. p. 124.

freedom which can be increased as well as decreased, depending upon the refraining from, or the committing of, sins, accounts for the moral virtue which prevails without the bounds of the Christian Church. It relieves us of the embarrassment which has been noted by Paul Lehmann in reflecting that when "one has laboriously settled the credentials of believing, one always sooner or later is bound to encounter another human being who has never been baptized and appears to be totally unaware of, or indifferent to, the koinonia, yet who behaves like the Lord's anointed."¹ But in solving this difficulty, this explanation raises far more serious problems. The whole question of the relation between morality and faith becomes the crucial issue.

b. Morality and Faith

When we turn to Brunner's statements on the relation between morality and faith, we encounter, once again, the contradiction between a view of the totality of sin which approximates the Augustinian position, and a mediating view which claims a relative value for the moral as such. On the one hand, man has lost freedom for the good. In sin the will over-reaches itself, and becomes its own slave, free only for itself.

It is a will that wants to be more than it can, and over-reaches itself by this self-exaltation. In short, it is a freedom that, through over-estimating itself, becomes a slavery, since there can be no such thing as freedom apart from God. It follows - and here comes in the (so to speak) metaphysical element in evil - that sin is at the same time lack of freedom for good, the so-called original sin. 2

On the other hand, this totality is modified in terms of a doctrine of "radical evil" which sees this "lack of freedom for good" in terms of "nothing purely good".

... radical evil. That will not mean: that man is through and through bad, and that there is nothing good in him. But that

¹ Paul Lehmann, Ethics in a Christian Context (London, 1963), p. 158.

² RPh p. 44. E.T. pp. 89-90.

there is to be found in man nothing truly good, nothing purely good, but in all only a mixture of good and evil; that evil belongs everywhere with it and at the basis of the situation of human life. 1

This apparent contradiction between the "lack of freedom for good" and "nothing purely good" is, however, only apparent. The solution of the contradiction consists in the realization that "good" is used here in two senses. In fact, there are two types of good, the Good which consists in the One, and that which consists in the many. "The Good which consists in the One is the same as being in God. ... But the Good which consists ... in the Many belongs to the moral category."² Herein we reach a central concept in Brunner's theology, the distinction between the sphere of morality and the sphere of faith. Picking up a distinction reminiscent of Luther and Kierkegaard, Brunner places great emphasis on the fact that "the antithesis of sin is not virtue but faith."³ The contrast between sin and faith preserves the doctrine of justification by faith from all work-righteousness. In the light of the fruitlessness of works for justification, we see the relativity of the distinction between good and evil. "The knowledge of good and evil arises only after the Fall."⁴ The morally good does not avail in the sight of God. It is as relative as the morally evil. The only thing good is faith. This, Brunner presents as the distinctive Christian knowledge, the central affirmation of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith, and, as such, the rock of offence on which the Kantian "Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone" shatters.

... his [i.e. Kant's] 'radical evil' is only one manifestation of sin, whose other far more dangerous manifestation is precisely that which in the thought of Kant is regarded as the Good; the fact that man does good by his own efforts. The fact that through the Fall alone man 'knows what is good and evil', that already the

1 Philosophie und Offenbarung, p. 11. 2 DII p. 129. E.T. p. 110.
 3 GuM p. 33. E.T. p. 83. 4 RPh p. 44. E.T. p. 91.

difference between good and evil is itself the product of the contradiction, and therefore is only a relative contradiction - of all this Kant can know nothing, since on the plane on which he stands such things cannot be perceived. 1

The contrast between sin and faith is absolute, the problem of the Good in the One; the contrast between vice and virtue is relative, the problem of the good in the many. The Good in the One is of God, and is known only in faith. The good in the many is the product of man's moral effort, and does not avail in God's sight.

Thus far the position is similar to Luther's position as reflected in his distinction between that which is Good before God and that which is good in the sight of men.² However, Brunner goes on from this denial of the merit of moral goodness before God to the conclusion that therefore moral goodness is of no concern to God. From the statement that "the morally good ... does not come under consideration 'before God', in the presence of the final court of appeal", Brunner passes to the further statement:

God declares the sinner righteous. ... how can God call the evil man good? God does not do so. He does not say the evil man is good; God rather passes over this whole moral formulation of the question. Being good is of no importance to me now, he says; what matters to me is your being with me. 3

One can appreciate that Brunner is striving to express here the absolutely unmerited grace of God by which man is justified. But that in order to do this one must say that "being good is of no importance to me [i.e. God] now" is not at all obvious, particularly from one who is speaking in the light of the Cross. What is obvious is that Brunner cannot maintain this bifurcation of morality and faith in the absolute sense in which it is here attempted. It is no accident that Brunner is forced to concede: "The morally good - always understood in this relative sense, which indeed is

1 MiW p. 129. E.T. p. 128.

2 Luther, Sermon: "Concerning Them that are under the Law, and Them that are under Grace", Sermons on the Most Interesting Doctrines of the Gospel (London, 1830), VII, 243ff.

3 The Letter to the Romans, p. 159.

expressed in the word 'moral' - is in itself, objectively, naturally in closer correspondence with the will of God than the morally bad."¹ Even more incongruous is the distinctly positive status he accords the morally good on at least one occasion. In the broad context of the question of God's existence, Brunner asserts: "You know already that there is a God, for you know that good cannot possibly be the same as evil."² That the good referred to here is none other than the moral good, about which God is apparently so unconcerned, is confirmed in a subsequent sentence - "To ask ... 'Is there a God?' is to fail to be morally serious."³

We seem to be involved here with two questions - the distinction between morality and faith, and the relation of morality to God. Perhaps it would be more accurate to describe these as two aspects of the one question, the former being the question of the basis of Brunner's concept of the relation between morality and faith, the latter being the question of the significance of this concept. Turning to the first question, we seem to detect remnants of the position which is supposedly here refuted. It might not be entirely incorrect to say that Brunner's emphasis on the absolute distinction between morality and faith is an opposition to the Kantian supremacy of morality in the sufficiency of the reason. This is not to deny that the source of Brunner's emphasis is the Biblical message as mediated by the Reformers. The point is rather that this emphasis is also partly polemical in that it is presented as the antithesis of the Kantian autonomy. The importance of this polemical aspect in the emphasis on the sole efficacy of faith is that it accepts the Kantian definition as valid in its sphere.

Sin belongs to a quite different category from that of vice and virtue. Vice and virtue belong to the empirical sphere, to that of the "qualities". But sin, like faith, lies beyond the

1 MiW p. 155. E.T. pp. 154-5.

2 Unser Glaube, p. 8. E.T. p. 14.

3 Ibid. p. 10. E.T. p. 15.

empirical sphere, in the sphere of man's relation to God. Indeed they are his relation to God; the one is negative and the other positive. 1

This raises the question of the relation of this "empirical sphere" to God, and leads us to the second aspect of the whole issue, the question of the significance of this distinction of spheres for Brunner's formulation. The immediate answer to the question is that the sphere of vice and virtue has no positive relation to God. It is the sphere of sin, and, as such, is man's negative relation to God. The difficulty in this emphasis, as Brunner develops it, is revealed most acutely when we inquire into the positive side of the situation, and ask what is the status of the moral in faith? Here we sense the impact of the Kantian position most acutely. The famous Kantian maxim, which is reducible to the formula "I ought, therefore I can", is reversed by Brunner, from the perspective of faith, to the formula, "I ought, therefore I cannot." It is Brunner's contention that "the good as duty (Schuldigkeit) is in itself an omen of the perversion, guilt (Schuld)."² In terms of the positive side of the situation, this results in an inability, on Brunner's part, to reconcile love and duty.

Love - and this is the paradox - is the one thing signified in all these commandments, but by that very fact it cannot be commanded, and does not come into existence through the Command. ... Love can only be present where it is given, not where it is commanded. 3

The source of this concept of the irreconcilability of love and duty is not far to seek. "But as Kant has proved, there is no such thing as love in a legalistic ethic. Love cannot be commanded to appear."⁴ The significance of this dichotomy of love and duty for Brunner's ethic is enormous. The bifurcation of love and duty leads to a bifurcation of motive and content in the Christian ethic. The love which cannot be commanded is given in Christ,

1 DII p. 123. E.T. p. 106.

2 RPh p. 44. E.T. p. 90; Cf. also GuM p. 30. E.T. p. 78.

3 DII pp. 264-5. E.T. p. 224. 4 GuM p. 30. E.T. p. 78.

and, as such, constitutes the motive of Christian action. The content of Christian action, however, is not given in Christ, but rather comes from "Creation". "So far as motive is concerned, our motto is: 'all from Christ', but where the concrete demand is formulated the only rule is: loyalty to the order of creation."¹

Obviously, it is beyond the scope of our concern to define the complex relationships existing among the various factors which are involved in Christian ethics. It is sufficient for our purposes to note the difficulty which is involved in Brunner's ethical position, and the source of that difficulty. Briefly stated, the difficulty is that the content of Christian ethics is presented as being somehow natural to man. The love of neighbour, which the Christian ethic demands, is both known and not known by the natural man.

... we know from our conscience that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. This is what the law tells us in our hearts. But our knowing it does not guarantee our doing it. Indeed, it does not even guarantee the acknowledgement that we ought to do it. 2

What is lacking in the sphere of vice and virtue, therefore, is the motive which propels man to do what he might well do otherwise. This difficulty can only be fully appreciated when we recognize the background of Brunner's ethic. "Agape, which by the nature of things is entirely incapable of formulation in a law, has at any rate a rational analogy, the Categorical Imperative ..." ³ Now, this analogy, Brunner contends, is both positive and negative. Agape is similar to the Categorical Imperative in that it too prescribes the love of our neighbour. Agape is different from the Categorical Imperative in that "agape cannot be formulated in general laws. One cannot speak of it as a 'principle'." ⁴ However, this presentation of the

1 DII p. 267. E.T. p. 226.

2 WGM p. 74.

3 DIII E.T. p. 309.

4 Ibid. E.T. p. 310.

negative and positive analogy between the Categorical Imperative and Agape is not exhaustive. For it is also true that the Categorical Imperative is purely formal, duty for duty's sake. "A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some purposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition, that is, it is good in itself, and considered by itself is to be esteemed much higher than all that can be brought about by it in favour of any inclination, nay, even of the sum total of all inclinations."¹ As Brunner also recognizes, this goodness of the will in itself corresponds to the Categorical Imperative conceived as the pure form of the good will.

It is the knowledge of the divine claim, of the divine call, of my being spoken to by God, that brings my human dignity to consciousness. Freedom and responsibility is one and the same thing.

As you know, certain champions of the Kantian philosophy have believed that they should deviate from him on this point. This foundation of morality is purely formal. It is necessary to complete it through a material value ethic. Kant has already sufficiently repelled this objection. What is involved is for that reason nothing other than that for morality not the 'What', the material, but the 'Why', the viewpoint, the conviction, is authoritative. 2

The analogy to Brunner's conception of Agape represented by this formal motivational Imperative is indeed very positive. It is hardly questionable that Brunner learned his respect for the supremacy of the formal nature of ethics from Kant. "That this 'Ought' is purely formal, a 'How' and not a 'What', is no rebuke, but precisely the dignity of the ethical; it should be orientated toward the 'How' and not toward the 'What', to the disposition not to the material result."³ This representation of the Kantian ethic in terms of its formal nature is so similar to Brunner's conception of the formal motivational nature of Agape in the Christian ethic, that it is

1 Kant, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, Ab. p. 10.

2 GPhKK p. 39.

3 RPh p. 32. E.T. p. 68.

extremely difficult to avoid the conclusion that Brunner is exposed to the very criticism which he levels against Kant's ethic.

... yet it remains a defect of this ethical system that it cannot point out exactly what is the nature of human duty. ... It is undeniable that even Kant had to borrow from the Eudaemonism he had rejected before he could approach the problem of the nature of conduct. 1

Brunner's recourse to the "orders of Creation" to give content to the purely formal motivational ethic which is established by Agape, bears a striking similarity to that inconsistency with which he charges Kant.

The significance of this conflict of love and duty for Brunner's understanding of the Law will have to await the next chapter, where account will be taken of Brunner's dialectic of Law and Gospel. We may note in passing, without further comment at this point, that this conflict appears to reflect a confusion of legalism with Law, whereby Law is seen solely in terms of the sinner, and not at all as a correlate of the creaturely. In any event, the immediate concern is the light which this conflict between love and duty sheds on the relationship which Brunner conceives between sin and sins. The conclusion to which we seem to be moving in this regard is that sin is God's concern, while sins are man's concern. Man's moral freedom implies his responsibility for sins. But God's concern, as developed through Brunner's concept of justification by faith, is not with sins but with sin. Hence, justification provides the motive, the reversed direction, to which the moral gives content in terms of man's natural morality of creation. The irony of the whole position is that it results, in large measure, from the polemic which Brunner conducted in the interest of justification by faith. That polemic was so concerned to deny the rational autonomy which makes

1 RPh p. 32. E.T. p. 69.

morality ultimate, that it uncritically accepted the legitimacy of the offensive position in its own sphere. Through the impact of the Kantian bifurcation of love and duty, Brunner minimizes the creaturely status of man in ascribing duty to sin, "the omen of the perversion". As a result, the emphasis moves from responsibility for sin to responsibility for guilt. At this point the anti-Kantian polemic has exerted a profound influence on the formulation of the Christian faith. This is the concern of the next chapter.

CHAPTER V I-THOU AND SOLA GRATIA

The centrality of "responsibility" in Brunner's theology suggests that he deviates from the Reformation principle of sola gratia. We have detected two lines of thought running throughout Brunner's presentation: one reflecting the sola gratia principle of the Reformers, and the other revealing a certain sympathy with moral Idealism, particularly as it has been formulated by Kant. The admixture of these two perspectives has been most significant with regard to the emphasis which Brunner places on responsibility. On the one hand, this term can be used in the context of the sola gratia principle as an affirmation that man owes his being to God. On the other hand, it can be used in the context of moral Idealism as an affirmation that man is "in himself" answerable. This admixture of what we have called moral and religious responsibility, represents the central difficulty in Brunner's theology. We have already suggested that it is the ambiguity inherent in this term which facilitates Brunner's division of man into a formal and a material image. We have also seen that Brunner's sympathy with Idealism is reflected in his treatment of the Fall and Original Sin, wherein the former lacks an adequate historical reference, and the latter ultimately sacrifices solidarity in sin for the more rational universality of sin. It now remains for us to examine Brunner's pronouncements on the subject of responsibility, and allied issues, in the light of the Reformation principle of sola gratia.

A. BRUNNER AND THE REFORMATION

a. Sola Gratia

Brunner is first and foremost a theologian in the tradition of the Reformers. The primary perspective of his theology is that of the sola gratia principle.

... grace can be no individual moment of faith, no particular "locus" within Christian doctrine. Rather it is the distinctive all-determining point of view for every Christian statement of faith. 1

This primary and pervasive character of grace is affirmed in connection with both the manner of becoming Christian and of being Christian. In regard to the former, salvation is by grace alone. "The man to whom the message is proclaimed is utterly a lost one. He is saved sola gratia, through Jesus Christ alone."² In regard to the matter of being Christian, the question of ethics, Brunner's position is equally clear. "... my own thesis: the sola gratia, sola fide, soli deo gloria is the only solid foundation for ethics."³ Indeed, Brunner regarded his massive treatise on Christian ethics, Das Gebot und die Ordnungen, as an attempt to recover the major emphases of the Reformation.⁴

Within the common concern of the Reformers for the sola gratia principle, it is Luther's formulation of the issues which most appeals to Brunner. Indeed, he affirms that Luther's grasp of the Pauline doctrine of justification distinguishes him "as the congenial interpreter of the Apostle Paul and as the one teacher who in all the Church is nearest to the mind of Christ."⁵ It might seem extravagant to single out this one man for such a unique position, when there have been so many outstanding interpreters of

1 "Gnade Gottes", Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Tübingen, 1928), II, 1262.

2 "Banalität oder Irrlehre", Kirchenblatt für die ref. Schweiz, 96, No. 17 (1940), p. 263.

3 ToFC p. 68.

4 GuO p. 86. E.T. p. 99.

5 DIII E.T. p. 191.

"the mind of Christ", and yet it is an honest acknowledgement of Brunner's allegiance. Consequently he builds his own theology on the foundation laid by Luther. Thus he affirms "Luther's understanding of justifying faith as the centre of the message of Christ and as the criterion of all faith, and it is this which is the fundamental plan on which our Dogmatics are built."¹ Thus it will be Luther who will concern us in our effort to evaluate Brunner's development of the sola gratia principle.

b. Against Synergism

A major concern of the sola gratia principle is expressed in Brunner's opposition to synergism, the tendency to regard the work of salvation as a co-operative effort in which man and God are seen as partners. In Brunner's estimation, this tendency is rightly concerned with the human response to God's gracious action on man's behalf, but it fails to do justice to the fact that even that response of man is a work of grace.

... synergism doubtless intends to stress the personal character of the act of appropriation, but it does not understand the comprehensive character of grace. It does not understand that it is due to grace that we can thus respond to God. 2

This concern of Brunner's for the "comprehensive character of grace", which involves even the human response, is significant. For, in terms of his emphasis on "responsibility", we might suspect that he himself will fail to do justice to this fact. Thus it is important to note that he is concerned with sola gratia in this comprehensive sense.

The dangers of synergism are seen by Brunner on two fronts, that of Roman Catholic and orthodox theology in their "objectivism", and of liberal theology in its "subjectivism". In the Roman Catholic concepts of

1 DIII E.T. p. 210.

2 Gu0 p. 587. E.T. p. 608.

sacrament and authority, Brunner sees "a tendency of man's spirit and will to get something into his power - to manipulate it like an object in definite ways and within definite limits - something which by its very nature is not under human control."¹ This "objectivism" represents an attempt of man to assign to himself a more positive role in the divine economy than is possible within the framework of grace. Not only is this seen in the Roman Catholic "divinization" of the Church by the concepts of sacrament and authority, but also in orthodox Protestantism in its "divinization" of the human witness to the Word contained in Scripture. It is Brunner's charge that orthodoxy, with its doctrine of verbal inspiration, neglects the truth that "the Word of God is no disposable object, but a free gift of grace",² in its identification of the Word of God with the human words of Scripture. It is beyond the scope of our concern to investigate the legitimacy of these charges against Roman Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism. It is sufficient for our purposes to note that Brunner is concerned to affirm the freedom of God over both Church and Scripture.

On the other hand, the extreme opposite of this objectivizing tendency also qualifies for the charge of synergism. The "subjectivism" of liberal theology, represented by Schleiermacher, displays the same tendency to arrogate to man what properly belongs to God. In contrast to the solus of the Reformers, Schleiermacher's primary word is "and".

Their [i.e. the Reformers] life-work is nothing other than a giant commentary on this one word solus. That is their theology. But if an "and" steps in its place, so is nothing less than everything they fought for surrendered, and it would be merely a tragic-comical misunderstanding, if to this end would be set as one member of the synthesis, even the faith whose content it is to exclude this and every "and". 3

1 WaB pp. 15-6. E.T. p. 71.

2 Ibid. p. 17. E.T. p. 72.

3 MiW p. 391.

Again, it is not within our province to evaluate Brunner's assessment of Schleiermacher. It is sufficient to note that, in his opinion, liberal theology erred in the direction of synergism in its principle of continuity whereby that which is properly of God was arrogated to man.

Thus Brunner's opposition to synergism occupies two fronts, the one which he characterizes as "objectivism", and the other as "subjectivism". But this opposition goes beyond a quarrel with extreme tendencies. It is not Brunner's concern to strike a middle path between the errors of subjectivism and objectivism.¹ On the contrary, his position challenges the whole foundation of the object-subject antithesis. Brunner states his thesis thus: "the use of the object-subject antithesis is understanding the truth of faith and furthermore in the church generally is by no means self-evident; on the contrary, it is a disastrous misunderstanding."² Positively expressed, Brunner's position affirms the personal category of faith and grace, as opposed to the inadequate category of the object-subject antithesis. The latter, according to Brunner, belongs to the causal sphere, and thus falsifies the understanding of matters of faith which are essentially personal. "A personal relation simply cannot be rendered by the causal idea which belongs to the sphere of things."³ This distinction between the causal and the personal, or between things and persons, is pivotal for Brunner's position, and consequently will warrant further attention. At present it is sufficient to notice that it is presented in the interests of the sola gratia principle, and in opposition to synergism. It is Brunner's contention that his "personalism" transcends the antithesis of subject and object, and in so doing avoids the synergistic calculation of divine and human shares in matters of faith. "All attempts to estimate the respective shares of the divine

1 WaB pp. 30-1. E.T. p. 84.

2 Ibid. p. 14. E.T. p. 69.

3 DII p. 181. E.T. p. 154.

subject and the human in faith and in the new life of the Christian are idle and instead of serving to clarify have done injustice now to this side and now to the other."¹ Whether, in fact, Brunner is able to formulate this trans-subject-object position satisfactorily so that he does justice to the truth in both sides, is our central concern. In any event, this is the task he sets himself.

c. Against Passivism

The sola gratia principle must be rescued not only from the errors of synergism, but also, according to Brunner, from the errors of passivism, the assumption that if all is of grace then man is merely acted upon and is in no way active in the affairs of faith. "On the other hand [i.e. in addition to the error of synergism] a doctrine of grace which obscures this personal element by the use of naturalistic images of appropriation for the sake of the objectivity of grace is just as incorrect ..."² In this area, Brunner's favourite corrective consists in distinguishing between miracle and magic as images for describing the operation of grace. "The creation of the new creature is indeed a miracle of God, but not magic."³ It is his concern to retain the sola gratia without thereby depreciating the importance of, and the necessity for, the human response. In this he claims to be presenting a thoroughly Biblical account of the operation of grace. "It is entirely contrary to the Biblical doctrine that in faith ... man should be 'wholly passive' ..."⁴

This concern for the human response brings Brunner into conflict with the Reformers. For, in his estimation, the Reformers erred in their concern for the sola gratia principle in that they depreciated the

¹ DIII E.T. p. 13.

² GuO pp. 587-8. E.T. p. 608.

³ GuM p. 36. E.T. p. 86; MlW p. 479. E.T. p. 486; GuO p. 143. E.T. p. 159.

⁴ MlW p. 517. E.T. p. 537.

significance of the human response. "It was especially the Reformers' interest in the 'sola gratia', the desire to get rid of all traces of synergism, which led them to understand man as a mere object of Grace, and thus faith simply as the working of divine Grace."¹ It is Brunner's contention that the Reformers concluded from the true perception that "man is solely receptive" in faith that man is purely passive. Receptivity was replaced by the causal notion of "purely effected", so that "God [became] the cause, faith the effect."² This, according to Brunner, is quite understandable. For the Reformers must be seen in terms of "their struggle against their sole opponents - the open liberalism of the Humanists and the disguised liberalism of Catholic theology ..."³ In this light, it is easy to see why they should have approached a deterministic view of the operation of grace. But this carries with it the implication that their position needs to be amended. Indeed, Brunner affirms that the task of theology today is precisely the opposite of that which faced the Reformers, the task, namely, of correcting the deterministic tendency which has permeated theology since the Reformation.

It may seem curious that Brunner, who says so much about modern man's pathological concern for freedom,⁴ should regard it as the task of theology to take account of this very element. Certainly, if his evaluation of modern history in terms of a movement of emancipation is accurate, then it would seem that the theologian today is faced with a liberalism, or "libertinism", far more pervasive than anything encountered by the Reformers. However, this is Brunner's evaluation of the situation, and it is important to note that it represents an opposition to the Reformers, whose basic

1 DI E.T. p. 315.

2 Ibid.

3 MIV p. 254. E.T. pp. 256-7.

4 "Freiheit als Verantwortlichkeit", pp. 353ff.

principles Brunner accepts. For Brunner does not claim simply to be re-affirming the Reformation position. On the contrary, in the light of present knowledge, particularly in the field of anthropology, Brunner has concluded that "it would be impossible to re-affirm the Reformation position and to go no further."¹ And it is precisely on this question of the passivity of man, or of the "freedom" of man, that Brunner parts company with the Reformers.² In this concept we find the central concern of Brunner's theology.

It is decisively Biblical that in the knowledge of God his omnipotence and absoluteness are maintained together with this freedom of his creaturely counterpart, and every attempt to deny this face-to-face relationship for the sake of a supposed exalting of the divine omnipotence will be rejected. 3

It is Brunner's goal to formulate the sola gratia principle so as to take account of the response of man, and to do that without prejudicing the sola gratia principle itself. "Man is not an equal partner, for he can only say 'Yes' because he has already received the 'Yes' of God as a gift; and yet he is to be a real partner, who may, and indeed should, say 'Yes'."⁴ It is the error of passivism which really sparks Brunner's concern for a balanced exposition of the sola gratia principle. In fact, so concerned is he to refute this error that he will risk the other extreme, the error of synergism. "We ourselves have also something to do here, whether this is labelled synergism or not."⁵

Recalling Brunner's rejection of synergism, where we saw that he emphasizes that even the response of man is of grace, we can appreciate that his passionate concern for the restatement of the significance of that response, so as to exclude all elements of passivism, sets him a most challenging task. His method, as we have suggested, is to develop a

1 MiW "Vortwort" p. 18. E.T. "Forward" p. 10. 2 Ibid.

3 WaB p. 42. E.T. p. 96. 4 DII p. 255. E.T. p. 216.

5 DIII E.T. p. 282.

personalistic conception of grace and faith, which, in his estimation, transcends the object-subject antithesis. To this formulation we now turn.

B. THE I-THOU FRAMEWORK

a. Rational and Personal

Although Brunner's concern to develop the sola gratia principle in a manner which avoids the error of passivism in regard to the human response to God's gracious action on man's behalf is, in his estimation, a corrective to the passivity involved in the development of the doctrine by the Reformers themselves, it is not in this context that Brunner's reformulation takes shape. Rather his development of the theme reflects a continuous battle with the rationalistic Zeitgeist. Brunner develops the category of the personal as a contrast to the rational. In this context, the personal is defined as the other-than-I which I can know only in so far as it reveals itself to me. "A person is a being of such a kind that we cannot ourselves think it, but it reveals itself to us in an act of revelation."¹ This is true of both the person of God and the person of our fellow-man. "The personality of God, which is the opposite of a God-idea, is His being over against us."² The same is true of the personality of our fellow-man, although obviously there is a difference between the being of man as person and the being of God as person. The difference, according to Brunner, is the difference between the absolute and the relative. God alone is absolutely personal, and therefore remains unknown until He reveals Himself. Man, on the other hand, is only relatively personal. His uniqueness is relative, for he is a member of a genus. Therefore we can know something

¹ The Scandal of Christianity, p. 41.

² W&W p. 30.

about men, irrespective of their willingness to reveal themselves, although true knowledge of men, like true knowledge of God, also depends on their self-revelation. "The mystery of human personality is not absolute; it is only relative, because it is not only 'other than I' but 'the same as I'."¹

This contrast between the rational and the personal involves several antitheses by which Brunner distinguishes the two categories. The first of these is found in the contention that the rational is essentially solitary, whereas the personal is essentially social.

The truth of reason is the truth which everyone can say to himself ... It lies therefore in the essence of reason, which sets itself up as the ultimate instance, that it isolates man. Everyone is a complete man in himself. 2

In contrast to this, the personal is essentially a social category in that man cannot be truly personal in isolation, but only in community.³ Secondly, the rational is not only autonomous, but possessive, whereas the personal is exposed to the challenge of the other. "All that I think ... can, as something I think, only confirm my autonomy."⁴ On the other hand, the category of the personal issues a direct challenge to my self-sufficiency.

Reality begins where I am "disturbed" in my thinking and dreaming solitude by what is outside of me, what is not me, where my thoughts encounter resistance. But nature, which is impersonal, cannot disturb this solitude, for I can include it too in my thought and become its master through thought. It is, on the contrary, what lies beyond me as the source of independent speech and will - the Thou, which really "disturbs" me and thus calls in question my autonomy. 5

Thirdly, the rational is the sphere of proof, whereas the personal is the sphere of decision. "You cannot prove personal truth, you can only believe it; and similarly you cannot believe impersonal truth, you can only prove it."⁶ Proof excludes decision. For "where the proof rules there is nothing

1 DI E.T. p. 122.

2 Das Grundproblem der Ethik, p. 11.

3 Gu0 p. 280. E.T. p. 296.

4 DIII E.T. p. 143.

5 Ibid.

6 W&W p. 27.

to decide."¹ Fourthly, the rational is ahistorical, whereas the personal is properly the sphere of history. "There is a vital connexion between the personal and history."² Just as the personal represents that which is other than I, so too history, according to Brunner, involves a contingency which shatters my rational systematizing.

The thinking of reason in the traditional sense is ahistorical. It deals with substantives and not with verbs. In philosophy the substantive dominates, but in the Bible the verb, the word expressing activity. The Word of God is always word and deed, history. Conversely, in philosophy, history is an alien and an embarrassment. Only through Christianity did it enter into philosophy, but even here this happened only in appearance. Like history, personalism is an alien and an embarrassment in philosophy, for one cannot think a person. 3

Fifthly, the rational lies with my initiative, whereas the personal sets me in a secondary position of response. "The God of philosophy is by definition an idea acquired by man's own thinking. The initiative is entirely with man."⁴ On the other hand, the personal depends on the divine initiative. "Man becomes truly personal only when he is addressed by the Word of God, that is in faith."⁵

The contrast between the rational and the personal is essentially a contrast between a subject-object antithesis and a subject-subject framework. Brunner's whole position rests on the contention that a subject-subject framework can more adequately express the working of grace and the phenomenon of faith, than can a subject-object antithesis. In this reformulation, the reality of grace and faith is presented in terms of the category of "personal correspondence", in contrast to the passivity which has been associated with the sola gratia principle; and the truth of grace and faith is presented in terms of the category of "truth as encounter",

1 Das Grundproblem der Ethik, p. 24.

2 MiW p. 437. E.T. p. 446.

3 WaB E.T. p. 25.

4 The Scandal of Christianity, p. 35.

5 W&W p. 30.

in contrast to the autonomous self-sufficiency of rationalist philosophy.¹ It is Brunner's contention that "our understanding of the message of salvation and also of the church's task is still burdened with the subject-object antithesis, which originated in Greek philosophy."² In contrast to this "Greek" outlook, Brunner contends that "the Biblical conception of truth is: truth as encounter."³ It is the predicament of our Western culture that we have inherited the essentially personalistic Hebrew outlook of Scripture through the medium of the impersonal thought forms of Greek philosophy.⁴ Consequently Brunner sets himself the task of restating the fundamental truths of the faith in a subject-subject framework. Thus his battle is essentially against "rationalism". Proceeding in terms of the antitheses between the rational and the personal which we outlined above, Brunner strives to erect a framework for theology which transcends the subject-object antithesis.

Obviously we are not confronted here by a simple alternative between object-subject and subject-subject. Brunner is aware of the unavoidability of the "objective".

The Biblical understanding of truth cannot be grasped through the object-subject antithesis: on the contrary, it is falsified through it. This does not mean, to be sure, that we should avoid using this conception, since it is indispensable for natural-rational knowing, or that we can do without it in every respect; indeed we should have to stop thinking altogether if we entirely gave up using it. The thesis does mean, however, that where the heart of faith is concerned - the relation between God's Word and faith, between Christ and faith - the objective-subjective correlation must be replaced by one of an entirely different kind. 5

The result is that, in Brunner's estimation, "the theologian is really a

1 An interesting internal analysis of Brunner's development of the respective spheres of Being and Truth is presented by Roman Roessler in Person und Glaube: Der Personalismus der Gottesbeziehung bei Emil Brunner (München, 1965).

2 WaB "Vortwort". E.T. "Forward to the First Edition" p. 2. 3 Ibid.

4 "The Significance of the Old Testament for Our Faith", The Old Testament and Christian Faith, ed. B.W. Anderson (London, 1964), pp. 247-8.

5 WaB p. 14. E.T. pp. 69-70.

wanderer between two worlds."¹ As a believer, he transcends the object-subject antithesis; as a thinker, "he remains between the tongs (so to say) of the object-subject antithesis", even though "his 'theme' ... lies beyond what can be comprehended by means of the object-subject correlation."² Yet the theologian is essentially a thinker, for it is not faith, but thought, which distinguishes him as a theologian. "The great theologian does not differ from the rest of the members of the Church by his greater faith, but by his greater powers of thought in the service of faith."³ Thus we should expect that the object-subject antithesis will play a major role in the work of the theologian. Yet this is precisely what Brunner is striving to avoid. He is faced with the formidable task of expressing in thought what, in his view, is opposed to thought, the truth which is real only in encounter.

This contrast between the rational and the personal, between the object-subject antithesis and the subject-subject framework, represents the foundation thought of Brunner's theology. In general terms, his presentation of the contrast evokes two contradictory reactions. First, it is evident that there is something vital at stake here. The "personal" is a key category of Christian theology. Indeed, the antitheses Brunner presents between the rational and the personal express definite contrasts between the Hebrew and Greek perspectives. Thus we can expect to find a decisive contribution to Christian theology in this concern for the "personal". Secondly, while the personal represents a key category of Christian theology, we must hold some reservations about Brunner's formulation of the personal as the antithesis to the rational. It must be questioned whether the contrast between the personal and the rational is quite so ultimate as Brunner at times seems to

1 WaB p. 62. E.T. p. 113.

2 Ibid. p. 61. E.T. p. 113.

3 DI E.T. p. 73.

suggest. For example, it may be that what is involved here is a contrast between the personal and the rational as it is understood in idealism, and not a contrast between the rational and personal per se. Brunner's definition of reason seems to suggest this. "Reason is the abstract way of thinking which is concerned with argument; this is its character in so far as it refers to idea, law, value and norm."¹ Or, "in knowing the subject always remains greater than the object, because he is the enclosing not the enclosed."² It is not our concern to evaluate the merits or demerits of any particular epistemology as a servant of theology. However, it is worth noting that Brunner's emphasis on the subject-subject framework, and the corresponding demarcation of the spheres of the rational and the personal, reflects a rather limited view of reason. The crucial question here is not essentially one of philosophical epistemology, but of the subject matter of theology. We must ask: Does this subject-subject framework provide an adequate framework for Christian theology?

b. The Adequacy of the I-Thou

The subject-subject framework is the formal framework in which Brunner constructs his theology. In concrete terms this is the I-Thou framework. This means for theology that "I am 'I' only because, and in so far as, God addresses me as 'thou'."³ On the human plane it means that "the 'I' cannot be personal over against an 'it', but only when it is confronted by the 'Thou'."⁴ Brunner's development of the I-Thou framework as an antithesis to rationalism raises the question as to the place of "reason" in this framework. But in addition to this preliminary question, there are other more specific questions, two of which are of particular concern to our

1 MiW p. 241. E.T. p. 244.

2 "Psychologie und Weltanschauung", NSR, 22, Heft 1 (1929), p. 5.

3 GuO p. 137. E.T. p. 153. 4 Ibid. E.T. p. 191.

subject. First, the pronounced emphasis on the personal represented by the I-Thou framework raises the question as to the significance of the impersonal dimension of life. Secondly, the employment of the I-Thou framework as a means of distinguishing the Christian conception of the God-man relation from non-Christian, and particularly philosophical, conceptions, is incomplete in itself. The crucial question is: What is the nature of this I-Thou relation? Both questions stem from the initial formulations of the I-Thou by its two outstanding exponents, Martin Buber and Ferdinand Ebner. Buber's formulation is concerned with the distinction between the I-Thou and the I-It dimensions of life. Ebner's development of the theme is concerned with the nature of the I-Thou relation in his contention that the I and the Thou are related through the medium of the word. Consequently a brief examination of these respective formulations may facilitate our understanding of Brunner's employment of the I-Thou framework.

The initial reaction provoked by Buber's I and Thou is that one is here dealing with a mystic poet who does not communicate so much in logically reasoned thoughts as in poetic images. If it is justifiable to reduce Buber's poetic descriptions to a rational formulation, then we might summarize his work as an attempt to distinguish the I-Thou from the I-It dimension of life. Yet it is the poetic flavour which predominates, so that one risks misinterpreting Buber by setting his poetry in the strait-jacket of logic. One fact, however, does appear clearly, that is, that the distinction between the I-Thou and the I-It is not quite so absolute as some of Brunner's statements on the subject would seem to suggest. On the whole, the two relations are integrated, so that the translator's warning in the "Introduction" to the English text of

I and Thou is quite appropriate.

It is certainly necessary that I should warn the reader against a too facile assumption of these distinctions as involving clear-cut divisions between two worlds in which man may move. There is one world, which is twofold; but this twofoldness cannot be allocated to (let us say) on the one hand the scientist with a world of It and (let us say) on the other hand the poet with a world of Thou. Rather, this twofoldness runs through the whole world, through each person, each human activity. 1

In terms of reasoned thought, then, Buber is concerned to distinguish the I-Thou and the I-It dimensions of life without abstracting from the complexity of real life in which the two dimensions are intimately related. He can do this because of his poetical outlook. In this connection, the key phrase in Buber's presentation is "presence". The I-It dimension of life, as well as the I-Thou dimension, is "exclusively present".

Take knowledge: being is disclosed to the man who is engaged in knowing, as he looks at what is over against him. He will, indeed, have to grasp as an object that which he has seen with the force of presence, he will have to compare it with objects, establish it in its order among classes of objects, describe and analyse it objectively. Only as It can it enter the structure of knowledge. But when he saw it, it was no thing among things, no event among events, but exclusively present. 2

The significance of this poetical outlook for theology consists in the fact that when we move from the sphere of objects or of fellow human beings to that of God, we are left with a conception of God which can only be described as sheer presence itself.

God cannot be inferred in anything - in nature, say, as its author, or in history as its master, or in the subject as the self that is thought in it. Something else is not "given" and God then elicited from it; but God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly, over against us, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed. 3

It is curious that the I-Thou framework, which Brunner regards as the decisive category for the Christian message, should have been developed

1 R. Gregor Smith, "Translator's Preface to the Second Edition" of Martin Buber's I and Thou (Edinburgh, 1966), p. ix.

2 Martin Buber, I and Thou, p. 40.

3 Ibid. pp. 80-1.

first by a Jewish scholar. This would seem to indicate that, while the category may represent a fair means for interpreting the Old Testament narrative where the thought is often "I am the Lord thy God" and "Thou art my people", we can anticipate difficulties in reconciling the I-Thou framework with the New Testament concept of the Mediator. Yet we do not have to move to the New Testament to question the legitimacy of the category as Buber develops it. For as Brunner has noted: "Buber's concept of faith does not make it clear that even Old Testament faith is an answer to God's action in historical events and in the prophetic Word."¹ There is good reason to concur with Brunner's estimation that behind this neglect of the "historical" element in faith there lies a more fundamental problem in terms of Buber's view of man.

In this connexion a conversation with Martin Buber has remained in my memory as significant. We spoke about sin. He opposed sharply the New Testament concept, above all, the Pauline concept of sin, because he saw in this a slur cast upon man's responsibility to himself and his freedom. 2

There can be little doubt that, in spite of his emphasis on the "Thouness" of life, Buber is working with a concept of man as subject which relegates the relation to the 'Thou' to a peripheral consideration in comparison to the importance of the 'I'. Man is defined as a responsible being in the sense that responsibility refers to "a man holding his ground before reality"³. This consideration hardly dismisses Buber's contribution to the understanding of human life by means of the I-Thou framework. It does mean, however, that we cannot look to Buber for assistance in understanding how the 'I' and 'Thou' are to be related. It is sufficient for our purposes to have seen the concern behind his formulation, and the problems which it raises, particularly the

1 DIII E.T. p. 161.

2 Ibid.

3 Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, tr. R. Gregor Smith (London, 1961), p. 43.

problem of the 'I-It' dimension of life within this framework. For an appreciation of what is involved in the actual 'I-Thou' relation itself as it is applied to the God-man relation, we turn to the second outstanding exponent of this category, Ferdinand Ebner.

In contrast to Buber's poetical presentation of the 'I-Thou', Ebner's development of the category is decidedly concrete. This concreteness is displayed in his concern for the nature of the 'I-Thou' relation, a concern which issues in the affirmation that the "word" is the medium by which the 'I' is related to the 'Thou'. Ebner crystallizes his basic position in the "Forward" to his book, Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten, in such a comprehensive manner that it must be quoted in full.

It does not appear entirely superfluous to me, here in the Forward, to bring the fundamental thought of the Fragments to as brief a formula as possible. This fundamental thought is: presupposed that human existence in its kernel has a spiritual existence generally, viz., one which is not exhausted in its natural manifestation in the course of world events; presupposed that one may speak of something spiritual in man otherwise than in the sense of a fiction of a poetic or metaphoric nature, or demanded completely on 'social' grounds: then this is essentially determined thereby, that it is fundamentally connected with something outside of it, through which and in which it exists. An expression, and indeed, an "objectively" tangible expression of dependence on a relation of such a kind, and one that is therefore accessible to objective knowledge, is to be found in the fact that man is a speaking being, that he "has the word". He does not, however, have the word on a natural or social basis. Society in the human sense is not the presupposition of speech, but rather itself has as the presupposition of its existence, that the word is lodged in man. If then, in order to have a word for it, we call this spirituality in man, I, and that which is outside of him, in relation to which the 'I' exists, thou, we must remember that this I and this thou are given to us precisely through the word, and in its "inwardness"; not, however, as empty word in which dwells no relationship to reality ... but rather as a word that "reduplicates" its content and real form in the concreteness and actuality of its being spoken in and through the situation created by speech. That, in brief, is the fundamental thought. 1

1 Ferdinand Ebner, Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten (Innsbruck, 1921), pp. 12-13.

Basically, Ebner's contention is that the fact of human speech has spiritual significance. This evaluation of the fact of speech is conveyed by the subtitle of his book, "Pneumatologische Fragmente". 'I-Thou' is essentially a spiritual category. For any consideration of the 'I' in itself is concerned with the "psychological I". The 'I' which stands in relation to the 'Thou' is the "spiritual I"¹. In this connection, "the word is the vehicle of the relation between the I and the Thou."² Consequently the fact that man has words, the ability of speech, is of spiritual significance.

In this concentration on the capacity for speech we encounter both a theme which is prominent in Brunner's theology and the central problem posed by Ebner. Ebner's development of the 'word' as the vehicle of the 'I-Thou' relation assumes that the fact of speech has spiritual significance. This assumption is developed in contrast to a psychological view of man which treats of him in isolation. But while the spirituality of man is clearly differentiated from his psychological existence, it is not clear just how this spirituality functions beyond the sphere of the human 'I-Thou' encounter. Ebner does not seem to concern himself with the problem of defining the relation between human words and the Word of God. Indeed, he seems to assume a basic continuity between the two.

The Logos of John's Gospel is rightly translated in the pneumatological sense, which is the only sense which comes into consideration here, with word, verbum. And this "Word" is also in no way meant as image and symbol for the only-begotten Son of God, but may and must be understood "wordly".³

Thus while Ebner provides a concrete medium for the 'I-Thou' relation, which is lacking in Buber's formulation, he raises the question as to how this medium in the human 'I-Thou' relation is differentiated from the medium in

1 Ebner, p. 96.

2 Ibid. p. 77.

3 Ibid. pp. 78-9.

the divine-human 'I-Thou' relation. It seems that Ebner leaves this area undeveloped. It is at this point that Brunner's development of the 'I-Thou' framework begins.

We have already encountered the difficulty which Brunner's concern for the "capacity for words" raised in the debate with Barth. In that connection, Brunner clarified his position by explaining that it was merely the fact of human speech which concerned him, and that he regarded that as an indirect point of contact for the Word of God in so far as proclamation of the Word presupposes a knowledge of grammar and an appreciation for the logical development of thought. We must now examine this concern for human speech more closely in the light of the 'I-Thou' framework. For in Brunner's development of the 'I-Thou', he regards the relation between the 'I' and the 'Thou' as essentially twofold: on the one hand, it is accomplished through speech, and on the other hand, through responsibility. "Speech is reason-¹ in-community", and "community is simply responsibility in its concrete form."² At this point we must observe a subtlety in the German language which is not approximated in English. In German, word, answer, and responsibility, all derive from the same root - Wort, Antwort, Verantwortlichkeit. Thus there is a connection in the German language between the capacity for speech and responsibility for which the closest parallel in English is the similarity between answer and answerability. In other words, we are confronted by an inherent connection between the spheres of speech and of morality. Thus the critical question, in view of Brunner's designation of speech and responsibility as the distinctive characteristics of the 'I-Thou' relation, is: Does man's ability for speech also involve an ability for moral self-assertion? In terms of the distinction between the human 'I-Thou' relation and the divine-human

1 MiW p. 176. E.T. p. 176.

2 Ibid. p. 139. E.T. p. 138.

'I-Thou' relation, the question becomes: Does the fact that man can respond to words also imply that he can respond to the Word? We have already seen that there is difficulty in Brunner's theology in distinguishing between moral and religious responsibility. It is in terms of this difficulty that the adequacy of Brunner's formulation of the 'I-Thou' relation will have to be assessed.

In addition to the question as to the nature of the 'I-Thou' relation, and the meaning of 'responsibility', raised by Ebner's development of the category in terms of the medium of the word, Buber's distinction between the 'I-Thou' and the 'I-It' dimensions of life also raises a question which is significant in Brunner's development of the 'I-Thou'. Brunner develops the category in contrast to the rationalistic Zeitgeist. In this context, his distinction between the two dimensions, the 'I-Thou' and the 'I-It', seems to be much more pronounced than it is in Buber's presentation. Consequently this raises the question as to the significance of the 'I-It' dimension. This too has already been encountered in our previous analysis in the form of Brunner's "law of closeness of relation", by which he distinguishes between the spheres of the personal and the impersonal. We suggested that this principle offered a promising means of accounting for man's continuing greatness in spite of sin, while still preserving the affirmation of the totality of sin; but we also acknowledged that it is a most delicate matter as to how one distinguishes between the personal and the impersonal. In the evaluation of Brunner's development of the 'I-Thou' framework, we must concern ourselves with the question as to the success of his differentiation of these respective elements.

These, then, represent the central issues in the 'I-Thou' framework as Brunner develops it: the question as to the nature of the 'I-Thou' relation, and the question as to the significance of the 'I-It' dimension within this framework. But these are not two separate issues, rather they are intimately related. Consequently it would represent an artificial abstraction to pursue the two questions independently of one another. Instead, we shall seek to analyse Brunner's development of the 'I' and the 'Thou' in terms of the two possible relations which may obtain between them, the relation based on the Imperative and that based on the Indicative, bearing in mind throughout the question as to the significance of the impersonal in both types of relation. But since this relation is described by Brunner in terms of 'responsibility', it will be well for us to review this concept, before proceeding to the questions of the Imperative and the Indicative, in an effort to appreciate precisely what is at stake here.

c. Responsibility and Guilt

We have suggested¹ that the central problem in Brunner's theology revolves around the meaning of the term 'responsibility'. On the one hand, responsibility can be predicated of man himself. In this connection, responsibility is essentially a moral term designating man as an answerable moral agent. It is this sense of the term which is conveyed by Brunner's description of man as essentially a responsible being. "Responsibility is not an attribute, it is the 'substance' of human existence."² On the other hand, responsibility can be predicated of man's relation to God. In this connection, responsibility is a religious term. It is this sense which the term conveys in Brunner's insistence that man owes his very being to God,

¹ See above pp. 108, 210.

² MiW p. 55. E.T. p. 50.

and therefore is understandable only in terms of his creation by and for God. "Responsibility is existence in the Word of God as an existence which is derived from and destined for the Word of God."¹ Yet it is not at all clear that this distinction between moral and religious responsibility represents an accurate interpretation of these respective emphases which the word receives in Brunner's theology. The difficulty comes out most clearly in a statement such as: "Man was not, in his origin, a responsible being, but he is still a responsible being, even in his irresponsibility, there, where he denies his responsibility and sets himself in opposition to his origin."² This may mean that man owes his being to God, irrespective of his acknowledgement of this fact; or it may mean that man is morally answerable to God, irrespective of his relation to God. If this latter is involved, then it is implied that man stands on his own feet opposite God on the basis of his 'works', in which case some form of a meritorious covenant of works will be inevitable. For it is an essential feature of moral responsibility that it implies a certain freedom. If a man is to be held morally answerable for an action, it is implied that he freely chose to commit the action for which he is held accountable. The problem of religious responsibility is not quite so straight forward. For while responsibility for sin, not merely sins, implies the free choice of becoming sinner, it also involves the 'inevitability' which has received traditional formulation in the doctrine of Original Sin. Man is responsible for being a sinner, but this responsibility is corporate as well as individual.

³
We have seen that Brunner does not do justice to the depth involved in the traditional doctrine of Original Sin. Indeed, in the final analysis, he subordinates the concept of the solidarity in sin to that of the universality

1 MiW p. 57. E.T. p. 53.

2 Ibid. p. 82. E.T. p. 79.

3 See above p. 217.

of sin. This may indicate that we are here confronted by a suppression of the paradoxical concept of religious responsibility, in the interests of an individualistic moral responsibility. This possibility is further suggested by the ambiguity in the word 'responsibility' itself, as we have seen it in connection with Ebner's emphasis on the speaking ability of man. The fact that man has the word (Wort) implies that he can be expected to give the answer (Antwort). This may mean that he is answerable in that he responds to words, or that he is morally answerable, i.e. has responsibility (Verantwortlichkeit). This movement from answerability in the sphere of speech to answerability in the moral sphere may also be involved in Brunner's discussion of responsibility. For, as we have seen, responsibility has a third meaning for Brunner, namely, the formal concept of 'responsiveness'. Man is responsible in that his basic nature is one of responding. This could apply as well to the sphere of speech where man responds to words, as to the moral sphere where man responds to claims. The difficulty comes when this is applied to the religious sphere. For man cannot be called upon to respond to God as a moral being responding to a claim. God's claim must be preceded by and included in the indicative of grace. The real issue at stake here is the question of guilt.

Guilt, like responsibility, bears a moral and a religious sense. Moral guilt concerns answerability for specific acts. Religious guilt, on the other hand, is concerned with the orientation of life as a whole. Yet a positivistic demarcation of spheres does not provide a satisfactory account of the complexity of guilt. For moral and religious guilt are related, although unlike. Moral guilt does not bear a one to one relationship to moral responsibility. This is shown in the normal use of language. In ordinary speech, the adjective 'guilty' is used in connection with morality

more readily than the noun 'guilt'. The noun 'guilt' carries a psychological connotation in modern every-day speech. It is employed in the sense of 'guilt feelings' or 'a sense of guilt'. This popular use of the term 'guilt' indicates something more evasive than a designation of accountability for a specific act. Thus when we shift the emphasis from 'responsibility' to 'guilt', we are approaching a perspective which is more amenable to the sphere of theology. For theology is concerned with 'guilt' in a sense which transcends the sphere of the moral. In theology guilt refers to the direction of life as a whole. In theological terms, it refers to man's self-willed alienation from God. This similarity between theology and psychology on the question of guilt gives us a vantage point from which to examine Brunner's doctrine of responsibility. For the difficulty which Brunner's presentation of responsibility occasions centers in the ambiguity of moral and religious responsibility. 'Guilt' as a psychological and a theological term comes in between these two senses of responsibility, and thus provides a focal point for the clarification of Brunner's meaning.

Psychologically, 'guilt' is subjective in that it refers to a sense of guilt or guilt feelings. It is not lacking in objective reference, but this objective reference is indefinite, and indeed may be merely a projection. The focal point is the subject himself. Theologically, 'guilt' is objective in that it refers to man's separation from God. It is not so much concerned with 'guilt feelings' as with the objective fact, disclosed in God's self-manifestation, that man has left the Father. Both the subjective and objective senses of the term 'guilt' are presented by Brunner. The former, the sense of guilt, is presented as the distinctive mark of humanity - "there

is nothing more profoundly human than the sense of guilt; nothing in which the lost image of God manifests its presence more clearly."¹ The latter, the objective reality of guilt, is presented as the unalterable self-alienation of man from God.

Sin is not that I have done something wrong, sin is that I have separated myself from God. ... we have to add "guilt" of sin. For sin is the destruction of personal communion with God, and, as such, is a fact which we ourselves cannot alter. ... The gate of paradise has been closed; before it stands the cherub with the flaming sword, not allowing us to return. 2

Now, the crucial question is: How are these two senses of the word 'guilt' related? Our analysis is facilitated at this point by a middle term which Brunner develops as the link between objective and subjective guilt, the term 'conscience'.

Conscience, in Brunner's presentation, refers to both the subjective feelings of guilt and the objective reality of guilt. Subjectively, conscience represents an alarm signal indicating "general disorder".

Conscience makes its presence felt on certain occasions of actual wrong-doing or of failure; but as soon as it makes its voice heard it announces more than this particular instance of wrong-doing or failure. It proclaims this fault as an outbreak of the contradiction as a whole, as a manifestation of "general disorder". 3

Objectively, conscience represents the perverted relation to God. "The bad conscience is the way in which we, as sinners, experience the presence of God. It is, so to say, the negative Holy Spirit, the wrath of God as experience, life under the curse of the law as a psychological reality."⁴ This double fact of conscience represents two perspectives. In the former, Brunner, the psychologist, is reiterating a fact common to everyone acquainted with modern psychology's view of man, the fact of the anxiety and restlessness of human life. In the latter, Brunner, the theologian, is announcing from

1 MiW p. 178. E.T. p. 178.

2 The Scandal of Christianity, p. 76.

3 Gu0 p. 141. E.T. pp. 156-7.

4 MiW pp. 202-3. E.T. p. 203.

the perspective of the Christian faith that this anxiety and restlessness is not simply a psychological phenomenon, but is grounded in the objective reality of man's self-alienation from God. Here again, we encounter the difficulty raised in our analysis of Brunner's concept of responsibility. On the one hand, this knowledge of objective guilt is presented as the knowledge of faith.

The man who has lost innocence can no longer appreciate what the loss of it means. To know whence we have fallen we must be able to see our original "place" still, or to see it again. Accordingly the testimony of faith is that knowledge of sin coincides with the miracle of the reinstatement of the lost, i.e. the "justification of the sinner". 1

The gradations in the seriousness of the sense of guilt, subjectively considered, are only quantitative in comparison to the qualitative distinction between the subjective sense of guilt and the knowledge of objective guilt accessible only in faith.² This insistence on the co-ordination of objective guilt and forgiveness is the primary emphasis in Brunner's presentation of the subject.³ Yet in addition to this primary emphasis there is a secondary strand in his presentation which suggests that the return of the "origin" in Christ is not the only possibility. This strand suggests that man can be summoned to return to the origin himself.

Certainly, apart from God man can do nothing but sin - per definitionem. But there is something else that he can do, and this he ought to do - he can and should believe, that is, turn away from his false freedom and return to union with God. 4

It is interesting to note that this statement occurs in the context of a refutation of the humanistic objection to the serious view of bondage represented by the Christian doctrine of sin. This may indicate that we are not to take the statement too literally. On the other hand, it may indicate

1 RPh p. 37. E.T. p. 77. 2 Fr n Anknpt p. 524.

3 GuO p. 142. E.T. p. 158; Mitt. p. 186. E.T. p. 212; WGM p. 22.

4 MiW p. 271. E.T. p. 274.

that the context determines Brunner's formulations in that he deviates from the basic position he is attempting to affirm when he tries to formulate that position as a rebuttal to an external objection from an alien frame of reference. Thus it may be that this statement is a further indication of Brunner's battle with moral idealism. Certainly if we are to take the statement as it stands, then man can be held responsible for guilt. He who has separated himself from God, and who is involved in the separation of humanity from God, can be challenged to reverse this separation. If this is true, then the basic position which Brunner is affirming is undermined. The point at issue is the Christian concept of repentance. It is in terms of Brunner's treatment of this concept that the final evaluation of his treatment of guilt, and hence also of responsibility, will have to be made. For the present difficulty concerns the relationship of repentance to forgiveness. Brunner's fundamental position affirms that repentance can be real only in the context of forgiveness. Yet there is also a strand which declares that "repentance is the presupposition of atonement."¹ The wider context of this problem involves the question as to the significance of the Imperative and the Indicative in the 'I-Thou' framework. Thus it is to these wider issues that we now turn, in preparation for an evaluation of Brunner's understanding of repentance.

C. I-THOU AND IMPERATIVE

Brunner's concept of repentance involves a dialectic of law which, according to Brunner himself, and from all appearances, parallels the dialectic of Law and Gospel formulated by Luther. Thus we are cast into the central

¹ Mitt. p. 480. E.T. p. 529.

issues of Luther's theology, and find ourselves confronted by questions on which Luther scholars are sharply divided. Yet, in spite of the forbidding nature of the task, we must attempt some understanding of Luther's doctrine. In this we shall rely heavily upon the excellent compilation of Luther's key references to "Law" and to "Law and Gospel" edited by Ewald M. Plass in What Luther Says: An Anthology, Volume II.

a. Apparent Similarity between Brunner and Luther on "Law"

We have already seen that Brunner's allegiance to the Reformers sets a high priority on Luther, to the point of regarding him as "the one teacher who in all the Church is nearest to the mind of Christ."¹ This allegiance is paramount in the matter of the doctrine of the Law. "Luther understood the Pauline conception of law more clearly than Calvin."² Yet, in spite of this allegiance, Brunner claims no comprehensive grasp of Luther's doctrine of Law. He acknowledges the complexity of Luther's utterances on the subject. "Indeed, Luther's utterances about the Law are in the highest measure full of contradictions; now it belongs to the devil, now to God, now it is eternal and good as God Himself, now his whole conception of salvation depends on it."³ There can be no doubt about the accuracy of this assessment. But it is an assessment which is equally applicable to Brunner's statements on the Law. For Brunner's doctrine of Law shares many of the contradictory assertions proffered by Luther. Thus an understanding of Brunner's doctrine of Law may be facilitated by a survey of the major points of comparison with Luther's doctrine.

Both Luther and Brunner use the term "Law" to refer to the Law of Moses, and to the natural law. For Luther, the Law of Moses, the Decalogue,

¹ DIII E.T. p. 191. ² R&R p. 332n.

³ "Der Zorn Gottes und die Versöhnung durch Christus", ZdZ, 5, Heft 2 (1927), p. 102.

is not original to Moses.

The Decalog is not of Moses, nor did God give it to him first. On the contrary, the Decalog belongs to the whole world; it was written and engraved in the minds of all human beings from the beginning of the world. 1

Thus the Law as it is presented in the Decalogue is a restatement of the natural law which is written in the heart from creation. The restatement is necessary, however, because through sin the law written in the heart has been clouded and darkened.

Later on, since men had finally come to the point of caring neither for God nor for men, God was compelled to renew these laws through Moses and, after writing them with his fingers on tables, to place them before our eyes in order to present to us what we were before the fall of Adam and what someday we are to be in Christ. 2

Yet this natural law written in the heart from creation is not insignificant. It is only because of this natural law that the Law of Moses can be recognized. The preaching of the Law of Moses strikes man because of the original law written in his heart.³ Brunner follows Luther in this relation of the Law of Moses and the natural law. "Although this natural law written in the heart may be 'dimmer' than that which is revealed in the Scriptures, yet here there is no difference in principle."⁴

Not only do Brunner and Luther seem to present a similar conception of the Law, but they also seem to be in agreement on the 'office' of the Law. Luther distinguishes between the Law and the Gospel by asserting that the former demands, while the latter gives.⁵ Consequently where justification is concerned, we have to do only with the Gospel. "In a word, the Law must be separated from justification as far as the heavens are separated from the

1 Luther, Disputations Against the Antinomians, W.A. 39 I, 478, in What Luther Says: An Anthology, ed. Ewald M. Flass (Saint Louis, 1959), II, 748, sec. 2311.

2 Ibid. W.A. 39 I, 454, Flass, p. 748, sec. 2313.

3 Luther, "Exposition of Exodus 20:5", Flass, pp. 748-9, sec. 2314.

4 MiW p. 504. E.T. p. 520.

5 Luther, Commentary on Galatians, W.A. 40 I, 336f., Flass, p. 733, sec. 2279.

earth."¹ This does not mean that the Law is useless. Luther has issued extensive warnings against this logical conclusion which man naturally draws from the message of the Gospel that justification is not be the Law.² The Law has a very definite function and value, but this is different from the function and value of the Gospel. The Law exercises a "ministry of wrath", the Gospel a "ministry of grace".³ Plass summarizes Luther's distinction between the respective offices of Law and Gospel thus: "the Law kills the sinner, not the sin; the Gospel kills sin, not the sinner."⁴ In spite of the danger of generalizations, this seems to represent the heart of Luther's doctrine of Law and Gospel, and it is a distinction which Luther regarded not only as the most important task of Christian theology,⁵ but also as the most difficult in practice.⁶ Yet in itself the Law has a very definite value and, according to Luther, a twofold function. First, it has a civic use in restraining sin and maintaining order.⁷ Secondly, it has a theological function in terms of its ministry of wrath. In this sense, the Law multiplies and exposes sin. This is "the true function and chief and proper use of the Law."⁸ Because of this theological function, the Law must precede the Gospel. "Before receiving the comfort of forgiveness, sin must be recognized and the fear of God's wrath must be experienced through the preaching or apprehension of the Law, that man may be driven to sigh for grace and may be prepared to receive the comfort of the Gospel."⁹ Thus Luther advocates repentance through the Law. Yet this is a relative matter. For whether the Law or the Gospel should be preached can be determined only from the given situation.

1 Luther, Disputations, W.A. 39 I, 418, Plass, p. 753, sec. 2332.

2 Luther, Commentary on Galatians, W.A. 40 I, 475f. E.T. Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen (Saint Louis, 1963), 26, 305f.

3 Plass, p. 736. 4 Ibid. p. 735.

5 Luther, "Sermon on Galatians 3:23-4", W.A. 36, 25, Plass, p. 732, sec. 2276.

6 Luther, Commentary on Galatians, W.A. 40 I, 141, Plass, p. 744, sec. 2302.

7 Ibid. W.A. 40 I, 479. E.T. 26, 308.

8 Ibid. W.A. 40 I, 480. E.T. 26, 309.

9 Luther, "Sermon on Luke 5:1-11", W.A. 22, 188, Plass p. 738, sec. 2286.

When one does not preach faith and does not let our incorporation in Christ and our becoming a branch in Him be the matter of first importance, all the world relies on its good works. On the other hand, when one teaches only faith, people become false Christians, who, to be sure, highly commend faith, are baptized and numbered with the Christians, and yet show neither fruit nor spiritual power. For this reason it is never right, no matter how you preach to them; they always lean to one side. If you do not preach of faith, their works become purely hypocritical. If you urge faith alone, works will not follow. 1

Thus Luther's conception of the 'office' of the Law clearly distinguishes it from the Gospel with regard to justification, and yet gives it a significant place as a civic restraint and a theological preparation for the Gospel. Once again, Brunner's doctrine appears to present a parallel to Luther's position. Brunner affirms the two uses of the Law which are paramount in Luther's presentation.

Within God's plan it [i.e. the Law] is important in a twofold connection. It has first a protecting significance ... And secondly, from the Law springs the knowledge of sin. 2

On this basis, Brunner presents a doctrine of Law-repentance which echoes Luther's formulation.³ Thus on the whole, Brunner's doctrine of Law would seem to represent a reformulation of Luther's position. Yet there are basic differences. It is to these differences that we now turn.

b. Differences between Brunner and Luther on "Law"

The similarity between Brunner's conception of Law and that of Luther may be more apparent than real. Two aspects of Brunner's presentation suggest that there is something very different here from that which is involved in Luther's doctrine. First, the parallels which we have noted between the two doctrines occur, for the most part, in explicit references either to Luther or to Scripture. When Brunner is concerned with the systematic

1 Luther, Commentary on John, Flagg, p. 741, sec. 2296.

2 The Letter to the Romans, p. 141.

3 MiW pp. 505f. E.T. pp. 522-3.

exposition of his own doctrine of Law, concepts are employed which are foreign to Luther's presentation. Secondly, the over-all impression conveyed by Brunner's presentation of the doctrine of the Law differs from that conveyed by Luther's utterances on the subject. It seems, in fact, that Brunner's doctrine is expounded in a context very different from that in which Luther is working.

Luther's doctrine of Law is developed in terms of the contrast between Law and Gospel. In this context, Law is described as the condemning, demanding Word of God, in contrast to which the Gospel stands as the freely pardoning Word of God. We have suggested that Brunner's doctrine represents a parallel to this. Yet we must now observe that it also represents a striking contrast. For the antithesis of Law and Gospel is presented by Brunner as the antithesis of law and love. On the one hand, Brunner affirms a position which is strongly reminiscent of Luther.

The law only reveals the sin of man in the sight of God. ... It can only forbid sin. But it has not the power to deliver man from the power of sin. Only through the justification of the sinner, of which man receives assurance in the cross of Jesus Christ, is man set free from the power of sin, brought into a new relation to God, and receives the love of God. 1

On the other hand, this contrast between the bondage of the Law and the deliverance of the Cross is presented as the contrast between the demand for love and the impossibility of its realization. "The law demands: You should love; but this law is powerless. Merely demanded love is a thing of impossibility."² This difference of phrasing may not be particularly significant in itself. It may be merely a different way of saying the same thing. Yet the context in which this version of the antithesis occurs suggests that there is more involved here than merely a question of terminology.

1 DIII E.T. p. 307.

2 Glaube und Ethik (Thun, 1945), p. 22.

For Brunner continues:

In Kant it means: You ought, therefore you can. Now we know: Because the content of the "You ought" is love, the statement must run precisely the opposite: You ought to love, therefore you cannot. If you could, you would not "ought", but would without an ought. 1

This latter statement implies a thought which would have been completely strange to Luther. For Brunner seems to be affirming that the command to love is illegitimate. Its existence is self-contradictory. At this point we have left the theological presentation of the doctrine of Law, and turned to a polemical comparison between the Christian concept of the bondage of sin and the optimism of Kantian moral theory.

Brunner's presentation of the dialectic of Law and Gospel in terms of an antithesis to the Kantian moral theory represents that secondary strand which we have detected in his theology. In this context, Brunner affirms not that man cannot justify himself before God, which is the whole point of the Law-Gospel dialectic, but that the idea of love being commanded is inherently contradictory. The source of this view is to be found in the Kantian theory which he is opposing.

Love to God is impossible ... For a command to like to do a thing is itself contradictory ... and no creature can ever reach this stage of moral disposition. ... Love, which apprehends no inner reluctance of the will toward the law ... would cease to be virtue. Such a love would be 'religious enthusiasm'. 2

The antithesis here is not between law and love as relations to God, but between will and emotion within man himself. The net result of this acceptance of the Kantian dichotomy is that Brunner is left with a false paradox.

Love - and this is the paradox - is the one thing signified in all these commandments, but by that very fact it cannot be commanded, and does not come into existence through the command.

1 Glaube und Ethik, p. 22.

2 Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Ab. pp. 176-7, quoted in WaB E.T. p. 29n.

The commandment of Love, since it emphasizes the whole meaning of all the commandments, eliminates itself as commandment. Love can only be present where it is given, not where it is commanded. 1

The Achilles' heel of this conclusion is the fact that love is commanded.

Brunner knows this well, and affirms it when he is dealing with the Biblical message itself.² But when he is concerned with the development of his doctrine of law, he adopts the Kantian dichotomy between will and emotion, duty and inclination.

This internalization of the Law-Gospel dialectic in the antithesis of law and love, will and inclination, brings us to the other striking difference between Luther's doctrine of Law and that which is presented by Brunner. We have seen that Luther thinks of Law in terms of the natural law written in the heart in creation and the Law of Moses, the Decalogue, which is a restatement of the law originally written in the heart. Thus it is the one Law of God which is involved in Luther's presentation. But Luther also uses the term 'law' to refer to the legalistic attempt at justification. It is in this sense of the term that law is contrasted with Gospel.

... what exactly does Luther mean by 'the law'? Like Paul, he oscillates between 'Law' in the strictly Jewish sense (the Law of Moses) and 'law' generally as a method of self-salvation. Occasionally the distinction can be indicated by using a capital 'L' where the Old Testament Law is intended; but it is not always possible to be sure which meaning Luther has in mind, and often, no doubt, no distinction is required. 3

It is this double reference of the term 'law' which creates the major obstacle in the interpretation of Luther's doctrine of Law. It is also here that the major difficulty in Brunner's doctrine is disclosed. The difficulty is poignantly represented by two contradictory evaluations of Luther's position. On the one hand, Brunner affirms that, so far as this conception of law as

1 DII pp. 264-5. E.T. p. 224.

2 DI E.T. p. 197.

3 B.A. Gerrish, Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther (Oxford, 1962), p. 107.

the antithesis of the Gospel is concerned, the question as to the definition of the 'Law' involved is insignificant. "It does not matter whether it is the Jewish Law, or the law written in man's heart; it is all the same (Rom. i and ii); in any case it is clearly opposed to the righteousness of faith (Rom. iii), although 'in some way or other' it is God's own Law."¹ On the other hand, in spite of this assurance that the identification of the 'Law' in question is unimportant, Brunner asserts that Luther's primary concern is the natural law.

The Jewish Law as such has no longer much interest for Luther. But he is intensely interested in ... the law which is written in the heart of man, which he also describes by the phrase lex naturae, which comes - through the patristic literature - from the Stoics. 2

It is rather curious that a matter of indifference should suddenly become a matter of intense concern. We saw in our examination of Brunner's evaluation of Kant's Opus Postumum that the extreme tension which he found there between autonomy and theonomy was more reflective of a tension in his own thought than in that of Kant. So too we must now suspect that this intense concern for the law written in the heart is more indicative of Brunner's own position than it is of Luther's.

Brunner's interpretation of Luther is largely determined by the outstanding Luther scholar of the last century, Theodosius Harnack. In Brunner's opinion, "Harnack seems to have solved almost completely"³ this major difficulty in the interpretation of Luther, the understanding of the Law-Gospel dialectic. Harnack's solution revolves around the twofold knowledge of God, the Knowledge of God in the Law and the knowledge of God in the Gospel. The success of this solution rests on the contention that

1 MiW p. 502. E.T. p. 518.

2 Ibid.

3 "Der Zorn Gottes und die Versöhnung durch Christus", p. 102.

"the knowledge from the law is known to the reason."¹ The contention, as such, is easily substantiated. For Luther has stated this himself. "Thus far comes the reason in knowledge of God, that it has legal knowledge, that it knows God's command, and what is right or wrong." (So weit kömet die Vernunft in Gottes erkenntnis, das sie hat cognitionem legalem, das sie weis Gottes gebot, und was recht oder unrecht ist.)² But from this affirmation of the cognitio legalis, Harnack concludes that this law is as valid a base for the Law-Gospel dialectic as is the Law of Moses. "When Luther speaks of the Law in connection with the fact of the salvation of the whole human race, so he does not mean a particular temporary form of the same, as the Mosaic, which is only valid for the Jews, but the law in its unity and universality ..."³ This line of interpretation can be substantiated from scattered statements in Luther's writings, but it overlooks one major element in Luther's doctrine of the Law. The fact is that for Luther sin has not left this law written in the heart intact. Thus, as another Luther scholar affirms, the Law must be preached to man.

Should the natural law again be awakened in man, so must it be preached to him on the basis of Scripture. Man no more bears it in himself, that it comes without preaching; but conversely the preaching of the Law touches the heart only because the law is originally written in the heart. 4

It would seem that the line of interpretation which Brunner follows emphasizes the latter half of this dialectic at the expense of the former. The law written in the heart, by means of which the Law of Moses is recognized, overshadows the fact that the Law of Moses must be preached. In fact, Luther's doctrine of Law and Gospel seems to present a twofold dialectic, the dialectic

1 Theodosius Harnack, Luthers Theologie (Erlangen, 1862), Part I, 93.

2 Luther, Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, W.A. 46, 668. E.T. Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis, 1957), 22, 151.

3 Harnack, p. 488.

4 Paul Althaus, Die Ethik Martin Luthers (Gütersloh, 1965), p. 35.

of natural law and the Law of Moses, and the dialectic of Law and Gospel. Some such construction will have to be affirmed if one is to do justice to Luther's varied pronouncements on the subject. Yet Brunner systematizes Luther's doctrine into a single Law-Gospel dialectic. Luther's doctrine presents us with a complex of situations, that of the "natural man", the Jew, the would-be Christian, the Christian, etc. But this diversity is condensed in Brunner's presentation into the antithesis of "being under the law" or "being in Christ". "Being 'under the law' - in contrast to being 'in Christ' - means that man stands upon his own feet; it appeals to that which man can do for himself."¹ This contrast between "being under the law" and "being in Christ" is, in itself, a fundamental axiom of Luther's theology. But when Brunner proceeds to apply this contrast to men in general, he neglects an important element of Luther's doctrine, namely, that the Law must be preached. He does not concern himself with the question as to the 'Law' which is involved in the Law-Gospel dialectic.

In the concept of law for the Reformers something like a unity of morality and religion is given, about which we do not have to ask more widely concerning the more exact content of these laws and of their relation to the "Law of Moses" and to the "Law of Christ". 2

Thus Brunner systematizes the two primary meanings of 'Law' in Luther's presentation, the Law of Moses which is a restatement of the law written in the heart, and law as a method of self-salvation. The end result is a formulation which is very different from that which Luther presents. It is a formulation which can be substantiated from Luther's writings, but one which neglects important elements of his doctrine in the interests of systematization. The contrast between the two is more one of perspective

1 DII p. 262. E.T. p. 222.

2 Fr n Anknptk p. 516.

rather than one of divergence on specific issues. Since Brunner's doctrine of 'Law' is formulated in the context of the I-Thou framework, we can expect to find some explanation for the difference of perspective through an examination of the relation between I-Thou and the Law.

c. Law and Imperative in the I-Thou Framework

Brunner presents Luther's Law-Gospel dialectic as a dialectic of law and love in which the contradiction between legalism and faith is presented as the contradiction inherent in the notion of love being commanded. On the other hand, he systematizes Luther's two meanings of 'Law', the Law of Moses which is a restatement of the natural law, and law as a method of self-salvation, into a unified conception of law as the antithesis to the Gospel. The two developments in Brunner's presentation are intimately related. For law as opposed to love is both a statement of the contrast between legalism and faith, and a statement of the contrast between the personal and the rational. It is in this context, the context of the contrast between the personal and the rational, that Brunner's doctrine of law is developed.

Brunner presents the contrast between law and love as a contrast between law as a prescription and love as a spontaneous identification. "Between me and God, between me and my neighbour, there stands this 'something', the law which it is possible to define; the neighbour becomes a 'case'."¹ Instead of the immediacy of love, the legal relation separates me from God and from my neighbour. Yet this is not simply a contrast between the calculated less or more of legalism and the superabundance of love. It is also a contrast between law as a material reality and love as a formal

¹ GuO p. 122. E.T. p. 138.

relation. In this sense Law represents an alien element in the personal relation of faith. This embarrassment to the personal framework caused by the material concept of Law is most pointed in the question as to the relation between Law and Christ. The truth in the contrast between "being under the law" and "being in Christ" is absolutized, so that it is difficult to see the connection between Christ and the Law.

The commandment of Love is not only the heart of the law, it is also its end. Christ is the end of the Law, not only its fulfilment. He who is in Christ is "no longer under the law". One who is filled with the love of God does not need to be commanded to love God; we cannot "order" such a person to do this or that as the law does. 1

Brunner is aware that Christ is the fulfilment of the Law.² But there is another strand in his presentation which by-passes this relation between Christ and the Law. In this second strand, he describes the atonement as transcending the moral sphere.

God passes over the whole moral formulation of the question. Being good is of no importance to me now, he says: what matters to me is your being with me. 3

We could overlook this statement, regarding it as an extravagant emphasis on the righteousness which is of grace, were it not for the fact that it represents a consistent strand in his argument. Indeed, he entitles a section of Wahrheit als Begegnung, "God's Act of Atonement Apart from the Law". Thus it is impossible to regard Brunner's contrast between law and love as a restatement of the Law-Gospel antithesis. It is not only legalism which is opposed to the Gospel, but Law itself.

We have suggested in considering Brunner's distinction between the rational and the personal that this distinction raises the question as to the significance of the rational; or in terms of the I-Thou framework, the

1 DII p. 264. E.T. p. 224.

2 R&R pp. 335-6.

3 The Letter to the Romans, p. 159.

emphasis on the I-Thou in contrast to the I-It dimension raises the question of the significance of the I-It. It is this question which now confronts us in connection with Brunner's doctrine of Law. For it seems quite clear that for Brunner the Law belongs in the I-It dimension. It is a 'something' which comes between the I and the Thou. It is impersonal, and renders the relation between the I and the Thou impersonal in that the Thou comes to be treated as a 'case'. Consequently the significance of the Law diminishes in proportion to the importance attached to the personal I-Thou relation. Since the I-Thou relation is all-important, the Law all but loses any significance it might otherwise have. It is relegated to the sphere of reason.

The law as a statute necessarily contains an impersonal element.
 ... It does not put me in contact with the 'Thou' - whether
 divine or human - but with the abstract entity 'reason'. 1

The Law is impersonal; but the impersonal is the sphere of reason; therefore the Law belongs to the sphere of reason. It is here that Brunner parts company with Luther, although he claims Luther's sanction for his proposal, and quotes Harnack to verify it. "The perception of the Divine law as law, that is, the cognitio legalis, also belongs in principle, according to the most strict Reformation view, to the realm of 'natural knowledge'."² We have seen that Luther does say this himself. But it is doubtful that he meant by it what Brunner means. This comes out in Brunner's next sentence. "No one is without some sense of responsibility, and there is no Christian missionary or spiritual adviser who does not make this sense of responsibility his point of contact."³ Brunner does not mean that reason knows God's Law, but that it is acquainted with the fact of law. The "sense of responsibility" is an inherent feature of human life. In Brunner's opinion, Luther's contrast

1 MiW p. 159. E.T. p. 158.

2 Ibid. p. 66. E.T. pp. 62-3.

3 Ibid. pp. 66-7. E.T. p. 63.

between Law and Gospel is concerned with Law as "the fundamental principle of the natural self-understanding of man."¹ Here the contrast between the perspectives of Brunner and Luther becomes crucial. Brunner can cite Luther as an ally in this conception of Law which he is presenting, but the fact that he does so suggests either a misunderstanding of Luther or a conscious deception. For the impression conveyed by Luther's references to the rational knowledge of Law does not suggest a perspective which is primarily concerned with the self-understanding of natural man. Rather Luther seems to refer to the knowledge of Law among non-Christian peoples in illustration of the fact that the Law is an inherent fact of creation. In so doing it is 'the Law' which is his concern, and not "the fundamental principle of the natural self-understanding of man". For he cites specific laws which the natural reason seems to affirm. "Although the same truth was stated still more clearly by Moses, it still remains true that all rational beings can of themselves determine that it is wrong to disobey father and mother, and the government, to murder, to commit adultery, steal, curse, and blaspheme."² It would be difficult to substantiate with chapter and verse the contention that Luther taught a meaning of the Law such as Brunner suggests. Brunner can substantiate his claim by combining references to the natural law and to law in the sense of legalism, but this combination seems to be foreign to Luther himself. It is a combination peculiar to the context of the rational-personal antithesis. For in this context, law belongs to the sphere of the rational. It is an 'It' which represents an intrusion in the basic I-Thou framework.

Once again, the Kantian antedecedents loom large. For it is in terms

¹ MiW p. 502. E.T. p. 518.

² Luther, Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, W.A. 46, 667. E.T. 22, 150.

of Kant's Categorical Imperative that Brunner presents his interpretation of Luther. "Thus the problem is posed of the Categorical Imperative which indwells reason; for the 'law of nature', for Luther, is always a law of obligation, even where it meets us as the Word of God in an order of creation."¹ Brunner's interpretation of Luther extracts all content from the Law, and in this way facilitates the identification of the two basic senses of 'Law' in Luther, the Law as God's Law and the law as a method of self-salvation. The law is purely formal, the Categorical Imperative, the fact of obligation per se. There is a motif at work here which is foreign to Luther, the motif which emerges from the polemical opposing of the Christian message to the perspective of Kantian moral idealism. From this perspective law is seen as a companion of reason in contrast to the Gospel which is concerned with the sphere of the personal. Thus law is interpreted in rational terms. "The Idea should be classed with the Law, and has the same dignity and the same ambiguity as the latter."² It is in this sense that the Law is contrasted with the Gospel as man's way of self-salvation as opposed to God's way of grace.³ In this antithesis between God's way and man's way, the Law occupies a boundary sphere.⁴ It is both God's Law and man's law. It is man's law in so far as it is known as laws - "we know laws but never the Law."⁵ As the Law it is God's Law, but this Law is the pure fact of law, the Categorical Imperative. Not only does Law as a material reality find no real place in the formal I-Thou framework, but in so far as it is significant, it is the purely formal Categorical Imperative.

Consequently Brunner's doctrine of Law ends in contradictions. On the one hand, he affirms that the Law is God's Law, and yet the fact of law

1 MiW p. 503. E.T. pp. 518-9.

2 Gu0 p. 591. E. T. p. 612.

3 "Gesetz und Offenbarung", p. 290.

4 Ibid. pp. 290-1.

5 Ibid.

itself is a result of sin.

The Law itself may indeed be good and holy, so far as its content is concerned. For what it demands is God's demand. But the fact that man possesses this demand in the form of the Law, is the result of sin: it has "slipped in between". 1

On the other hand, although the content of the Law is divine, this content is insignificant in comparison to the fact of law which is the result of sin. "Not what God demands is important, but whether one is willing to take the claim of God - what it always is - as the guide, the consciousness of responsibility opposite Him, the 'first command' is the decisive one."² In the I-Thou framework, Law occupies an uneasy position. It is an 'It' which must be accounted for in some way or other. To be sure, Brunner does not omit the idea of Law as a divine material reality. "The Law of God is a moment in his making of the Covenant."³ Indeed, "the Decalogue is a wonderful summary of the Law as a whole."⁴ Such statements are strongly reminiscent of Luther's position which affirms: "both are God's Word: the Law, or the Ten Commandments, and the Gospel; the latter was first given by God in Paradise, the former on Mount Sinai."⁵ But this is only one element of Brunner's presentation. It is also true that the Law is an 'It' in the I-Thou framework. Brunner's most consistent means of accounting for it is to divest it of all content and reintroduce it as the Imperative.

D. I-THOU AND INDICATIVE

a. Imperative and Indicative

There are two possible types of relation within the I-Thou framework, that which is based on the Imperative and that which is based on the

1 DII p. 263. E.T. p. 223. 2 GPhKK p. 39.

3 "The Significance of the Old Testament for Our Faith", p. 256.

4 DII pp. 257-8. E.T. p. 219.

5 Luther, "Sermon on Galatians 3:23-4", W.A. 36, 25, Plass, p. 732, sec. 2276.

Indicative. In the employment of the framework as a category for Christian theology, it is crucially important that these two types of relation be carefully distinguished, and defined in their respective settings. For if the sola gratia is to be affirmed, then the Imperative can exist only after, and within, the Indicative of grace. Brunner affirms this position in his insistence that "the Gospel is not an imperative; it is an indicative."¹ This is true of the original creation of man, as well as of the reconciliation through the Gospel. "The Primal Word is not an imperative, but it is the indicative of the Divine Love: 'Thou art mine'."² And it is only on the basis of this indicative that the imperative is issued.

... First the gift (Gabe), then the task (Aufgabe). Of course this "then" is not chronological. Gift and task are not to be separated from each other. The act in which God comes toward his people and in which he confronts his people is the same act. ³

This we take to be an affirmation of the sola gratia principle of the Reformers. The primary and comprehensive word is the indicative of grace, and it is only within this indicative that the imperative can be established.

Once again, however, we are not confronted by a simple re-affirmation of the Reformation position. Indeed, it is particularly in this question of the relation between imperative and indicative that the significance of that second strand of thought in Brunner's presentation becomes clear. Brunner's affirmation that "there is, indeed, a certain analogy between Kant's conception that personal being can only be grasped as freedom under the imperative and what we said about responsibility"⁴ raises the alarm signal. For this emphasis on the Kantian Imperative threatens to undermine the primary position which Brunner is attempting to affirm. Brunner seems to regard the moral personality, engendered by the Categorical Imperative, as but one step removed

¹ W&W p. 125.

² M&W p. 100. E.T. p. 98.

³ "The Significance of the Old Testament for Our Faith", p. 255.

⁴ WaB E.T. p. 19.

from the personality created in the indicative of grace. It is his contention that "through this Categorical Imperative I first know that I am an 'I', a responsible subject."¹ The purely formal duty for duty's sake effects the emergence of personality. It is "through the 'You ought!'" that my personality is called into existence."² In effect, Brunner seems to be affirming that man's realization of himself as a moral person is the first step to his appreciation of the indicative of grace. If this is Brunner's position, then there can be no question of the priority of the indicative of grace. Not only does the indicative come second, but it is dependent on the prior imperative. It may be that Brunner succeeds in reconciling these two elements in his concept of repentance. This will be the place where the final clarification can be expected. In the light of these assertions regarding the importance of the Categorical Imperative, however, it seems that we are confronted by two mutually exclusive trains of thought. This evaluation is strengthened by Brunner's insistence on the form of the imperative even in expressing the indicative of grace.

The First Commandment also begins with the indicative: I AM the Lord thy God. But this indicative must be heard: Thou shalt have none other gods before ME. ... It is the Lord who commands - on pain of punishment - that we are to take His grace seriously. 3

It is not easy to see how this insistence that even the indicative upon which the commandments are based must be heard as an imperative can be reconciled with the primacy of the indicative which is the essential position Brunner is attempting to affirm. It is quite compatible with this position to affirm that the indicative must be followed by the imperative.

The new man exists and continues to exist only in the obedience of faith. This is his reality. Therefore immediately behind the indicative: "Thou art the new man", stands the imperative: "Be the new man". 4

1 GPhKK p. 39. 2 Ibid.
 3 Mitt. p. 565. E.T. pp. 618-9.
 4 GuO p. 145. E.T. p. 161.

But Brunner's concern for the imperative is not confined to this insistence that it be affirmed within the context of the indicative. In so far as he goes beyond this, he endangers his sola gratia principle. The final decision will have to be made in terms of Brunner's doctrine of repentance, but before this doctrine is examined, one other aspect of Brunner's presentation must be noticed. The question of the respective significance of the imperative and the indicative is grounded in a deeper question, the question as to the nature of the Atonement. Consequently, before investigating Brunner's doctrine of repentance, we must turn to the question of the treatment of the Atonement in the I-Thou framework.

b. I-Thou and Einmaligkeit

We have seen that Brunner's insistence on the personal I-Thou relation creates an embarrassment with regard to "Law". For in this context the Law is an "It", and consequently finds no integral place in the I-Thou framework. We should expect to find a similar situation with regard to the Mediator. For it is not easy to see how a concept of a Mediator can have an integral place in this framework in which the emphasis is on the present relation between God and man. We should expect the doctrine of the Spirit to play the dominant role, while the doctrine of the Mediator and the 'historic' Atonement will represent a foreign element.

The question which concerns us is really the question of the 'objective' in the subject-subject framework. It is the question of the 'historic' Atonement effected once for all in the Incarnation. The first thing that must be said about this question in terms of Brunner's presentation is that the suspicion that it must represent a foreign element would seem to be

unfounded. For Brunner's writings abound in references to the Atonement effected through the Incarnation: "Faith is first and foremost a relationship to this factum perfectum, to God's saving act in the past."¹ Not only is this the ground of faith, but it is an event of cosmic significance which is valid for all time.

Here the decision is made in history. Jesus Christ is therefore the fullness of time because in him occurs the turning point of the ages. ...

... This is the decision which alone deserves the name of decision in the profoundest sense of the word. It is therefore the decision which either is never, or only once, made. 2

This Einmaligkeit,³ once-for-allness of the Atonement, although it would seem to represent an intrusion in the I-Thou framework, is, in fact, one of the dominant themes of Brunner's theology. This is not surprising when we realize that Brunner is a theologian of the Reformation tradition. His central affirmation is: "the Christian faith is simply faith in Jesus Christ."⁴

Brunner has affirmed his allegiance to the faith of the Fathers in a memorable passage in the "Preface" to Der Mittler.

I have nothing new to say; on the contrary, my main concern is to make clear that what is said here has been the faith of the Christian Church from the very earliest days. 5

Yet, in spite of this claim to be re-affirming the age-old message of the Christian faith, Brunner's remarks in the opening paragraph of this same "Preface" reveal that there is also a novel element involved in his presentation.

"God alone matters": this is the one question which concerns humanity supremely. ... But the thing that matters supremely is not whether man is "aware" of, or has a "feeling" for "something divine", but whether he knows God as the One who challenges him to decision. The question of God - in the form of decision - is the question of Christ. Religion, and an incipient "awareness" of the Divine, exists indeed in every

1 DIII E.T. p. 4.

2 WGM p. 62.

3 Mitt. p. 7. E.T. p. 25.

4 DII p. 281. E.T. p. 239.

5 Mitt. "Vortwort" p. VI. E.T. "Preface" p. 14.

part of the world, but there is only one "place" at which God challenges man to decision, because He Himself confronts man: Jesus Christ. 1

Brunner may be presenting "the faith of the Christian Church from the very earliest days", but he is presenting it in an age which has learned the superiority of the practical reason, the importance of 'decision', and the awareness of 'confrontation'. Thus the question is: Does Brunner succeed in presenting "the faith of the Christian Church from the very earliest days" in this context of 'decision' and 'confrontation'?

Once again, we encounter two lines of thought in Brunner's presentation. One affirms the Einmaligkeit. "Only in the Reconciliation achieved by Jesus Christ do we understand what Creation and Redemption mean."² The other line of thought is more compatible with the I-Thou framework. "The 'natural' existence of man ... must be understood ... from the two points of view of creation and of sin."³ It seems that when Brunner is concerned about 'natural man', he neglects the Incarnation in the interests of the contrast between creation and sin. This could mean that the sinner stands outside the Atonement effected once for all, until he decides to set himself within its compass, in which case the imperative would certainly be the primary word. On the other hand, if the indicative is to be the primary word, then the sinner must be proclaimed to be within the compass of the Atonement effected once for all. This is not to deny the necessity for, or the reality of, the human decision; nor is it to adopt a theory of universalism. Rather the point is that the Gospel cannot be one possibility among others. Yet it cannot be denied that Brunner seems to affirm such a position on occasion. The fact that he does indicates a difficulty in his concept of the Einmaligkeit of the Atonement.

1 Mitt. "Vortwort" p. V. E.T. "Preface" p. 13.

2 Gu0 p. 108. E.T. p. 123.

3 Ibid. p. 48. E.T. p. 62.

It is beyond the scope of our concern to evaluate Brunner's Christology. Yet we cannot avoid this crucial aspect entirely, if we are to appreciate the difficulty in his treatment of the Einmaligkeit of the Atonement. In his Christology, Brunner follows Melanchthon's famous dictum that Christ is known from His benefits, thus approaching the Person of Christ from His Work rather than the Work from the Person.¹ This procedure is not surprising in view of Brunner's emphasis on 'Act' as opposed to 'Being'. Nor is it surprising that this procedure has come in for severe criticism. The charge is that the emphasis on the Work of Christ has reduced the subsequent presentation of His Person to the level of repetition.

The concept of Encounter has really robbed the traditional locus on Christ's "person" of any raison d'être as a separate theological topic. The evidence of it is that the Dogmatics, Chapter XII, is reduced almost entirely to repetition and polemic. The next development may well be to take more seriously the union of work and person and give a fully integrated analysis. If not, the divine "person" will continue to hover over history as a meta-physical abstraction. 2

It is this warning that must direct us to the difficulty in Brunner's Christology. For the corollary to the divine Person hovering over history is the affirmation that only the human person was actually in history. A tendency in this direction is to be found in Brunner's presentation in Der Mittler.

Christ has indeed assumed human nature, but not a human person. Thus He may have assumed the possibility of being tempted - the possibility of sin which is connected with the historical personality - but He did not assume the corrupted personality spoilt by Original Sin, that is, the necessity of falling in temptation. To fall in temptation - in spite of Original Sin is never a natural fact, but always and only a personal act. Hence it is said of Christ: He was tempted in all points like as we are - yet without sin. He stepped into the abyss. He entered wholly into human life, even descending to the deepest depths of the "sinful flesh". He allowed the powers of the abyss to work their will upon Him - but He did not make the abyss wider, for that would have destroyed the meaning of His coming. 3

1 DII p. 317. E.T. p. 271.

2 Edward A. Dowey Jr., "Redeemer and Redeemed as Persons in History", The Theology of Emil Brunner, ed. Charles W. Kegley (New York, 1962), p. 204.

3 Mitt. p. 285. E.T. pp. 319-20.

The curious thing about this refusal to permit Christ a human person is that Brunner does not employ the concept of solidarity which he finds so important in other connections. We really seem to be confronted here by a remnant of the Augustinian biological view of Original Sin, which Brunner elsewhere combats so fiercely. Yet it is perhaps not so curious. For, as we have seen, it is not really solidarity in sin, but the universality of sin, which finally prevails in Brunner's theology. Thus while it is affirmed that Christ "entered wholly into human life, even descending to the deepest depths of the 'sinful flesh'", it is also affirmed that "He did not assume the corrupted personality spoilt by Original Sin". This corresponds to the emphasis on the Divine Person.

God does not send a man, but His Son. It is not a man who obeys Him, but His Son. This is why this "sending" and this "willingness to be sent" cannot be regarded as an event within the sphere of history. 1

Undoubtedly this statement is true and important, and it is perhaps unfair to criticize Brunner's complex Christology in so sketchily a manner. Yet it must also be the case that the Son obeys "as man", and it is this aspect which is weak in Brunner's Christology. For in the final analysis, the human Person is an uneasy guest in the I-Thou framework. In spite of the fact that the Einmaligkeit represents a consistent emphasis throughout Brunner's theology, it really does not belong. The proper category for the I-Thou is the present. Hence the emphasis on the Work of Christ at the expense of an adequate integration of the Person, inclines well with this context. For faith is concerned with the present Christ, the Christ who is known from His benefits, and is somewhat at a loss to fit the 'historic' Christ into this framework. This latter is more appropriate in thought than in faith. "What

1 Mitt. p. 277. E.T. p. 311.

is constitutive in thinking, that I think something - this distinction between the objective and subjective - finds no place in faith."¹ Of course, Brunner is aware that "even God's Word in some way contains doctrine, and even the faith that is the response of prayer contains knowledge";² but "doctrine seen by itself, that is, separated from the Word of God as the event of encounter, stands in the closest relation to the law."³ Thus the Einmaligkeit suffers the same fate as the Law in the I-Thou framework. The danger of this situation is disclosed by Brunner himself: "The counterpart of unhistorical religion, religion without a Mediator, is the failure to recognize the radical character of the guilt of sin."⁴ We need only add that the radicalness of guilt must be proportional to the condescension of the Mediator, and to the Einmaligkeit of the Atonement effected in Him. In the I-Thou framework, as Brunner presents it, this Einmaligkeit, the once-for-allness, is not integral. Thus as the incompatibility of the Law with the I-Thou framework carries with it the suggestion that man can tell himself the Law, so the incompatibility of the Einmaligkeit with the I-Thou framework carries with it the suggestion that man can effect reconciliation in some measure himself. Both suggestions are incompatible with Brunner's basic position, but they are none the less real.

E. RESPONSIBILITY AND SOLA GRATIA

a. Faith as Crisis of the Moral

Brunner's I-Thou framework relegates the Law as a material reality to a peripheral position in the interest of the formal imperative. Luther never thinks of 'Law' in a formal sense, other than as a designation of legalism, but always means specific Laws, supremely the Law of Moses. Thus

¹ WaB p. 62. E.T. p. 114.

² Ibid. p. 68. E.T. p. 119.

³ Ibid. pp. 88-9. E.T. p. 138.

⁴ DIII E.T. p. 7.

we can suspect that this discrepancy will have repercussions in the concepts of repentance which Brunner and Luther present, although once again Brunner claims to be following Luther. His concern is to emphasize "what Luther calls 'law-repentance', which he defends against the Antinomians as a necessary preliminary stage on the way to the repentance of faith."¹ Once again, we encounter a concept in Luther's theology over which there is great difference of opinion, and therefore one which we cannot hope to examine adequately. Relying on the compilation of Luther's key references to "Law and Gospel" made by Plass, we assume that Luther's basic position consists in the contention that it is the office of the Law to drive a man to Grace.

It is true, we live in the New Testament and ought to have the preaching of the Spirit only. However, since we are still clothed in flesh and blood, the preaching of the letter is also necessary in order first to put people to death by the Law and destroy all their self-confidence, so that they may know themselves, become hungry for the Spirit, and so be a people prepared for the preaching of the Spirit. Thus it is written of St. John that he prepared the people for Christ by preaching repentance, which was the ministry of the letter, and then led them to Christ, saying (John 1:29): Behold Him, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the whole world. This was the ministry of the Spirit. 2

The insistence on the priority of Law, and the preaching of repentance, creates problems in the interpretation of Luther. This is particularly true in our age which is so familiar with the idea of 'decision'. Thus it is a formidable task in itself to determine just what is involved in Luther's statements to the effect that repentance must precede the Gospel. Rather than enter into this complex question, we observe a comment of Calvin on the subject, a comment which we take to represent an important concern of the sola gratia position.

Christ and John, it is said, in their discourses, first exhort the people to repentance, and then add, that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mattah. iii. 2, iv. 17). Such, too, is the

¹ MiW p. 207n. E.T. p. 208n.

² Luther, W.A. 7, 658ff., Plass, p. 736, sec. 2284.

message which the Apostles received, and such the course which Paul followed, as is narrated by Luke (Acts xx. 21). But clinging superstitiously to the juxta-position of the syllables, they attend not to the coherence of meaning in the words. For when our Lord and John begin their preaching thus, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mattah. iii. 2), do they not deduce repentance as a consequence of the offer of grace and promise of salvation? The force of the words, therefore, is the same as if it were said, As the kingdom of heaven is at hand, for that reason repent. For Matthew, after relating that John so preached, says that therein was fulfilled the prophecy concerning the voice of one crying in the desert, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah xl. 3). But in the Prophet that voice is ordered to commence with consolation and glad tidings. Still, when we attribute the origin of repentance to faith, we do not dream of some period of time in which faith is to give birth to it: we only wish to show that a man cannot seriously engage in repentance unless he know that he is of God. But no man is truly persuaded that he is of God until he have embraced his offered favour. 1

This insistence that we must "deduce repentance as a consequence of the offer of grace and promise of salvation" may well be representative of Luther's doctrine as well. In any event, we take it that it is an essential affirmation of the sola gratia principle.

When we turn to Brunner's presentation of 'repentance', we find, once again, an uncompromising affirmation of the sola gratia perspective. "It is not the word of demand which annihilates me, but the word of assurance that creates me anew, which makes the change from autonomy to dependence a reality."² This is so because "only through the assurance of grace do I become truly a man who depends on God."³ But at this point we encounter the difficulty which seems to be involved in Luther's doctrine, namely, the difficulty of the priority of repentance.

Only through the imperative "Repent" do we come to the indicative of faith, of the new life 'in the Spirit'. For this reason faith itself is called the obedience of faith. ... Even faith in the forgiving mercy of God stands under the imperative: "Believe!" 4

1 Calvin, Inst. III. iii. ii.

2 DIII E.T. p. 144.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. E.T. p. 284.

We have declined to investigate this strand of thought in Luther's presentation, but we must examine its implications in Brunner's formulation. For it is critically important for the maintenance of the sola gratia principle that the imperative be issued only after and within the context of the indicative of grace.

Brunner's development of this theme involves a dialectic between law-repentance and the repentance of faith. "Faith itself must continually issue from repentance, as, on the other hand, repentance is only completed in faith."¹ The adequacy of this dialectic depends on a distinction between the repentance which precedes faith and the repentance which is only possible within faith. It is this necessity for a clear distinction between these two types of repentance which constitutes the chief difficulty in Luther's doctrine. His contention that Law must drive a man to Grace may mean that man must see the hopelessness of his situation under the Law, or it may mean that man must actually repent of his legalism prior to the knowledge of grace. If this latter sense of repentance, the repentance which recognizes the error of legalism prior to faith, is involved in Luther's theology, then the sola gratia principle is endangered. For it must be a primary axiom of the sola gratia principle that man's self-willed alienation, his guilt, means a total inversion of his relation to God which cannot be recognized for what it is until the original relation is restored. The difficulty in the interpretation of Luther at this point is accentuated by the fact that we are posing a question which Luther did not raise. We are asking: How did Luther deal with the false autonomy of sin? This notion of autonomy is essentially a modern concept. The importance of this difference of perspective for a proper understanding of Luther's doctrine of the two realms has been indicated by G. W. Forell.

¹ Gu0 p. 67. E.T. p. 81.

For an understanding of Luther's practical principle of social ethics, it is basic to understand his teaching of the two realms of human existence, the secular and the spiritual and to keep firmly in mind that the very word secular creates a semantic problem in our time. For Luther the secular realm was also God's realm, and modern naturalistic and agnostic connotations of this term tend to confuse the meaning of Luther's thought. 1

This difference of perspective is particularly crucial in the matter of repentance. For whatever Luther's understanding of the repentance which must precede faith, it is a repentance within the context of God's activity. If this may mean that man must repent through the Law, before he can receive the comfort of the Gospel, this does not carry the implication that man must of himself come to the Gospel via the Law. It is God's Law which breaks man, the material Law which must be preached. Thus the only question here, with reference to the sola gratia principle, is whether man really can see his predicament in terms of the Law prior to the preaching of the Gospel.

Brunner's insistence on the priority of repentance presents this same difficulty. "Man must stop on the way he is going and must turn around. ... The preaching of repentance is therefore the first task."² But Brunner is not unaware of the difficulty involved in this concept.

How can we expect that proud man should renounce this self-defence, when precisely self-defence and self-assertion are the sign of his condition as sinful man?

There are here only two possibilities: Either we believe that sinful man can himself achieve the penitence necessary for faith, this conversion and self-surrender. If so, then his sin cannot be so bad as we have hitherto claimed. Or else something from outside of him must penetrate within him to transform his unreadiness into readiness, his self-assertion and resistance into self-surrender and acceptance. In the first case, theological thought is involved in a self-contradiction. We believe man capable of acknowledging himself as a sinner, and at the same time we believe him able to achieve this knowledge himself, by which he would prove that he is not so bad a sinner after all. 3

If one is to maintain that repentance must precede faith, then one must carefully distinguish this repentance from the repentance of faith which is

1 G.W. Forell, Faith Active in Love: An Investigation of the Principles Underlying Luther's Social Ethics (New York, 1954), p. 15.

2 WaB p. 114. E.T. p. 161.

3 DIII E.T. p. 10.

no human possibility. Brunner presents this difficulty with a clarity which is not characteristic of Luther's presentation. But this divergence is a reflection of the more basic divergence of perspectives between Brunner and Luther. The concern with the natural possibilities of man, around which the question of repentance as a human possibility revolves, is foreign to Luther. Luther's concern is to emphasize that man cannot justify himself before God. In Brunner's perspective this emphasis is augmented by the question as to whether man can of himself know that he cannot justify himself before God. Thus not only is the question of the priority of repentance raised, but also the question of the human possibility of repentance.

With the question of repentance as a human possibility, we move from the sphere of theology to that of anthropology. Thus we are faced not only with the problem of the relation of repentance and faith, which is the problem of Luther's presentation, but also with the problem of the psychology of repentance. It is here that the distinction between Luther and Brunner is particularly evident.

The presupposition of faith is repentance. It is of course true, that in the last resort even repentance is the work of God and is only fulfilled in faith. But it also precedes faith - faith in the specific Christian sense. At the outset it belongs to the "human" sphere, to the Law. 1

The former part of this statement may reflect Luther's position in so far as he emphasizes the priority of repentance, but the latter part represents a thought which is completely foreign to Luther. For in Luther's thought there is no indication of Law being a corollary of the human. It is true that for Luther legalism is the natural attitude of man to God.

The Law is a directive of what we are to do, but the Gospel treats of that which God wants to give. The first we cannot do, but the

1 Mitt. p. 480. E.T. p. 529.

second we can accept by faith. However, note what men are like: the first, which they cannot do, they want to do; but the second, which they should accept, they do not want to believe. 1

Yet this is something very different from equating the Law with the human. Brunner's contention that "the law is the mark of humanity"² is representative of Luther's thought only in so far as man naturally thinks of his relation to God legalistically, whereas the free grace of the Gospel is unthinkable. But Brunner means much more than this in his identification of Law with the sphere of the human. He means that Law is really man's possession. Man as an autonomous being is the possessor of the Law. "The consciousness of autonomy originates in the Law, as the Law is only thinkable through autonomy."³ It is here that the divergence between Luther and Brunner, with regard to the Law, becomes most significant. As we saw, Brunner divests the material Law, which it always is in Luther, of all content, and reintroduces it as the formal imperative. Thus we are not concerned with the Law, but with the fact of law, legality. By this manoeuvre, Brunner can move from the human to the divine in a setting which is completely foreign to the way of thought of the Reformers. For the Law is man's law in so far as man has a sense of obligation; it is God's Law in so far as man's ultimate obligation is to God.

This formality of Law allows Brunner to equate law with logic, with morality, and with the demand of God. Thus law represents a human possession and a divine imperative.

The law is the principle of the crisis in every sense of the word: as crisis of the critical thinking, i.e. as principle of the separation between the given and the non-given, the being and the ought-to-be, the relative and the absolute; as "crisis", as highest point of that "sickness unto death", in which man first in his relation to the absolute will of God comes to the full knowledge of his needy situation, in that knowledge of "radical evil", as that "moment" therefore, when the servant of guilt can do nothing more

1 Luther, Plass, p. 741, sec. 2294.

2 "Gesetz und Offenbarung", p. 291.

3 Ibid. p. 296.

than cry out from the bottom of his hardened heart and cast himself on grace; and for that reason also crisis in the original sense of the word: Judgment.

... Ethics, claim, responsibility, law and crisis are identical concepts. 1

Obviously this is something very different from the perspective of Luther's contrast between Law and Gospel. The fact is that Brunner's concern is very different from that of Luther, although he does not seem to be aware of this. For it is Brunner's concern to claim natural man for God.

Even as an unbeliever, man knows of the Categorical Imperative, of a spiritual power that limits his own will ... In all the moral law there is something that limits man, and sets a bound to his caprice. No one lives wholly without consciousness of responsibility. 2

The concern to distinguish rightly between the Law and the Gospel, which is Luther's main concern, becomes in Brunner the concern to co-ordinate the Law-Gospel dialectic with the natural self-understanding of man. The result is that the dialectic between the two Words of God becomes the dialectic within man himself. The situation is not helped by Brunner's refusal to call it psychological.

... knowledge of sin comes first from the law without grace, mere demand.

The first effect of this law, its supreme achievement - again in principle, and not from the point of view of psychology - is the despairing self-knowledge of man: "I died" (Rom. 7:10). ...

In principle this is the last word which lies within the sphere of man's own possibility. But actually man does not admit his lostness. That which "in principle" is possible - for our concern, indeed, is about that which man ought to say to himself if he were wholly honest - this in fact does not happen. Man is too profoundly a sinner to be able to admit his sin. 3

That man should know his situation as a sinner, "in principle", is a thought which is foreign to the Reformation perspective. Luther's insistence on Law-repentance raises the question as to whether man really can know his situation as a sinner from the Law. But even this does not presuppose that

1 M&W p. 312.

2 DIII E.T. p. 149.

3 R&R pp. 424-5.

the sinner should know his situation himself. This is a thought which owes its origin to the moral idealism which provides the context for Brunner's polemical presentation of the Christian message. In this setting, Brunner makes the unfortunate assumption that "if the idea of autonomy is conceived in a purely formal way as the Idea of the good will, then it is just as Christian as it is Idealistic."¹ This underlying assumption that "in principle", or "ideally", man stands on his own feet opposite God represents a thought which is totally foreign to the Reformation perspective. In so far as this idea prevails in Brunner's theology, his presentation of the sola gratia principle is distorted. This is particularly important in this question of repentance. Brunner's doctrine of faith as the crisis of the moral deviates from the sola gratia principle in so far as the moral is the sphere of the human, and, on this basis, man is called upon to exercise his 'responsibility'.

Nowhere could it be more evident than at this point that LUTHER and KANT are so close to each other, and yet so remote from each other. Ultimately, with his doctrine of the "moral revolution" KANT is completely Pelagian: "For, so long as the Moral Law commands 'Thou shalt become a better man', the conclusion is inevitable 'that thou canst'." In spite of his theory of "radical evil" Kant completely overlooked - without understanding - Paul's and Luther's theory of the "enslaved will". 2

What Brunner overlooks is that it is not only the concept of the "enslaved will" which distinguishes Luther and Kant, but the fundamental perspectives from which each is working. Kant's "Moral Law" finds no place in Luther. In so far as Brunner builds on this "You ought", the formal Categorical Imperative, he presents an adaptation of Luther's theology to the perspective of moral idealism.

The result of this combination of Reformation theology and Kantian

1 Mitt. 88n. E.T. p. 112n.

2 GuO p. 571. E.T. p. 590.

moral theory is a perspective which can only be described as "synergistic".

Sola gratia means "God first".

The relation between God and man is thus always reciprocal, yet never interchangeable, like the relation between left and right. God is always and inconvertibly the first, man always and inconvertibly the second in this relation. 1

Brunner's central theological position might be summed up in the phrase, "Divine initiative and human response". The inadequacy of this position can be presented in Brunner's own words.

... synergism doubtless intends to stress the personal character of the act of appropriation, but it does not understand the comprehensive character of grace. It does not understand that it is due to grace that we can thus respond to God. 2

This recognition of the inadequacy of a doctrine of sola gratia which is limited to "God first" does not change the fact that it is this formula which is most appropriate to Brunner's basic position. References to the comprehensive character of grace are by no means lacking, but this concern is not integrated into the basic framework which Brunner presents. This is true not only of his theology, but of his sermons as well, and is most evident in what is perhaps his most famous sermon, at least in the English speaking world, "The Great Invitation".

The inviting is God's concern ... But the appropriation of the message is our concern, the opening of the door, for God does not deny us the freedom of coming to Him. 3

Brunner's concern to emphasize human 'responsibility' triumphs over his allegiance to the Reformation perspective in that the responsibility he is concerned about is modelled on the moral answerability of Kantian moral theory. It is this question of responsibility which is the chief concern, and the Achilles' heel, of Brunner's theology.

1 WaB p. 36. E.T. p. 89.

2 GuO p. 587. E.T. p. 608.

3 "The Great Invitation", The Great Invitation, tr. Harold Knight (London, 1955), p. 42.

b. The Ambiguity of 'Responsibility'

Brunner deviates from the Reformation perspective in his concern to emphasize responsibility. His contention that the Christian faith views man primarily in terms of responsibility neglects a basic element of the Reformation view. But we have seen that Brunner does not claim to be re-affirming the Reformation position, as such. It is his contention that the Reformers succumbed to a deterministic perspective in their concern for the sola gratia principle. Thus we cannot charge him with deviating from the Reformers where he believed them to be wrong. Yet Brunner also wants to affirm the sola gratia principle, and it is this conflict which presents the difficulty in his theology. For whatever inadequacies may be involved in the basic positions of the Reformers, it cannot be affirmed that Brunner has provided a more satisfactory formulation of the sola gratia principle. It is our conclusion that his basic structure is synergistic, and that this is so because his concern for responsibility is formulated under the influence of Kantian moral theory.

The term 'responsibility' is inherently ambiguous. We have isolated three possible meanings which it seems to have in Brunner's writings. First, it may mean a purely formal statement of the contention that human life is essentially responsive. Secondly, it may have a moral meaning in the sense that man is answerable for his actions. Thirdly, it may refer to man's ability to respond. In addition to these three senses of the term, there is a further ambiguity in terms of the context in which the term is used. For there is a difference between moral and religious responsibility. The basic problem in Brunner's presentation is that these two senses of the term are not clearly distinguished. Because of this there is a prevailing tendency

to move from moral responsibility to religious responsibility, without acknowledgement of the discrepancy between the two. It is at this point that the sola gratia principle is endangered. For moral responsibility refers to the accountability of a moral agent for an act, or acts, performed. This responsibility implies freedom, in that one is held responsible for that which one has freely chosen. Thus, at least in theory, moral responsibility demands as its corollary the freedom of the moral agent. Religious responsibility, however, is more complex. For religious responsibility is concerned not only with sins, but with sin; and while man is only held responsible for sin because he has himself freely become sinner, there is also an element of inevitability here which must be taken into account. This element of inevitability, which Christian theology has traditionally affirmed in its doctrine of Original Sin, renders impossible a one to one relationship between sin and responsibility, such as is at least theoretically predicable of the moral situation. This implies that religious responsibility is corporate as well as individual. There is also another side to religious responsibility which distinguishes it from the sphere of the moral. For the fact that religious responsibility refers to sin, rather than simply to sins, implies that it is a total responsibility. Thus religious responsibility is responsibility for guilt. But the sinner who is immeshed in the self-willed alienation from God cannot be expected to recognize his predicament so long as he remains in it. The fact that sin is only really sin "before God" implies that man must be restored to his original relation to God before he can recognize his religious responsibility. But this can happen only through his being relieved of this responsibility. It is only through the Gospel message, in which man learns that Christ has taken his responsibility for sin, that

man can appreciate what that responsibility means. We have seen that Brunner presents us with two different lines of thought. On the one hand, there is an affirmation of the sola gratia principle of the Reformers which demonstrates a concern for the issues which we have outlined as being distinctive to the category of religious responsibility. On the other hand, there is a sympathy with the setting of moral idealism as presented by Kant, a polemical sympathy which undermines the sola gratia principle in so far as the latter is pressed into the mould of this anti-Kantian polemic. We must now observe the basis of this difficulty in Brunner's presentation.

In our consideration of the ambiguity in Brunner's employment of the term 'responsibility', a basic fact has been implicitly involved which must now be made explicit. This fact is that the term 'responsibility', particularly as a religious term, is of relatively recent origin. The original meaning of 'responsible' seems to have been "correspondent",¹ as in "The Mouth large, but not responsible to so large a Body." This meaning of the term in the late seventeenth century is far removed from the moral-religious context in which the term came to be used in the middle of the nineteenth century, as in "The Great God has treated us as responsible beings." One modern writer, who is aware of the history of this term, does not regard the fact itself as particularly significant, except in that it gives us a new means for articulating depths of meaning previously unarticulated.

This history may mean nothing more, of course, than that men have found a new sign for a well-known phenomenon and an old idea; many writers, indeed, so use it, as their definitions plainly show. But it is also possible that the word gives us a new symbol with which to grasp and understand not a really well-known phenomenon or an old idea but the actuality of that human existence of which other aspects came into view when we employed the older symbols of the mores, or of the ethos, or of what is due, or of being virtuous, that is, being manly.

¹ The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1962).

I believe that this is the case; the symbol of responsibility contains, as it were, hidden references, allusions, and similies which are in the depths of our mind as we grope for understanding of ourselves and toward definition of ourselves in action. 1

This evaluation of the significance of the late emergence of the term 'responsibility' presupposes a continuity of thought through the centuries such as does not, in fact, exist. As it stands, this evaluation may be quite adequate to the sphere of "the mores" or of "being virtuous", but if it is extended to the sphere of religion proper in such a statement as "The Great God has treated us as responsible beings", then we must anticipate difficulties in enunciating the Christian faith, as it has been traditionally formulated, with the aid of this category. This difficulty is particularly crucial for Brunner in his concern to use this term as a basic category of his theology, and also hold to the basic perspective of the Reformers. For the Reformers did not speak of 'responsibility'. The term 'responsibility' combines various concerns of the Reformers, the concern for man's response, his obligation, his accountability, and his culpability.² Thus when Brunner uses the one term 'responsibility', he can move from moral answerability to answerability to God in a context which is totally foreign to the Reformation perspective.

The ironical feature of this predicament in which Brunner is involved is that he appreciates the background to this difficulty so well. No one has been more insistent than Brunner on the revolutionary significance of the contrast between the perspective of modern man and that of former ages.

It becomes increasingly plain to us modern men that a profound gulf separates the "modern world" from the world of the Early Church and of the Middle ages. ... This division cuts through the whole of life, and in particular through the foundations; it separates us at the very point at which the modern man as such is constituted. ...

1 H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York, 1963), p. 48.

2 Holmes Rolston III, The Understanding of Sin and Responsibility in the Teaching of John Calvin, Unpublished Thesis (Univ. of Edinburgh, 1958), pp. 207ff.

It does not cut across - as Liberalism used to think - the point at which the Reformed faith and Catholicism parted company. Rather both of them stand on the further side of the gulf, over against the modern world. In their belief in the Christian revelation they are at one, in spite of all the differences between them; they form the one Christian Church. 1

Brunner goes on to define this distinction in terms of the centrality of the Christian revelation in the Ancient and Mediaeval Church as opposed to the assumption of general revelation in modern thought. Elsewhere, he characterizes modern life in terms of the centrality of the concern for freedom in the sense of autonomy,² so that "modern man is, in relation to ancient and mediaeval man ... a statue in relation to a relief."³ It is most curious that Brunner has not applied this recognition of the variance between the perspectives of modern man and his ancient and mediaeval counterparts to the question of responsibility. For in his failure to do this, he has combined elements of moral answerability and religious obligation in a way inappropriate to the perspective of the Reformers. The result is a concept of man which is very different from that of the Reformers. For, as another modern theologian, Paul Tillich, has observed, "'Responsibility' presupposes the fully developed ability to respond as a person."⁴ The final result is an infringement of the sola gratia principle in so far as man is addressed as a 'responsible being' prior to the proclamation of God's gracious condescension wherein he takes man's 'responsibility' upon Himself.

It is instructive to notice the solution to this problem presented by this same theologian who has pointed out the implication of the term 'responsibility', Paul Tillich. For his solution has been subject to censure by Brunner. It is Tillich's contention that Luther's "justification by faith" does not represent a live option for modern theology.

1 Mitt. pp. 77-8. E.T. p. 102.

2 Das Grundproblem der Ethik, p. 7.

3 Ibid. p. 8.

4 Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (London, 1957), II, 48.

It has been recently maintained ... that Luther's doctrine of Justification by Faith is no longer relevant for us at the present day, since our generation does not live under the burden of legalism, and the fear of the wrath of God; this statement entirely overlooks the fact that the language alone has altered; the fact remains. 1

It is curious that the gulf between the Reformation and modern man which "separates us at the very point at which the modern man as such is constituted", should become merely a linguistic difference in such questions as "legalism" and "the fear of the wrath of God". Tillich does not share Brunner's conviction at this point. He recognizes the gulf as extending to these central questions of Luther's theology, and on this basis rejects Luther's doctrine of "justification by faith" as a meaningless concept for modern man. But it is the concept, and not the truth with which it is concerned, which Tillich rejects. Thus his contention is that the truth which Luther expressed in his doctrine of "justification by faith" must be expressed by means of concepts which are meaningful to modern man. The chief concept which Tillich employs in this connection is "acceptance".

Since it [i.e. justification] is a biblical term it cannot be rejected in the Christian churches either, but it should be replaced in the practice of teaching and preaching by the term "acceptance", in the sense that we are accepted by God although being unacceptable according to the criterion of the law (our essential being put against us) and that we are asked to accept this acceptance. 2

The acceptance of acceptance may be quite intelligible to modern man, but it is doubtful if this can convey the content of Luther's concept of "justification by faith". What it means to describe the law as "our essential being put against us" depends on what our essential being is, and how it could ever be "put against us". In the end, Tillich really seems to be contending that theological concepts are reducible to psychological concepts. To accept

1 Gu0 p. 572. E.T. p. 590.

2 Tillich, Systematic Theology (London, 1964), III, 239.

acceptance is a psychological phenomenon which is very different from standing in the dialectic of the demand of the Law and the comfort of the Gospel. It is this reduction of the theological content of "justification by faith" to the level of a psychological phenomenon which has provoked Brunner's censure. Yet Tillich's answer to the modern predicament is instructive for an understanding of Brunner's solution. For Brunner's contention that the difference between the Reformation position and the modern perspective is merely a linguistic one with regard to "legalism" and "the fear of the wrath of God", reveals a basic confidence that a bridge exists between the psychological orientation, such as Tillich proposes, and the Reformation outlook. This bridge Brunner finds in the fact of law, the inherent legality of human life, the Gesetzlichkeitsstruktur of human life. With the aid of Kant's formal Categorical Imperative, Brunner builds a bridge between modern autonomous man and the man who stands under the Law-Gospel dialectic as Luther presented it. He is able to do this because of the inherent ambiguity in the modern concept of responsibility. As pure fact of obligation, responsibility can refer to my accountability as a moral agent and to my ultimate obligation to God. The result is a concept of man as "responsible being", a concept which infringes upon the sola gratia principle in that man is addressed on his own terms, and called to account for himself. The final result is a synergistic formula of the divine-human relation, wherein God and man stand face to face.

To be addressed by God means: to be drawn to account by Him. His claim is the question: Adam where are you? In this claim at the same time lies the frightful seriousness of Judgment, of being-accountable, and the valuation of ourselves as persons. This claim, which makes us re-sponsible, establishes us as free, self-acting, "autonomous" spirit-beings. 1

1 *MuW* p. 159.

The contrast with the Reformation position is evident in the fact that for the Reformers this was the essence of sin, that man took life into his own hands. Man was not meant to be "responsible", but to live by grace. Of course, Brunner is not unaware of this. But his loyalty to the Reformation perspective is weakened by a second strain in his theology, the polemical presentation of the sola gratia principle in the context of Kantian moral idealism. Thus the ambiguity inherent in this relatively modern term, 'responsibility', both facilitates the development of Brunner's position and accounts for the major difficulties which that position involves.

c. Brunner's Contribution

To question the adequacy of the term 'responsibility' as a concept for presenting the Christian Gospel in terms of the sola gratia principle is to question the kernel of Brunner's theology. Thus it would seem that our evaluation of Brunner's work must be essentially negative. But his failure to clarify the ambiguity of this term, and to take this into account in the development of his theology, does not invalidate Brunner's position as such. The basic problem is his contention that man can be addressed on the basis of his responsibility. This implies that man as a moral agent must be challenged with the 'claim' of the Gospel. The result is a concept of man as an autonomous being, free to accept or reject grace. But this represents only one strand of Brunner's presentation, although it is an important strand. His basic position consists in an affirmation of the sola gratia principle of the Reformers, wherein man is seen only in the context of grace. Thus it is clear that whatever Brunner says about 'natural man' is not said because of a concern for the 'rights of man', but rather because of a truly pastoral concern. "We

are not trying to save man's 'face' or his honor; here our one concern is with the question of the preaching of the Gospel, religious instruction, and the 'cure of souls'.¹ It is in this context that Brunner has devoted himself to the task of "apologetics", or "eristic theology" as he later called it, and developed the contested subject of "the point of contact". If in so doing, he has concentrated on man as a moral agent to the detriment of an adequate expression of the comprehensive nature of grace, it is, nevertheless, true that his concern is a legitimate and indispensable one. Consequently Brunner has made a major contribution to twentieth century theology precisely in this area. We may mention three particular issues which Brunner has emphasized to the edification of modern theology.

First, Brunner has rightly dwelt on the fact that the Gospel must 'strike' man where he is, and that man must be persuaded of his need for the Gospel. In spite of the fact that man's true need cannot be recognized until it has been fulfilled through the Gospel, it remains true that Christian theology must exert every effort to uncover the sham and pretence of man's 'natural' existence. Thus there is "another task of theology" which is not really another task at all.

We know well that no human skill can create faith, but only the Spirit of God. But this Spirit of God works, where he works, not as dark mystical-magical power, but He works in that He speaks. There is no other faith and no other reception of the Spirit than that which is accomplished as a "becoming convinced" of the Truth of the Word. 1

Theology must follow her Lord in the condescension into the world of flesh where men live, that they may be grasped by the power of His resurrection. In spite of the difficulties in his isolation of man's "sense of responsibility" as the "point of contact" for the Gospel, there is much in Brunner's reflections

1 R&R p. 413.

2 "Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie", p. 259.

on the predicament of modern man which is of the utmost importance for theology.

Secondly, while we have been critical of Brunner's re-interpretation of Luther in terms of the Kantian setting, it remains true that his task as a theologian is decidedly different from that of Luther. "No theology is ever final, and the limitations of every age call for the corrections of the next."¹ Theology, like every other human occupation, is subject to the limitations and errors of human understanding. But it is not only the humanness of theology which constitutes the uniqueness of its challenge in every age, but the challenge of the age itself. "Theology is the struggle of faith with the powers of the Zeitgeist."² In this struggle with the Zeitgeist, Brunner finds his major role. If it is true that Brunner's theology is unacceptable in so far as the Zeitgeist influences the central theological message, it remains true also that Brunner has made an appreciable contribution to the theological clarification of our age. He has knowingly risked the dangers of this struggle with the Zeitgeist.

There is undoubtedly a great danger - proved by the history of theology in the last century - lest theology, in order to make itself understood, should adopt the Zeitgeist and secularize itself by way of escaping from a false sacralism. But this danger ought to be no hindrance to the recognition and acceptance of the task. 3

Brunner is treading the dangerous path of a theologian who is endeavouring to interpret the Christian faith as it is mediated by the Reformers in the context of the Zeitgeist of the twentieth century. As such, he is particularly vulnerable. Yet this vulnerability is also his strength, in that he has wrestled with many of the issues which are involved in an appreciation of the Gospel message in the modern setting.

1 "The Present-Day Task of Theology", Religion in Life, VIII, No. 2 (1939), p. 182.

2 "Secularism as a Problem for the Church", The International Review of Missions, XIX (1930), p. 507.

3 Ibid. p. 508.

Thirdly, in addition to Brunner's contribution to the theological understanding of modern man, and of the problems involved in presenting the Gospel in the modern situation, Brunner's more strictly theological concern, that Christianity be seen first and foremost within the personal dimension, represents a distinct contribution to modern theology. If his emphasis on the personal as contrasted to the rational raises questions as to the significance of the impersonal, it is also true that his concern for the personal constitutes a sober warning to the intellectualizing tendency in theology.

Faith is more difficult for none than for the theologian, and for none is it harder to be a Christian than for the baptized. The reason is that there is no temptation so great as the temptation to put a theological system in the place of faith, and membership of the visible church in place of being a Christian. 1

If we have had occasion to question Brunner's appreciation for the depth of the Incarnation, we must be ready to learn from his appreciation for the breadth of the Incarnation. Whatever the deficiencies in Brunner's theological position, he will not let us rest content with some other formulation. He, as a theologian, is not deceived by the theological task. Consequently he points us ever beyond theology to the Lord we serve, and in so doing provides a most needed emphasis in an age which puts such a premium on the intellect.

These brief indications of three of the areas in which Brunner has made a distinct contribution to modern theology suggest that it would have been possible to give a much more positive account of Brunner's life-work than that which we have presented. Undoubtedly this is true. But it has not been our concern to present Brunner's 'theology' as such, but rather to examine

1 RPh p. 98. E.T. p. 188.

his understanding of the themes of sin and responsibility, and to do this in the light of the Reformation principle of sola gratia. In this light, Brunner's presentation is open to severe criticism. The ambiguity of the term 'responsibility', and the synergistic tendency in Brunner's presentation of the I-Thou framework, provide an inadequate base for the sola gratia principle. Yet even in terms of this Reformation standard, Brunner's presentation represents a thoroughly legitimate and important concern. For it is true that the human response is important, and that man is "responsible". Brunner presents this concern most poignantly in a sermon on "Election".

The Word of God does not support those who desire to persuade us out of our sense of responsibility and the freedom which it necessarily involves and to say to us "You can do nothing at all". To what purpose otherwise would the Word of God address us? Why would God otherwise in the whole history of His self-revelation be at such pains to win the heart of man? Indeed, why would God have gone to the extreme length of taking humanity upon Himself and become man to reveal His love and His holiness if in spite of everything all is as it will be, and if after all, our decision and our opening of our hearts does not count? In all this self-revealing action God is speaking with us in order to draw us to His side. 1

Undoubtedly Brunner is quite right in his concern for the human response, and in his emphasis on the ultimate significance of this response. Yet the problem for theology at this point is to emphasize the importance of the human response while maintaining that this response is only possible within the context of the prior decision of God. In this situation Brunner sometimes suggests that the response involves a choice between two possibilities. Thus while his concern is a thoroughly legitimate one, his method of implementing it leaves him exposed to the charge of synergism.

We have considered Brunner as a theologian of the Reformation tradition, for there can be no doubt that this is how he would wish to be

1 "Election", The Great Invitation, p. 46.

regarded. By this standard his basic position is vulnerable. Yet it is a curious feature of Brunner's presentation that he himself is aware of the difficulties which his formulation involves. The fact is that Brunner is a comprehensive theologian. Nothing essential is lacking in his presentation. But as a systematic theologian, formulating a distinct theological position, he neglects important considerations which elsewhere find a place in his writings. Thus in the final analysis, Brunner is his own best interpreter. Consequently, if there is any merit in the criticism which is here offered, it is largely due to insights gleaned from Brunner himself. The most important consideration in our analysis which does not find a place in Brunner's theology is the ambiguity in the relatively modern word 'responsibility'. Thus the final comment must be one of puzzlement, and that on two counts. First, it is striking that Brunner should suppress insights, which are evident in the broad scope of his writings, when he comes to develop his systematic formulation of the basic reality of the Christian faith. Second, it is inexplicable that Brunner should have neglected his penetrating insights into the chasm which separates the modern perspective from that of the ancient and mediaeval world when he concerned himself with the specifically modern term 'responsibility'.

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