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Jesus never ends. From age to age the King of Glory passes on His way; but still as in the past His triumph has a twofold significance.

God give us grace to make the wise decision, and as He this day passes before us to the Calvary of His life, may it be ours to crown Him 'Lord of all.'[1]

[1] W. M. Mackay, *Days of the Son of Man*, 87.

General Revelation in the Theology of Emil Brunner.

By David Cairns, B.A., Aberdeen.

In spite of the general agreement of viewpoint among the dialectical theologians, there is a healthy independence of each other, which in some matters goes beyond a mere difference of emphasis. Emil Brunner is by no means a paler copy of Karl Barth—the truth being rather that both are deeply influenced by the same thinkers and personalities, *e.g.* Kierkegaard, Blumhardt, Kutter. The reason for the writing of the present article is that British readers may learn something of Brunner's teaching about general revelation, which is interestingly different from Barth's.

Three years ago Brunner wrote in *Zwischen den Zeiten* (the periodical of the dialectical theology) the following words: 'Now that the antithesis between nature and grace is in some degree understood, it is high time for us to apply ourselves with the greatest industry to the problem of general revelation in all its phenomena. To reject from the outset a natural theology in every sense of the word is neither Pauline nor Reformed, however great the danger of the modern thought of continuity may be at this point.'

We can perhaps elucidate this sentence by showing where Brunner agrees with Barth, and where he parts company with him. They are agreed in rejecting the Roman Catholic conception of natural revelation which we may describe as the two-storey conception. According to this view in the sphere of ethics there are certain virtues which the natural man can in his own strength perfectly practise, and certain things which, through the light of Nature, he can quite certainly know about God and his duty. What is given by the special revelation is a further and supernatural grace. The coming of the special revelation does not alter that structure of knowledge and action which is already there; it merely affirms it. On this 'basement' of general revelation the 'first floor' of special revelation is built up. All this is utterly opposed to Brunner's teaching as it is to Barth's.

Another point of full agreement between Barth and Brunner is that they make a sheer difference between special and general revelation. One has only space here to indicate that they believe that the Ritschlian reaction against the relativism of Schleiermacher's Christology was not radical enough, and so logically slipped back into the relativism of Troeltsch and the Historico-Scientific school. Brunner believes that the dialectical theology has managed to make a clear distinction between general and special revelation. But now he fears that in avoiding Scylla some of his comrades are in peril from Charybdis.

The denial of general revelation in every sense is, he believes, particularly dangerous in face of the world situation which to-day confronts the Church. Missionaries know that they must find a point of contact (*Anknüpfungspunkt*) for the gospel in the conscience, religion, or customs of their hearers. And what forces itself as sheer necessity on the missionary is only seemingly a less urgent necessity for every preacher. The situation is everywhere rapidly becoming a missionary situation, the Church is everywhere faced by a world which does not understand churchly or theological language. In the article quoted above Brunner says: 'Especially in a time when all consciousness of God is diminishing, it will not do . . . to treat that consciousness of him which remains . . . as if it were not there, or of no significance. . . . By such a proceeding we can only spoil our opportunity of getting a hearing; for the man who, without being a Christian, knows something of God, will not let himself be persuaded that he knows nothing about him.' Brunner is also fond of quoting a saying of Luther's that it is as effective to preach to cattle as to men whose consciences you do not touch, and this principle is a central one in the practical instructions on preaching which it is one of his duties as Professor to give.

Starting ourselves from the standpoint of Christian

faith, we must ask what, apart from indirect Christian influences, are the nature and extent of the non-Christian's knowledge of God. To get an answer we must take two propositions from the Christian doctrine of man. Man is created by God and fallen in sin. We cannot, however, take the first proposition, that man is created by God, and proceed to infer from it that there remains to-day in reason or conscience, any completely sound part which would suffice to give us a wholly trustworthy picture of God or our duty. Man was created by God to find his freedom in love and obedience to the divine will. Man has misused that freedom, has tried to break loose from God from the 'Grace of Creation.' But here we must not go too far in asserting man's depravity, for man has not been able to shake off from himself his relation to God. For to do that would be no less than to destroy his humanity and to become a beast.

Apart from theological presuppositions let us look at the facts of human nature. What makes man specifically human? In everything he does he seems to be necessarily related to the Absolute. He alone of all creation seems to feel the compulsion of the norm, the moral imperative in the Practical Reason and the idea of truth and the Absolute in the Theoretical Reason. He alone of all creation can be false to his nature—inhuman, unreasonable. Solipsist or sceptic man may be in theory, no one ever was so in life; every man who is not insane acts like a reasonable creature. The Christian theologian interprets this fact of general anthropology in his own way. What all reasonable beings see as the relation to the Absolute is more truly interpreted by Christian theology as relationship to God. If not in the right relationship to God, man is not merely neglected by Him; much more terrible, he stands in a perverted relation to God, before divine wrath.

Now human nature and the range and quality of our natural knowledge of God must be interpreted in the light of this double principle of the grace of Creation and sin. In our humanity the two elements are inextricably intermingled. That very grace which makes it impossible for us to escape from God into mere animality, forbids us, now that we have sinned, to escape from guilt and divine anger. We shall be prepared, then, to see in all human activities a search for God inextricably united with a flight from Him, and in all human knowledge, elements which the special revelation affirms and crowns, and elements which it denies. The relation of the Christian Revelation to the natural man and his Reason is a double-sided one of affirmation and negation. One may comment that here in Brunner we have no flippant dialectic, but rather a view which must be held by all who believe in the truth of the Christian Revelation and its transcendence of general revelation, and cannot accept the Roman Catholic 'two-storey' scheme. Let us finish by taking a few spheres in which the special revelation comes into touch with human life and see what is affirmed and what negated. I propose to touch on the Christian doctrine of man in relation to the natural man's knowledge of himself, the relation between special revelation and Philosophy, the relation of Christian knowledge of God to the philosophical idea of the Absolute and Moral Imperative, and the relation between the special revelation and man's religious tendencies.

Firstly, let us consider the natural man's knowledge of himself—the unsystematized subject-matter of a Natural Anthropology or Doctrine of Man. It is this self-knowledge in his hearer which becomes the point of connexion for the preacher; the true preacher must make the ordinary man say, 'What he says is true of me'; he must become conscious of sin, of the unsatisfying nature of his life without God, of the restless search which is the inner meaning of his life; and yet it is only in the light of the confidence that God has forgiven him, that he needs no longer to strive to reach God, but can begin again with the assumption of the divine forgiveness and presence with him; it is only when he knows this, that a man can tell what the true nature of his sin was, and what the real meaning of human life is. The Christian Doctrine of Man is not the same as that of the natural man, but there is enough 'overlap' to win the ear of the natural man: to convince him of the truth of the Christian doctrine the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary.

We pass to the second subject. To give an adequate account of Brunner's conception of the relation between Philosophy and special revelation would itself require a long article. Here there is room for merely the briefest account. Brunner cannot too strongly condemn the attacks made on the Reason in the name of Intuition. 'Scheler's statement that the Logos is an invention of the Greeks is merely ridiculous,' he tells his students, 'for the Logos is the backbone of human existence.' Brunner's position with regard to Reason is largely the Kantian one: so long as it is dealing with the subject-matter of experience Reason is in its own sphere and unassailable; so soon as it ventures beyond this function, taking,

like Idealist speculation, the concept of coherence as one from which to construct the picture of the whole of Reality—or, so soon as like Realist Metaphysics, it argues from analogy beyond the sphere of possible experiment (Aristotle)—the Reason is embarked on a voyage without a harbour. The frequent struggles and mutual confutations and the incessant recrudescence of such systems warn us that here we are dealing with an activity of the human mind which may have an æsthetic justification, but is not, strictly speaking, thought at all. The true Philosophy is one which restricts itself within its own sphere and refuses to take metaphysical theories or speculations as constitutive of reality. But Reason, when left to itself, will always wander into those realms, and attempt to dictate to the universe. Here the special revelation affirms the legitimate use of Reason, but curbs it when it attempts to make itself the final arbiter of the universe. There is only one court of higher instance than the human Reason, and that is God.

Thirdly, let us consider the relation in Brunner's theology of the special revelation to the Idea of the Absolute, and to the Idea of the Categorical Imperative, the norms of the Theoretical and Practical Reason respectively. The Idea of the Absolute is a limiting concept. We try to conceive of it as that which is entirely independent of ourselves, but as soon as we think it, it becomes merely the object of our thought: an idea which we set up. However hard we try to leap beyond the circle of our own thought, even if we describe the Absolute as 'that about which we cannot even be silent,' we have described something in terms of our world, and therefore have come short of that which is wholly independent of our world. There is no way from the human mind to the Absolute. But suppose that that God whom man on his own initiative could never truly reach were to enter man's world, were Himself to take the initiative, revealing Himself as Creator and unconditioned love, would we not find in that God a person who reveals Himself as more absolute than our Idea of the Absolute? If this be so, we have in this sphere the usual relation of the special revelation to the General, which we have come to expect. God in His special revelation denies the truth of the Idea. He is Person, not idea; He is concrete and subject, all idea is abstract and object. But the Idea is not wholly done away; it is in part affirmed. It remains and has a critical function. Reason gives us the right to say, 'At all events I know that God can't be less absolute than my Idea of the Absolute.'

The case is similar with regard to the Ethical Imperative. Perhaps the deepest conception of that Imperative which man has attained to is the idea of a law binding upon all persons. The essence of all law is that it is abstract, impersonal and general; individual actions are considered right if they can be subsumed under the general law or not prohibited by it. When St. Paul refers to the Law it is often to this wider moral law that he refers, and not to the special law of the Hebrew people. Now the special revelation—the gospel, stands by no means in a merely negative relation to the Law so conceived. We all know how Paul had to fight against Antinomianism. As the Logos is the backbone of thought, so is the Law the backbone of moral action. God's law and anger are the last decisive reality—for him who does not know of God's inexplicable forgiveness. If the Law is transcended by the gospel, it is because the gospel achieves and affirms the purposes at which the Law aimed. But if we must say that nowhere is the Law so affirmed as in the Cross, we must also say that nowhere is it so royally cast aside. The Cross is God's proof of His justice, proof that infringement of the Law could not be merely passed over; and yet that infringement is here blotted out by forgiveness. The Law is the only way in which a fallen world was able to come in touch with God outside of His special Revelation, but the Law can also come between God and man, and stand in the way of the gospel and grace. Taken seriously it led to despair, taken not seriously it led to moral arrogance and Pharisaism. Here, again, in the sphere of moral activity we see the dialectical nature of the relation of Special Revelation to General Revelation. The former affirms and at the same time negates the latter—affirms its general aim and purpose, and negates its error and inadequacy.

Finally, we have to deal with the relation between the religious tendencies in man and the Special Revelation. Brunner admits the universal existence of a religious instinct in man. This is not, however, a human faculty for grasping God—the content of man's religious consciousness includes abominations as well as highly ethical worship. It is not possible to make a unitary picture of Religion in general. What is possible is an understanding *for the Christian* of the various religions from the central point of Christianity. In Christianity the believer sees, as it were, the harmonious and perfect unity of the various tendencies which war together irreconcilably in the religions. As the religions develop and are purified they lose not only their

primitive and sub-rational element, which is a gain, but also their sense of the transcendent; they become rationalized, one might almost say secularized, and this is a loss. Each one of the world religions may be said to be in some one sense nearer to Christianity than the others. The gospel affirms some elements in all; in all of the religions there is much which it must deny. For example, Zoroaster's conception of God as holy and personal is to be affirmed, but his belief that the good man is justified by works is to be denied. For those who are not believers in Christ this centrality of Christianity is not visible—for to them Christianity is itself more or less a jumble of contradictions.

Religion is, in part, a search after God, in part a flight from Him. And this is true of the religiousness of us Christians too. It is Christianity as God's revelation to us, not our religion and piety which stand over against the religion of the world. Apart from grace every man worships idols, inasmuch as his picture of God is, in part, false. The conscious atheist may be, like Nietzsche, a seeker after God, and much Christianity is a flight from God. How much true reverence does there not lie in the words 'Écrasez l'infame!'? How much true and just reaction against false pictures of God? We are reminded also of the just element in the reactions of Bolshevism. It is only in Christ that the religious find their goal, but here also they find their end.

The Authority of Conscience.

By the Reverend Archibald Chisholm, D.Litt., Glasgow.

'It is as hard to get a conviction of sin in the courts of God,' we are told by an American writer, 'as to get a conviction of Volstead violation in the courts of New York.' Moral standards have been questioned and in many instances undermined; modes of morality which prevailed in a former generation have been exchanged for codes of life which seem to be based on no guiding principles. Yet during the period in which there has been outwardly so definite a revolt against former standards the balance has been evenly held by the leaders in ethical thought who, while prepared to accept the further insight into the operations of the human mind which has come through the medium of psychology, have stood by what is essential in the old positions.

About twenty-five years ago Professor Westermarck, in his book *Moral Ideas*, outlined very fully the arguments in favour of subjectivism in ethics. He realized that he would be liable to attack on the ground that subjectivity in morality would lead to laxity in life; that if he dethroned the moral imperatives, removing them from the realm of reality which human questioning could not invade and placing them among the products of tradition, he would be regarded as undermining morality. His answer was that no individual would obey moral dictates any the less even although uncertain of their being universally objective. 'If I make them control me, that is enough.' In spite of the force of his argument, and the ability with which others who held the same standpoint supported this position, in his recent volume, *Ethical Relativity*, he has to admit that the whole trend of ethical thought has been against his position, and consequently he has to affirm more boldly than ever the point of view which he formerly outlined. 'A good conscience is little more than the absence of a bad one.' Conscience, he maintains, does not provide us with moral judgments possessed of objective validity, but these judgments are relative to the emotions they express, and these emotions in turn are the product of tradition and custom which find their origin in 'a generalization of emotional tendencies transmitted from generation to generation.'

It will be generally admitted that if conscience is no more than the voice of certain 'retributive emotions' which rally in support of the *status quo*, it loses much of its prestige. One reason why there has been no great readiness to accept this point of view is to be found in the fact that the concept of conscience displays itself in so many ways which force us to regard it as belonging to the realm of essential values. The Freudians describe it as the Super-ego keeping watch over the 'primordial, unconscious, instinctive, unmoral, pleasure-loving, pain-hating, passionate, illogical Id.' It makes