DIVINE GRACE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

by

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Scope and Contents of Thesis:

A contemporary statement of an old controversy is the subject of this thesis: here we are discussing the relationship between the activity of God's grace and the exercise of man's responsibility and freedom—as viewed from points of view not uncommonly contradictory, namely the viewpoint of the theologian and that of the moral philosopher. Hence, the main focus of this thesis is concentrated upon the writings of Dr. Emil Brunner, a theologian of considerable distinction, and Dr. H.D. Lewis, a moral philosopher of great renown.

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Gerry B. Steeves

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C O N T E N T S

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I

The Concept of Freedom in Dr. Emil Brunner

Freedom in Brunner's theology must be viewed from various perspectives. We shall treat these after a brief sketch of Brunner's life and thought.

Such an investigation as this is believed to be necessary, not only for theological exercise, but also due to the increased emphasis being placed on human freedom in our day. Modern man, it seems, has become obsessed with a desire for more and more freedom, so then, the question can be fairly raised: What is the nature of the freedom which is sought?

It is not my purpose here to deal with political freedom as such. Brunner's chief, but not only, concern is to treat of freedom theologically. He is interested in the subject from the point of view of man and God. The kind of freedom we will observe is a freedom in which man as a relatively free creature stands before God as the absolutely free Creator. However, it is my contention that the approach to the subject of freedom which Brunner takes can be applied to freedom in all the various spheres of life and society.

Sketch of Brunner's Life and Thought

Dr. Emil Brunner, a world-renowned Swiss Reformed theologian was born in Zurich, Switzerland, on December 23, 1889. He studied at

the universities of Zurich and Berlin, and also at Union Theological Seminary in New York. At the age of thirty-three he was appointed Privatdozent at the University of Zurich and soon after became Professor of Systematic Theology and Practical Theology. In 1953 he began a two year term at Christian University, Tokyo, Japan, after which he returned as preacher at Fraumunster Church in Zurich.

Popularly referred to as one of the founders of the so-called "Dialectical School" of theology, Brunner has lectured widely at universities in Europe, Great Britain, and the United States.

Brunner and Barth are collaborators in a reform movement, the main lines of which have been fully developed in their writings. According to Brunner, any theology based upon human experience and observation alone has no significant importance, and must, therefore, be rejected. Faith in God is not an object that we discover, but rather the act of apprehending and letting ourselves be apprehended. Theology has significance only beyond the reach of all human possibilities and in truth which is given in the event which constitutes revelation.

In the person of Brunner an original thinker has joined the ranks of theologians. He has not feared to break with the thought of his contemporaries, but he has not done so for the sake of being different. His view of the otherness of God compels him to refuse to identify the words of man with the Word of God. His conception of spiritual truth as grasped only through faith leads him to think of the Bible as a veiled revelation which is accessible to faith and faith alone. He seeks to restore a lost emphasis on the Old Testament because he believes that only through Biblical tradition can we know and understand Christ.

This holds true for both the Old Testament and the New. It is impossible for Christ to be understood without the Old Testament.

According to Brunner, man is a sinful creature, but he still has traces of the divine image. The heart of man's sin is found in his refusal to be humbled and to admit that truth must come to him from a source outside himself.

Brunner deals with the ethical question as a man who looks up to a righteous God. When one does this, the ethical question is taken in earnest.

> All theories that build ethics on the basis of pleasure or well-being break, according to Brunner, on the fact that they cannot reveal the good as love. They have never been able to work out the synthesis of desire and duty. They set the goal, but have no power to make man want it. In Christianity the essential thing is the revealing of the love of God in Christ. Man responds to that love and in the response of love to love, the synthesis of duty and desire is reached. We have reached the highest only when through the compulsion of love we do what we ought to do because we love to do it.[1]

Brunner has not confined himself to a study of theology alone. He has also taken an interest in such fields as cultural history, philosophy and psychology. Although he favours an active participation of the church in matters of "earthly justice and the welfare of man" he warns that these must always remain "secondary matters"; however, not "secondary" in the sense that they can be ignored.

In his writings Brunner has a certain deceptive smoothness and simplicity which appeals to the popular mind. But this does not mean that he lacks depth. Over and above this simplicity there is a dialectical restlessness and a continuous subtle movement.

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[1]Holston, A Conservative Looks to Barth and Brunner (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1935), p. 149.

Brunner does not seem to admit of classification under any ordinary theological terms. He is neither a Modernist nor a Fundamentalist, neither a Calvinist nor an Arminian. Yet he is both Modernist and Fundamental, Calvinist and Arminian. Brunner believes that man must have a personal relationship with God. Without such a relationship man cannot know God, and is in a state of "essential contradiction".

A true Christian theology, according to Brunner, knows man in his essential contradiction and knows the solution of this contradiction in the Biblical doctrines of creation and sin, used as limiting notions. So used, those point to the ideal of a God-acknowledging personality for which man is destined, but destined by way of his freedom.

Freedom and Sin

The life-element of man's existence is freedom. Without this freedom man, as man, cannot be imagined, for by freedom man raises himself in self-determination above what is given. This freedom is that which is characteristic of man; it is what may be found in every rational act. "Reason can realize itself only in freedom, that is, in the fact that man seizes the opportunity provided by his own powers, in the fact that he transcends the given in reaching out after that which is not given."[1] This freedom, as evidenced in the product of an Epstein or the genius of an Einstein, in the formal sense of the word, is one aspect of the fact that man was made in the image of God, and indeed it is that aspect which, however deeply he may fall into sin, he cannot lose. In point of fact, man could be rid of this formal freedom only by ceasing

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[1] Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), p. 485.

to be human at all. This freedom is that which makes rational man, man.

Turning now to the material side we see freedom in another light. Freedom, in the material sense can actually be lost and really is lost by sin. It follows plainly then, that as a sinner man is no longer true man; he is now less than God created him to be; he is less than true man—in fact, rather "in-human".

The Bible teaches as a basic truth that man shall be the expression of God's sovereignty through faith and in love. Faith means to hope in God alone. This faith, in the Christian sense, is nothing more than the receiving of the love of God which revelation has made accessible to man. But this hoping and this receiving must be a free act. Hence it is that freedom to which man is called; "the very word of God which subjects him to Divine sovereignty bestows that freedom upon him".[1] So then, freedom must belong necessarily to the destiny of man. God seeks fellowship and communion with man, but being a holy and righteous God, He cannot have communion with that which is unholy, impure and unethical; or, conversely, God can only have fellowship and communion with a free being. This supreme "meeting" is possible only in freedom. Because it is only in freedom that man can know, "meet", or commune with God, it is also true that only in freedom can man do the will of God. Not only shall man walk by faith, but also love shall motivate him. Love, like faith, is an activity of freedom. Love is the free response of man to the voice of God—that voice which calls to him and calls him; faith, supreme personal responsibility, and personal responsibility as

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[1] Emil Brunner, Justice and the Social Order (New York: Harper and Bros., 1945), p. 55.

communion with God. Such is the Biblical picture of man in his utmost dignity, poise, and propriety. And all men offered this dignity, poise and propriety for all are called to this freedom. Every man is asked to obey freely.

However, the autonomy of man is never independence from God. Continually, man's freedom is grounded precisely in his dependence on God, so that a maximum of freedom is at the same time a maximum of dependence.

> Man is the more free, the more he is conscious of his dependence on God and the more dependent he makes himself, the less free, the more he denies this dependence and seeks to withdraw himself from it. Being and knowing are here inextricably intertwined. But it is never true that apparent independence means actual independence. On the contrary, the very man who questions his dependence on God draws every breath (so to speak) by leave of the Creator whom he denies. True humanness and true freedom, however, both of which are lost by the man emancipated from God, are present only when man knows and acknowledges his complete dependence on God.[1]

This utter and complete dependence upon God alone is simultaneously the essence of true freedom. The Christian takes refuge in this truth amid the attacks of the various "-isms" which stress the idea of the creature's autonomy to such an extent that the very concept of creature is destroyed. Over against Himself, God places a genuine counterpart, full-blooded, real, a living creature of such a nature that he can actually say a clear 'No' to God, but a creature who in this very action, that of answering 'No', loses his true God-given strength and freedom.

The Bible sees man's sin as it really is. The Bible recognizes no other concept of sin than the understanding of it as man's self-chosen alienation from God, the Creator and Giver of all life. In this concept

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[1] Emil Brunner, Divine Human Encounter (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), pp. 54-55.

of sin the face-to-face relation between God and man consequently is expressed with particular penetration. Sin presupposes, on the one hand, that originally and inextricably the human being is God's human being, that he is not only created by God but indissolubly bound to Him, be it in life or death, in salvation or disaster, in love or in anger. On the other hand, that man is genuinely God's counterpart, endowed by God with the power of free decision and therefore fully responsible for what he does, especially for his alienation from God. The connection between these two sides must be pointed out more exactly.

In the Bible, New Testament and Old alike, man, even in sin, remains bound to God. Man is always sinner before God. He is called an alien, and he sins always against God. This sin is always opposition to God; it is downright disobedience to Him to whom we belong; it is rebellion and war against God. And sin is always an actual relation to God, that is to say, a negative one; sin is a perverted relationship with God. Such sin is indeed ungodliness, not in the sense that man is free from God, but that he would like to be free from Him.

In the parable of the Wicked Husbandman this gross ungodliness is depicted with incomparable clarity. Here the tenants realize their lot but are dissatisfied with it. They know that they are and forever will be the lord's tenants, but still they are reluctant to admit it. They can never be lords and so they turn their backs upon God and try to forget Him. When His messengers arrive they are beaten and killed; however this mars their conscience. It is precisely because they have a bad conscience that they put His messengers to death. Nevertheless, the truth remains that because of and by means of sin the image of God

in the heart of man becomes a caricature.

> Knowing God, they have refused to honour him as God, or to render him thanks; hence all their thinking has ended in futility and their misguided minds are plunged in darkness. (Rom. 1:21 New Eng.) Idolatry is the resultant of two components: the God-given knowledge about God and human sin; hence a knowledge about God and yet no recognition of God. Recognition of God one can have only in faith and obedience, not in sin. But whenever man turns himself to God he realizes "as David of old", Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned.[1]

Brunner then asks: How could man sin against God if He did not stand in an indisoluble relation to Him, if he knew nothing of Him?

As man remains bound to God even in sin, so sin is also the proof of his God-bestowed power to make decisions for himself. Nowhere in the Bible is God made responsible for sin. Even the strongest emphasis upon the omnipotence of God, argues Brunner, has its delimilation at this point which never over-stepped. It is not as if God did not have power over sin; He Himself reserves this sphere of freedom for man; He Himself, in the creation of man in His own image, made him a free counterpart of Himself—man who can defy Him, who can rebel against Him.

There is a point at which man's logic must stop and beyond which it must not go, even though it desires to go further. For instance, consider the treacherous act of Judas Iscariot. His betrayal of the Master proved to be nothing short of being a necessary instrument in the hand of the redemptive God. Dr. Brunner even argues that this treachery was a part of God's eternal plan of salvation for mankind. If, here, logic is to have its way to draw its own conclusions, God Himself becomes the real perpetrator of this evil. But, on the point

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[1] Ibid., p. 134.

of calling God the actual originator of evil, human logic stops and says: this can never be! God is good. Man alone is at fault. Man alone is responsible for evil and man must carry the full responsibility for sin. A part of the freedom which man received from God was the power to sin: God cannot be held responsible for the misuse of this power to sin is entirely man's own free act. The very fact "that man is held fully responsible for sin is a decisive proof of the inviolable nature of the basic biblical idea that man is actually and genuinely, not merely apparently, God's free counterpart.[1]

> Sin is indeed slavery; to be sunk in sin is to be incapable of good, says Brunner. But this is the consequence of sin, not its cause. Even while each human being is seen in his immediate relation to God, he is also seen as one who is jointly responsible for the entire history of sin. If he is the slave of sin now, he himself is to blame for his condition.[2]

Man's sinful state, according to Brunner, "never becomes the explanatory and accordingly excusable cause of the sinful act, precisely because the sinful state is itself act."

> Even the idea of slavery to sin cannot, therefore, be allowed to conceal that of freedom of decision and the noncomitant responsibility. Freedom of decision and inability to decide now for the good are two sides of one and the same human reality, the one turned towards creation, the other towards eternal death.[3]

Because the power of sin is indeed a superior force in the life of man, one which dominates all mankind, and because man in himself has no resistance in the face of this superior force man essentially loses his freedom. True freedom is the freedom which is based upon communion

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[1] Ibid., p. 135.

[2] Ibid., p. 136.

[3] Ibid., p. 136.

with God as such, which consists in that alone, and is indeed identical with it. However, since man has separated himself from God by sin, with the alteration of his attitude towards God there has also come a change in his nature. He lives no longer in God, but against God; he no longer has God for him but against him. Man has been cut-off from the Source of his life, he has separated himself from the Good and from Love. No longer does he possess this Good as a freely offered gift, for it has become an obligation. In other words, he no longer has the Good in his life, he merely ought to have it. The result is that the task of his life is now not just a difficult one but a hopeless one. He ought to do the Good willingly, which, as a duty, cannot be done willingly at all. Brunner affirms that the Good can only be done in the natural spirit of love, but now it has become a legalistic demand. He ought to love. This nonsense is the result of the perversion of life's meaning and of man's relation with God. Man can only do that which is truly Good when he comes to it from God; now he has to do it while he is aspiring after God. Brunner states his argument well in: "He has to do good before he is good"[1] and still more sharply with: "He who is now bad must do good".[2] The man without God must somehow love God. Impossible. A rupture has been affected which never can be repaired; a sightless eye can never become unblinded.

Such is the state of lost freedom. How can man as sinner be in the love of God? And how can man love God and his neighbour without

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[1]Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 272.

[2]Ibid., p. 272.

being in the love of God? But how can one stand before God without loving God and one's neighbour? Such is the vicious circle into which life has been drawn by sin. And this is the un-freedom with which Christian love is concerned.

Freedom, then, is complete dependence upon God while sin is man's self-chosen alienation from God. Sin is the desire for freedom and the illusion that it is possible to be free from God. (This is what constantly gives sin its most dangerous power).

The important thing to notice here is that man is a sinner before God. He seeks to be free from God, but this is impossible. This is what makes sin so serious. Man is God's free counterpart since he has the power to reject God. Yet, in this very rejection only slavery is found, not freedom. Hence a relationship of unfreedom is the result. According to Brunner, unfreedom is sin; it is separation from God, and only complete dependence upon God will result in freedom.

Freedom and Truth

> God places a creature face to face with Himself, a creature who, in having the power of knowing and acknowledging has a share in the essential nature of God, namely, in being a subject. In the sense of free knowing and acknowledging, in the sense of voluntary subordination of the creation under the Creator, Brunner states, man alone of all creates beings is suited to be a subject. Because the will to Lordship is inextricably linked with the nature of God—that nature as known to us in His revelation—God is always the God who approaches man. And because this subjectivity of Man is, according to the revelation of the Bible, exclusively grounded in God's will to Lordship, man is always the man who comes from God.[1]

God wills to be known and acknowledged as Lord by man. He is concerned about the free obedience of His creatures. Because in the

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[1] Brunner, Divine Human Encounter, op.cit., p. 57.

full sense God can be Lord only of such a subject who in free personal decision acknowledges Him as Lord, He wills this independence of the creature in the very same unconditional way that he wills to be Lord. That the creature can be in freedom 'over against' God is grounded in the will of God to be Lord, and man's unconditional interest in God is given with and grounded in his unconditional interest that God may be Lord. God is the Creator-Lord and man is the creature, created to be freely obedient.

When Brunner speaks of the independent freedom of man he is in no way suggesting that man is on a par with God. No equating man with God and no erasing of the invisible boundary between God and man is thought of by saying the independent freedom of the human creature is to be maintained as unconditionally as the Lordship of God; this free self-hood of man is grounded only in God's will and the Creator's power. Man's own self-realization depends entirely on the acknowledgement of this absolute dependence on God's will and power. None other than God can be the source of man's being and freedom; but as certainly and as unconditionally as God wills to be Lord, so certainly and unconditionally He wills to have His free counterpart.

Because man is subject he is free and because he is spirit he is free. 'Subject' and 'Object' are worlds apart. As 'object' man would not be free. Being 'object' implies a state of forced rule, being determined and forcible compulsion, whereas 'subject' is that which is as it determines itself.

As spirit man is free because in the spirit alone is there freedom. Through the spirit, argues Brunner, man can detach himself

from his present existence, as it is at this moment. Man has the ability to reason; he has the power of ideas; he is able to measure his existence by that which ought to be. He can decide in the light of the idea; he can transform the idea into the actual stuff of life. The spirit proves itself as an operative principle, and in this effectiveness man experiences his freedom.

In his subject-spirit existence man finds freedom, the freedom from which, in which, and for which he was created, namely freedom-in-responsibility or freedom-in-love.

> The original being of man is not anything which exists by itself; it is not substantial, but it is always derived from God and directed to God. It is never an independent existence; on the contrary, it is the achievement of dependence. The being of God alone is unconditional, absolute freedom. That of the creature is conditional, relative freedom, or freedom in dependence. This apparent paradox; that man's freedom is based upon his dependence upon God, exists only so long as one holds the deistic conception of the divinely-created 'I' or the pantheistic idea of the divine 'I'. Certainly to the extent to which the truth—this truth of our dependence upon God—seems alien to our reason, the Christian doctrine of freedom is a 'paradox'. For faith the paradox has disappeared.[1]

Man's being rests upon his acknowledged dependence upon God. Therefore his freedom is only complete when he remains in this dependence. The greater man's dependence on God, the greater his freedom. Conversely, the greater his arrogance, the greater his un-freedom.

Brunner clarifies the freedom which is grounded in dependence upon God. Of what kind is it? It is freedom of choice, that is, freedom to answer with a real 'yes' or 'no'. It is freedom to decide, but man must decide and he must continue deciding. There is no middle ground

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[1]Brunner, Man in Revolt, op.cit., p. 259.

and a refusal to take a stand on one side or the other is a decision. Hence, one has no alternative but to say 'yes' or 'no'.

"Freedom, however, is limited by responsibility in a further way: the call to responsibility is a clear imitation to love,"[1] so that man is not just confronted with an ordinary decision, man is not only given a choice, but he is called to God. The way to God is opened before him, clearly, unconditionally, categorically. This is the destiny and the only destiny which has been clearly determined for him; and this is placed squarely before him as a choice. Man's own decision is always his own. It is not squeezed from him by compulsion or any type of force. "In this freedom, man is defined not as the master of his own life, but clearly as a servant who has a master. From the outset man is the property of God."[2]

Truth, then, in Brunner, is the dialectic of the "yes" and "no", that is to say, man, as God's free counterpart must decide for or against God. Man must either say "yes" through faith, or "no" through unbelief. A refusal to answer is an automatic "no", because even in refusing to answer, a decision has been made. Therefore, man's "yes" is a real "yes" in which true freedom is the result; and his "no" is a real "no" in which a false freedom or unfreedom is the result.

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[1] Ibid., p. 260.

[2] Ibid., p. 260.

Freedom and Election

Whenever the Bible speaks of the eternal decree of God, it proclaims the decree of election and that is all. Any doctrine or semblance of a doctrine of the double decree, says Brunner, is not biblical and is nothing more than a speculative enlargement of what the Bible says. The passage so often cited as the classic expression of the doctrine of the double decree[1] is the ninth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans. This chapter of Romans really says nothing about a double decree; rather it teaches the complete sovereignty and freedom of the divine compassion. "God's compassionate love for us has no other ground than his free unnecessitated love. The creature has no claims upon God; God owes him nothing, He after all is the creature's Lord".[2] God's compassion for man (a sinner) is because of His limitless love which He gives without necessity.

> This eternal election is the holy secret of faith. This is what God says to him whom He creates His child in Jesus Christ, and to whom He therefore promises eternal life, while through this His Word of love calls faith into being in him. Consequently the eternal decree should always be spoken of only in correlation with faith.[3]

Brunner's claim is that those who are elected are the same as those who love God and exhibit that love. He feels that in the Scriptures, election and faith, that is, election and love of God are correlative concepts. Therefore, to be elected and to be one in whom the love of God is poured

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[1]This doctrine of the double decree states that some are predestined through all eternity to everlasting life, others through all eternity to everlasting damnation.

[2]Brunner, Divine Human Encounter, op.cit., p. 124.

[3]Ibid., p. 125.

out through the Holy Spirit means precisely one and the same thing.

Brunner is adamant that the thought of the double predestination is an overstepping of the delimitations of the Biblical doctrine of divine foreknowledge, and he further explains in the Divine Human Encounter that any idea of double predestination originated in the non-biblical thought of the sole-efficiency of God. Nevertheless, he admits that the doctrine of the double decree is much more satisfying to logic than a doctrine of divine election. However, if divine election is thought to be logically unsatisfying, which Brunner feels is the case, this is a clear sign that the relation between God's grace and man's decision can never be logically determined. "We have, then", says Brunner, "only two possibilities: either the logically satisfying system of equipoise, satisfying the claims of thought, whereby either divine sovereignty or human freedom, and hence, the reality of decision, is nullified; or the validating of both the divine sovereignty and the reality of the free decision, whereby the logically unsatisfying paradox takes its rise."[1]

Being logically satisfying, the doctrine of the double predestination is not at all paradoxical. Because it is logically acceptable it must sacrifice the reality of the human decision to Determinism. In other words, it evades the basic biblical structure of personal correspondence, which from its point of view is certainly a logical annoyance.

> That afterward we affirm that human decision is a reality notwithstanding in no way makes the system as such paradoxical, but merely affirms something which by definition is ruled out. The claim of freedom comes too late; the system is closed; there is no place for it. The system of truth has become master over the Biblical faith in God who always, while calling on faith, furthers the power of decision.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 125.

[2] Ibid., p. 126.

> As the Bible thus speaks of the eternal divine decree, the close connection between God's will to Lordship and will to fellowship on the one hand and man's complete responsibility on the other becomes fully apparent. Man's responsibility is grounded precisely in his having been elected.[1]

The part of election alone creates real, responsible, self-reliant personality. True freedom comes only to those who know that God Himself addresses us—as we are—treats us as worthy of his love, and draws us into His own life. In the fact of election alone do we begin to perceive the significance of the word "thou". "I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine", Is. 43:1. Here there is nothing between God and man, between the person who is being created and the One who creates. Here alone does the "individual" exist; and this is true freedom.

Here, I believe, Brunner would remind us that it is only within the Church, the Christian community, do we receive that which makes us "individuals", believers—namely the Word and the Sacraments. But even within the Church, no one has a right to God's mercy. God grants his mercy to whom he wills; there is no possibility of gaining or earning it. Freedom through the mercy of God is a free gift. God also hardens whom He wills. What the nature of His hardening is He shows us in Pharoah. He hardens the man who rebels against him, Exodus 10:20. In this, too, God asserts His divine will and His divine honour. The parallel with Israel is already hinted at here. Even though he rejects Israel it is because Israel opposes Him; Israel must serve His plan for the world and the spreading of His honour.

But now human reason revolts more than ever. If God acts thus,

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[1] Ibid., p. 126.

where is human guilt? If, after all, everything is in God's hand, where is our responsibility? Human thought, says Brunner, never does reconcile God's freedom and our responsibility. Whoever cannot bear the thought that God is the absolutely free Lord forgets that he is a creature, who is placing himself on the same level with the Creator.

> Therefore, it must first be shown to him again in as obvious a manner as possible who he is: a creature, that is, a nobody apart from God's will and work. If God is the Creator, who is to give him orders about what he can do? God can do what he wills, just as the potter (to use Brunner's expression) can make ornamental vessels or chamber-pots."[1]

> Faith means the knowledge that I am one of the elect. But the act by which God imparts to me His election, His eternal purpose for my life, is that of the Calling, the κλησις. It is the communication of divine grace to me; through this fact of election the unusual promise becomes a reality in my own experience. It is, therefore, the foundation of the new state of life: for whoever has been called, now belongs to Him, is now "with Him" and may henceforth live in absolute dependence upon Him.[2]

These two terms, freedom and election, appear to be mutually exclusive, but in Brunner no such conflict is found. In Brunner the call of God is for all men; no man is excluded. But the point is this: only the man who answers the call knows himself to be elected and finds real freedom. Nothing can be said of election outside the relationship of dependence upon God. In this relationship election becomes the solid ground on which man may be sure of the love of God and of his belonging eternally to him.

Brunner warns that the doctrines of the Double Decree and of Universal Salvation must be carefully guarded against. God is both Lord and Saviour, and the Christian should never lose sight of the vital

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[1] Brunner, Epistle to the Romans (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959), p. 86.

[2] Brunner, Divine Imperative, op.cit., p. 198.

Biblical tension, based on the dialectic of God's Holiness and Love.

Freedom and Faith

Faith is the only possible union of complete freedom and complete dependence in the soul of man. This faith, awakened through God's love, man may know by means of God's self-revelation, by His taking the initiative and calling it into being. This experience, in which obedience and trust are one, this experience of God through His Word, is the most intimate of all personal experiences. In this faith, the person really becomes a person; he ventures out of his shell and in so doing assumes the entire responsibility for his acts. By way of contrast with such trust, everything else that man attempts to do is only something which he cannot do 'with the whole heart' for everything else that man does is conditioned; the experience of faith alone is unconditioned. It is by faith and by faith alone that man can 'come completely out of himself', without stipulations, without restrictions, but with spontaneity and with reassurance. In faith alone can man develop unhindered, for only here is there room enough to let him achieve a complete personality. Hence only this faith is complete freedom.

Moving on, Brunner asserts that faith consists in the fact that henceforth man knows that his life, his very self, is a gift from God, not a life which is straining after God. When God lays hold of man he does so by winning his heart. Here is where He gains a foothold and here is where He begins working the transformation. The complete reversal of the direction of man's life constitutes the New Birth. It is a re-directing of a man's life or a con-version. To know that one is thus 'born again' is what faith means. When one is born again he accepts

life as a gift and knows righteousness as something outside of himself. Only now does it become true that the Good is that which God does, not that which man does. Now at last man is no longer "in-dependent" but he is dependent upon God alone. "Christ is my Righteousness", my new self. No longer is man himself the centre of the picture, but God. At last he has become what in vain he sought to become—free from himself. The law has been side-stepped, nor more searching. Man now meets with God Himself, personally, and to Brunner this means with the living God, a loving God.

Faith is the knowledge that I no longer belong to myself, but that I belong to another; I now have a master.[1] Faith for man is the knowledge that he has been apprehended by the loving God. This is not One whom we "apprehend". God does not say, "I will love you if . . ." His love is unconditional. He meets us where we are. The true God is One who gives life, not one who demands it. This means that at last freedom has been realized. The fetters and chains of the sense of "ought" are alien to freedom, for freedom is the true life solidly established on grace, on the gift of God. Such freedom means being "rooted and grounded" in God alone. But more than anything else, freedom means being completely free from the obligation to seek one's own good. Brunner is emphatic here. When he defines freedom as utter dependence upon God, he means the absolute renunciation of all claim to independence and of all illusory independence over against God. In creating us, God intended us to be free. Since we are not God, there can be no freedom

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[1] Emil Brunner, Dogmatics III (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949-62), p. 141.

in ourselves. For the creature the only possible freedom is a 'deo esse'.

Freedom in faith implies for Brunner a freedom which is redemption, redemption from 'the curse of the law" to use a Pauline phrase. Not only does this mean freedom from guilt, but also from unrest, from dis-peace. Straining after God does not bring peace but anxiety under the law. But he who lives in God and on God knows tranquility and peace. Faith which is "living on God" means "living in harmony with the purposes of God". We witness to the fact that we have been absorbed into God's purposes when we are no longer concerned with self-regarding aims. God's interests, God's work, God's will, and God's way for our lives become our chief concern. Obedience becomes the gauge of one's faith, for by faith we become volunteers in the Lord's army and we believe we can do nothing other than that which God will, precisely because our lives are based in and on God alone.

Because God is good, if man lives in the will of God he will always do the Good. Conversely, apart from God's will man can do nothing else but sin. There is, however, still something he can do, if he would, and this he definitely ought to do. Man can and should believe. In other words, he should turn away from his false freedom and false security and return to union with God—who is truly the Waiting Father. That is the sum and substance of the Word of God which in Jesus Christ is addressed to him. It is a call to repentance. It is an invitation to turn away from his false independence and to return to the Divine love offered to him in this Word. Beyond the pale of faith in God there lies nothing but the waste of the godless state where sin is inevitable; there is but one alternative, that of returning to God in

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faith to freedom. Faced with the plain alternative, the sinner must decide. The fact that man as sinner still has his existence-in-decision comes out positively in the fact that man is claimed for the Word of God, that faith is not possible save through the decision of man. In spite of the fact that faith is the free gift of a loving God, it is also fine that faith is also human decision, but nevertheless a decision given by God through His claim on the human will.

Faith is the doorway to perfect freedom. As in faith man no longer seeks his goodness in himself but in God, no longer tries to realize it in himself, but lets it be presented to him by God, he ceases to have his life and centre in himself. His whole life is centered no longer in his own striving, but in God's giving. As Brunner puts it, the axe is laid at the very root of sin. The antithesis of sin is not virtue but faith. The relationship to God is no longer conditional, it has become unconditional. The legalistic relation of slavery has been abolished and replaced by a new and better relation, that of freedom and sonship. God stands before us no longer challenging us with claims and demands that we cannot meet. We will no longer suffer the guilt of failure. God now meets us as the divine giver who from start to finish is for us, and never against us. Man's complete dependence upon God, which the natural man in his blindness and stupidity still regards as un-freedom, is revealed as the true freedom.

In faith man is a free man. In faith he is that for which he was created. In faith whatever God wills happens to man's own free will. In faith man knows that every so-called freedom other than that which is found in dependence upon God is illusory and slavery. This

freedom of faith is identical with freedom in the Holy Spirit; it is that freedom which comes through God's speaking in us. "Only where the Spirit is, there is liberty and only if the Son make you free ye shall be free indeed'".[1] Brunner says that only in receiving is man in his proper relation to God, only so does he achieve that for which he was created. In possessing his life in God's Word spoken to him, he is free from himself and free from the world. That is the glorious liberty of the children of God.

> The man who acts in faith is always free, for he is bound by nothing but God's guidance. He lies, light like an arrow on the bow of the marksman, in God's hand. Yet the man who acts in faith is ever bound and worlds apart from all self-will; for, like the adjutant in the ante-room of the general, he waits continually upon his master's command.[2]

Faith, then, is a divine-human encounter in which a two-sided act takes place; man appropriates God's act of self-revelation in His Word. Man's act is seen in his appropriation of God's act, but it is of importance to notice that man's act is simply the acceptance of God's freely given love. Therefore, man can claim no merit in himself. The act of man is an act of redirecting his life; the act of God is an act of transformation whereby man is able to exercise dependence upon God, and thereby discover genuine freedom. Man can only find such freedom through faith. Faith is the primary thing; freedom is the result.

Freedom and Love

We have already affirmed that God creates a counterpart, namely

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[1] Emil Brunner, God and Man (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1936), p. 82.

[2] Ibid., p. 90.

man, who in freedom acknowledges Him as Lord, but God goes this far in order that He might communicate with this man, this creature—in love. A loving God wills not only that His creation, including man, shall acknowledge Him as Lord and, therefore, should obey Him, but He wills also that His creation love Him, that is, love Him with that love which He shows and gives to that creation. In this relation, too, God intends to be unconditionally placed first. God's freely bestowed love is first (in contrast to eros); man's love for God, is always a reciprocated loved, that is, it is second and necessarily is consequent upon the first. Similarly, Brunner adds, man in loving is unconditionally dependent upon God. The totality of this love is grounded in the will and action of God, but it is nevertheless the free, spontaneous love of the creature.

"If God's will to Lordship is His self-affirmation 'over against' and in the creature, then His love—His will to fellowship—is His unconditional self-communication to the creature".[1] God is love.[2] God as Lord, then, wills to be loved—freely loved. Obedient acknowledgment of the divine Lordship is not only the prerequisite, but also the essential presupposition of the love for God.

But, continues Brunner, love for God cannot be founded in His Lordship by itself, but only in such a kind of Lordship in which He communicates Himself. As creature, "man can unconditionally love only the unconditionally loving God. The relation of the fulfilled condition thus subsists between Lordship and obedience on the one hand, and between self-communication and responding love on the other".[3]

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[1] Brunner, Divine Human Encounter, op.cit., p. 60.

[2] I John 4:8.

[3] Brunner, Divine Human Encounter, op.cit., p. 60.

Love presupposes complete, uninhibited freedom. Brunner is correct when he affirms that enforced love is technically not love at all. The reason is simply that to be anything else except free, contradicts the very nature of love—precisely that love depicted in the Bible as the right kind of love. Love, then, presupposes, Brunner goes on, an even higher degree of freedom than the acknowledgment (in obedience of God as Lord. "Love is the most freely willed of any activity of which we are able to think. Love is actually the essence of free will, and contrawise, the essence of free will is love."[1] Thus love is clearly seen as that which is diametrically opposed to all involuntary, disinterested reflex subjectivity, the subjectivity that is turned toward an object as nothing more than a mere object. Love is the most active and most personal of anything of which we can think or know. Brunner points out it is "for this reason the Bible speaks of 'hearty' love. In love the whole person freely gives himself."[2]

But love is not only most completely free, but at the same time the most completely dependent. In Brunner this point is well taken. "Whilst we are loving God—in the sense in which the Bible speaks of love for God—we know ourselves to be (as indeed we are) unconditionally dependent upon God, upon His giving love".[3] "Our creaturely love can be nothing other than the free return of that which God has first given us, of that which God is in His love gives us—that is, Himself and therewith our actual life. We can give ourselves

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[1] Ibid., p. 60.

[2] Ibid., p. 61.

[3] Ibid., p. 61.

to God in love only because He has given Himself to us."[1]

The love of God is proclaimed and given to us by the Spirit of God. To have our standing in the love of God through the Holy Spirit indeed simply means living by the gift of God, by the grace of God, that is, having a share in God's own life which is love.

Hence forward our whole attitude towards the world, towards humanity is completely altered. Faith which is 'living on God' means living in harmony with the purposes of God. The ethical impulse is now no longer that of self-respect, but of love. The isolation of the self has been broken down; wherever a man has been set free from himself, he has been set free for others. He who lives by the generosity of God himself becomes generous. All that he now possesses of his own he possesses in God; in faith alone is self-love conquered by the love of God. The law can only reveal our own emptiness; the transformation is only achieved by Love.

Now, says Brunner, since man is turned toward others in love the law no longer stands between him and others as a program or an idea. Why? Because this love impels him to come into touch with others in the personal way in which God meets us. "Now you act towards the 'other man', your 'neighbour' in a way he needs, and as you alone can know. Love is not only the fulfillment of the law, but also its end, and thus the end of all ethics".[2] "That which ought to be done in love in the freedom of the Spirit of God, that alone can love. For those who believe 'are led by the Spirit of God', For who hath known the

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[1] Ibid., p. 61.

[2] Brunner, Divine Imperative, op.cit., p. 79.

mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him'? And after this, who wants to revert to merely 'ethical conduct'?"[1]

Love in the Spirit is the only possible way of loving. It is loving simply and solely without conditions in which is real communio. The man who loves without conditions, that is, to put it concretely, the man who loves his enemy, he alone is wholly independent and wholly in community".[2] This man will not permit his own attitude and disposition to be determined by the attitude of the other, because he continues to love him "in spite of himself"—to use Brunner's phrase. However, since he acts in this way, he no longer loves him "for something". He loves him rather and simply because he is his fellow man—also part of God's creation. This is not because he is a special kind of fellow man or because he belongs to a certain rank or class, but solely and simply because he exists. He is another human being. That is what it means to love our neighbour. This kind of love, the love of our neighbour, is not a vague and general idealized type of love for humanity, but rather it is the unrestricted recognition of the <u>other</u> man, without consideration what he is like, what his name is, where he is from, etc., etc. "This is what it means to love 'in Christ'. For we can only love like this when we know that we are all loved in this free and generous way".[3]

Here is a love which is not hemmed in by barriers, for it does not respect barriers. Instead it transcends them, and this means going

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

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 306.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 307.

out toward the other, and even identifying myself with him. Brunner says, one who loves is not bound by anything at all, save by the claim of his fellow man, his fellow creature, which make him free even while they bind him.

It should be noted also that in this kind of freedom—freedom in love—the natural individuality is set free. The nature of love provides that the person who loves is the very person who is released from all tension, from all anxiety and rigidity. The person who loves is one without caricature, without masquerade or pose. He is set free from his former bondage. Whereas,

> the unloving person is compelled to seek himself and to seek himself. The loving person, on the other hand, does not need to seek himself at all, for he has been found. He is free from anxiety about himself, free for others. Hence his creative powers are set free.[1]

This love is possible in the act of faith; that is, as a gift of divine grace.

In a footnote Brunner says: Kant's discussion of the Christian commandment of love is extremely instructive, owing to the clear way in which he here shows the limits of legalistic morality, and yet at the same time returns as the ideal. "True morality is not concerned with the personality of the other man but with respect for the law. I am not bound to love my neighbour but 'willingly to fulfill my whole duty towards him' out of respect for the law".[2]

"The love, the agape, of which the New Testament speaks, is of a wholly different character. It is 'superabundant' as Kant says. But

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[1] Ibid., p. 307.

[2] Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 300.

while Kant means this as a criticism we perceive in it precisely the truth which reason seeks in vain".[1] "We cannot love with the reason; we love with the heart. The reason knows nothing of love, because it knows nothing of the 'superabundant', of that which is more than just, more than is owed, more than equity".[2] The amazingly unique quality of love is that it is the supra-rational element which forgives, which ignores barriers, and which goes over to the 'other' for its own sake. Love will sacrifice for the "thou", but not for an ideal, says Brunner. And so it follows then, that in the last resort, rational morality can create only people who are governed by "duty", but not those who are motivated and controlled by love, for "love is patient and kind . . . loves does not insist on its own way . . . hopes all things, endures all things".[3] Love is kind, considerate, and gracious, because love is the true gift of the loving God. Such love begins precisely where the law leaves off; that is, where the rational element ends, "at the point where with the revelation of the divine 'Thou', there is also given to me the 'thou' of my fellow man."[4]

The important thing to notice here is that man could know nothing of the meaning of love apart from the love of God. Man's love is a reciprocated love. It is always unconditionally dependent upon God, but it is nevertheless the free, spontaneous love of the creature. In fact, love is both completely free and completely dependent. The man

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[1] Ibid., p. 300.

[2] Ibid., p. 301.

[3] I Corinthians 13:4-7.

[4] Brunner, Revelation and Reason, op.cit., p. 301.

who freely dwells in God realizes the most personal and intimate relationship with his Creator, a fellowship of agape - love.

Furthermore, the love of God is unconditional. God does not restrict his love to a favoured few, nor does he love for any gain He might receive. If man is to know anything of this love he must give himself over to God. And this cannot be done through any process of reason—since love transcends reason. The love of God can be received only as man surrenders his life to God. Then and only then can man in some small sense be a bearer of that love in freedom to his fellowman.

II

THE CHALLENGE FROM MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Introduction to the Thought of H.D. Lewis

"The dominant trend in Protestant theology today", says Dr. Lewis, "is altogether at variance with elementary ethical principles which we take for granted from day to day, and which the moral philosopher seeks to describe and correlate".[1] Dr. Lewis holds that "Barthianism is in one way or another denying that man's will is free, that human beings vary widely in moral character and attainment, and that each man is responsible only for what he himself has done or has failed to do".[2] Professor Lewis is adamant that Continental theology has not kept pace with the times. He "emphasizes the affinity of the New Theology, as he calls it, with some reactionary trends of the twentieth century world, particularly in the way of dictatorship and authoritarianism in general".[3]

> The tones in which theology speaks most unmistakably today, he says, and those which echo most clearly its traditions in the past, find a responsive chord more easily in the primitive mentality induced by confusion and stress, than in the cultural and scientific advances of our age. Having failed to make commensurate progress with the latter and to respond effectively to the peculiar opportunity and challenge of the present time, it allies itself with the starker forces of reaction, the affinity being especially

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[1] H.D. Lewis, Morals and the New Theology (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1947), p. 8.

[2] N.H.G. Robinson, Christ and Conscience (London: James Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1956), p. 22.

[3] Ibid., p. 89.

directed in the repudiation of that most treasured and significant feature of civilized life, the sense of personal responsibility.[1]

It is true that an examination of all the many and interrelated factors which tend to the debasement of moral personality in the modern world would take us a very long time and would necessarily lead us into many different spheres of inquiry. But from most investigations of the kind we should undoubtedly find ourselves coming back sooner or later to the agelong but quite crucial question of moral freedom. Dr. Lewis has ventured to protest against attempts to isolate this question from other issues concerned with moral obligations. He believes that our views on most ethical questions are bound to be radically affected by whatever views we hold about freedom as a postulate of moral responsibility. Dr. Lewis feels there can be little or no doubt that one of the cardinal reasons why so many individuals are inclined today to doubt the distinctiveness and ultimacy of moral responsibility and to assimilate it to legal notions or reduce it to purely utilitarian terms, is that they cannot or will not accept the conditions which seem to be postulated most often by the more traditional notions of guilt and accountability. Many conscientious people, Dr. Lewis points out, believe that the freedom in question is just an illusion; it is a myth—and any efforts to make sense of it arises largely from attempting to cast around for a notion of responsibility which in some ways resembles legal accountability, but in others differs radically from it. The freedom which is closely related to legal liability could survive the surrender of genuinely open choice, although freedom in a less ultimate sense would still be

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[1]Lewis, Morals and the New Theology, op.cit., pp. 97-98.

preserved. Absolute free choice, according to Lewis, is impossible; and therefore, we must conclude that there is definitely something bogus about the notions which seem to require it.

Here we have a challenge which Dr. Lewis feels must be taken up. It is an important challenge for us, that is, if we are to do any clear thinking about ethics and somehow endeavour to restore confidence in ourselves as moral agents—with all that this involves for other activities and attitudes. It is Lewis' feeling, therefore, that philosophical argument has a most important role here in our maintenance of the right view of our human status. Lewis thinks it is a very encouraging sign that issues like that of moral freedom which generally had fallen into considerable disregard are again being revived.

In Lewis' writings, it is clear that no concept of freedom, other than that which will permit an absolute possibility of doing something other than that which we actually do, will suffice for ethics. Freedom, according to Merriam-Webster, is a word with numerous uses. Freedom is an ambiguous term, but where moral accountability is concerned we must be free in the sense that, given all the circumstances at the moment of acting, our action could possibly have been other than it actually was. As Dr. Lewis explains, this does not imply that any kind of deed might be expected from any particular person at any particular instant. There is an obvious continuity in conduct and we rightly count on one another in many ways. But still, there are certain occasions on which our former character at the time prompts us to a line of conduct which is clearly opposed to that which we consider to be our duty. It is on those occasions and on no other, while remaining within the bounds of the conflict between duty and interest, that we have the one

gap in the relatively smooth continuity of events. In other regards some form of determinism holds sway over our lives, although by no means the mechanical determinism of the materialist. For instance, argues Lewis, A's thoughts, distinct from B's, are in a very important sense his own; and A must appropriate as a part of himself what he is to appreciate, just as a water lily absorbs its nutriment from its environment. But when all this has been said, and when we have spoken eloquently about 'self-determinism', Lewis' point is that we all know that we cannot think otherwise than we do at a particular time or summon up emotions at will. It is possible for us to cultivate beliefs and emotions, but only if we desire or choose to do so. Man must decide to do this or that, and he must decide in freedom. But it is only choice that is ultimately free, and the only sort of choice which does not depend on the kind of individuals we seem to be at the time of choosing is the choice required by the challenge of some duty which is counter to that which we most desire to do on the whole. Lewis says:

> To exhibit these conditions of moral accountability, to remove misunderstandings of them and answer objections or counter mistaken philosophical notions which undermine our confidence in the truth of the moral ideas in question, is an outstandingly important part of the function of the moral philosopher in contemporary society.[1]

A moral, every bit as important, arises at this point for the theologians, a moral for their consideration and ours as well. Dr. Lewis says, "it must be admitted that a great deal of traditional theology is entirely out of accord with what we normally take to be

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[1]H.D. Lewis, Freedom and History (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962), p. 281.

basic conditions of moral responsibility".[1] (At this juncture, Lewis shows his distaste and disapproval of the doctrines of major emphasis in what is popularly labeled, traditional theology.)

> The logical implication of that attitude has, moreover, been carried out ruthlessly by powerful and influential religious writers of recent times. It has been urged that man is a wholly corrupted creature and that his very efforts to do good only betray his total incapacity for goodness; the more we struggle against our wicked nature, the more, so it is very commonly urged today, are we enmeshed in the toils of it.[2]

Thus Dr. Lewis begins his sustained and somewhat embittered attack on Barthianism in general, and on Brunner's idea of man's freedom and responsibility in particular. Lewis complains that in Barthianism man, a corrupted creature has absolutely no escape, unless he, in desperation, acknowledges the utter hopelessness of his situation. Such an acknowledgment induces man to throw himself unreservedly upon the mercy of God so that he thereby might escape his inevitable doom for his inevitable sin. Despair, then, is how salvation must begin for man. "The first and most urgent step to be taken in the redemption of man from the terrible destiny which otherwise awaits him is to induce with all possible haste and intensity the sense of utter despair by which he shall realise that no effort of his own will avail to do anything other than sink him deeper in the mire."[3] With tongue in cheek, Lewis comments on Brunner's famous theology of crisis which Lewis calls: the 'preacher's theology'. Such is the theology which, adds Lewis, "is to bring us, by vilification and denunciation, hasting back from

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[1] Ibid., p. 281.

[2] Ibid., p. 281.

[3] Ibid., p. 281.

our social enterprises and puny philanthropy and our ridiculous, indeed contemptible, confidence in reason, to acceptance of a form of salvation by faith of which the only tangible manifestation appears to be the strident proclamation of it".[1] Lewis explains that this is perhaps not exactly the way the Barthians understand their theology of crisis, nor how they expect others to interpret it, but Lewis admits he finds it extremely hard to derive any other meaning from their central themes, quite adamantly expressed by the majority of Barthian disciples.

Such doctrine, which reduces man to a mere speck controlled entirely by the 'Wholly Other' brings serious injury to the most elementary understanding of personal responsibility.

> This cannot fail to have a peculiarly unfortunate effect at present. For it is hard to think of any age when there was greater need for men to lay hold firmly, very firmly on their ethical principles. It is a commonplace to note how easily the confidence of men, not merely in this or that particular ethical view, but in all morality, is undermined in periods of transition; these are periods when selfishness is most swift to exploit the prevailing uncertainties, when honest doubt gives way to cynical opportunism.[2]

Is this not the case at the present time? Has there ever been such a period as that through which we are passing with such crucial political, social and religious upheavals? The damage to the moral fabric of Western civilization is clear, says Lewis. It is recorded very grimly in the woeful pages of recent and contemporary history. It is evidenced in every newspaper we read, in every news broadcast we hear. Not is it easy to determine whether private or public morality has received the greatest hurt. Dr. Lewis here reveals his great concern over the support

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[1] Ibid., pp. 281-282.

[2] H.D. Lewis, Morals and Revelation (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1951), p. 19.

which "the most influential and stirring religious thought of today inevitably gives to the moral nihilism by which society is so seriously threatened".[1]

> Instead of looking to religion for moral stability, and for the refinement of the moral consciousness which we require to cope with new and bewildering problems in almost every sphere of interest, we have, for the most part, to consider how best to counteract the influence of religion itself![2]

Freedom and Revelation

In the philosophy of H.D. Lewis moral worth is made solely dependent on the response of the individual. Such a response immediately presupposes some kind of a system of objective duties, duties not always coincident with the duty which the agent presents to himself, and not always in terms of his loyalty to which moral worth must be appriased. The very existence of that system of duties may be apprehended as an ultimate ethical truth which requires no support from any other source. The popular assumption, holds Lewis, that ethics depends on some metaphysical or religious principle has led and will continue to lead to many distortions of ethical truths. The picture which we may have of the moral life and its function in society, in no way precludes the emphasis that also falls to be placed upon the disasterous effect for human life as a whole, whether we think of the individual or of society as an alienation of man from God. If man has the capacity of knowing God and enjoying Him, then it is inevitable that there can be nothing short of the direct frustrations when this capacity of knowing the Creator

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[1] Ibid., p. 19.

[2] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

goes unfulfilled. Bewilderment, cynicism, and disorder are sure to result, for man has been created in the image of God, and created thus, it is the case that he cannot set his 'house' in order without God. But should the 'house' be empty, however carefully the scientist may sweep and garnish it, the 'devils' will return and make our state 'worse than before'.

But life, urges Lewis, as a whole is more than morality; disasters of a quite overwhelming kind may come about in ways that are not primarily ethical. Man needs to win moral battles, but he also needs to learn wisdom and to acquire graciousness and acquire religious sensitivity. And in the context of success or failure in these regards the language of religious or theological thought may retain a terrible significance in some ways which have no direct relation to the moral field. By throwing man, in respect to his moral activities entirely upon his own resources, we must not be taken to ignore other needs, equally fundamental in the economy of his life as a whole, which man cannot supply in the same fashion for himself.

Neither do these considerations imply that the idea of salvation must be shifted to another sphere than that of moral struggles, successes, failures. The truth, continues Professor Lewis, is here quite simple. It is the whole man that must be saved, or to put it better, the need of man is to be made whole, and this will include redeeming him from the 'penalty of sin'. Man must discover the true significance of the supreme experiences of religion, 'conversion', 'atonement', 'new birth', 'salvation'. Dr. Lewis feels Brunner is quite right "in stressing the ultimacy of human guilt and the need for forgiveness, and adds: to have brought these ideas into prominence, and rebutted the naturalistic

interpretation of them, is a major achievement of the school of theologians to which he belongs. But, the way he conceives the relation between this and the need for a historical revelation seems to Lewis far from clear".[1]

In the first place it is not certain, says Lewis, whether Brunner regards our sinfulness as pointing to a need for a historical revelation or finds in revelation the proof of our sinfulness.

> He is certainly loath to admit that we can know anything of guilt apart from the revelation of God's forgiveness of it, and he assures us, in his own words: 'When we as Christians say that only by an intervention of God, by His creating a new situation, can communion with God be established, we recognise that a breach between God and man does exist.' One finds it hard to avoid the impression of a vicious circle here similar to Brunner's insistence in earlier writings that the knowledge of evil which makes us guilty comes only with the intervention of the grace which heals us.[2]

One of the main difficulties Lewis finds in the position taken by Brunner is that he seems to ascribe the need for revelation in history solely to our sinfulness. There seems to Lewis to be a detour here around the crux of the whole matter. Lewis feels that Brunner leap-frogs the crucial epistemological problem of how it is possible for man, a finite being, to know God who is infinite, that is, transcendent. This problem is complicated by sin, but it cannot be reduced altogether to the problem of the cure of sin. There are numerous other problems in the relation of God and man than those expressly created by our wickedness; and may it not be that there is something in the nature of all communication of God to man, of the infinite to the finite which links it with historical events? Lewis argues that it is certainly not in the ethical realm

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[1] H.D. Lewis, Freedom and History, op.cit., p. 211.

[2] Ibid., p. 211.

alone that God has dealings with us. Moreover, such reflections as these enable us to look outside a particular tradition, the Hebrew-Christian tradition to be more precise, for some indication and manifestation of God's activity in broader history. However, Lewis knows that Brunner is most reluctant to do this. Brunner will not admit any revelation of God in any other religions than Christianity. Lewis charges that he is driven to conceive of the Christian revelation too rigidly in terms of dogmatic formulations of religious truth. This 'historical revelation' Lewis openly identifies with 'dogmatic religion'. What this does, says Lewis, is "to give priority to formal doctrinal ideas at the expense of the varied experiences and happenings to which they are related. The insistence on the historical character of revelation seems here to lack the courage of its conviction".[1]

If, however, the theologian would set himself to the task of guiding us back from the more persistent abstract formulations of religious truth which we have to the original experience in the symbolic totality of which they played an indispensable part, then he would be discharging a function than which few can be more important at present. How crucially important it is for us to redouble our efforts to counter the irreligious forces in our age and hasten the revival of true religion. And this is not a task to be accomplished in the abstract or in isolation from the continuous life of religion in the past, least of all for Christians whose faith depends on a historic revelation. But if we are to recover the experiences of the past by which our own religious life may be enlivened and on which so much in the work and significance

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[1] Ibid., p. 212.

of the Church depends, few things will help us more than the skillful and sympathetic reconstruction of the vital religious experiences and reactions in which the mind of God became known to men in the past. This is not a process of analysis, nor is it any kind of philosophical construction, it is, concludes Lewis, a process of carrying out an operation upon religious experience which is itself a distinctive form of religious activity and upon which no one can enter in any mood other than a deeply religious one. And is this not man's chief access to true freedom?

Freedom and Moral Autonomy

Although it may be admitted that the refinement of ethical ideas usually comes from religious sources and that we have derived our noblest ethical ideals directly from religion, those persons who have no allegiance to any religion are considered as responsible for their conduct as any other persons, because, states Dr. Lewis, it is possible to be moral without being religious. "To deny this is just perverse, for it is an assumption we make every day in our dealings with irreligious people among whom there are many for whom we must have the highest esteem".[1] We may also bear in mind, says Lewis, that there have been persons of a deeply religious nature, and some religious geniuses, in whom the flame of the moral life flickered very faintly, and others whose ideas of moral values were very distorted.

> Thus the normally close relation between ethics and religion appears to be by no means an invariable one. But what we have to emphasize here is that there can be no fusion of ethics and religion, and that it is quite possible, indeed most usual today, to appreciate moral distinctions and live a very moral life, without subscribing to religious beliefs or being touched by religion.[2]

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[1] Lewis, Morals and Revelation, op.cit., p. 16.

[2] Ibid., p. 16.

Furthermore, "those of us who do hold religious views could think them away without thinking away our normal obligations; in a godless universe it would still be wrong, for example, to be cruel".[1] It would clearly follow then, reasons Lewis, that ethical ideals should not be regarded as direct commands of God, and also, that they need not lose anything of their distinctiveness and objectivity when we turn away from religion. Ethics continues to have meaning and content if divorced from religion, and, argues Lewis, there is no solid ground for the criticism of the alternative to the Barthian view (Barth: ethics has no significance apart from religion) that of necessity ethics must fall into humanism or subjectivism if severed from a religious content.

The erroneous belief that there can be no standards for the guidance of our conduct other than those which are immediately given us by God is beset with yet graver difficulties and snares in yet another way. Says Dr. Lewis, "it is not merely that doubt is cast on our ability to determine, without the immediate aid of God, what courses of action to pursue, but also that the very significance of the notions of right and value, as we normally think of them, is blunted".[2] But why is the direction and guidance which man's 'natural' moral sense distrusted? The chief reason is simply because ethical thinking as such has become discredited, admits Lewis.

> It thus seems impossible to retain any distinctively ethical conceptions, and the irreligious person, nay, even the professedly Christian person who puts his trust in any human power in his usage of the notions of right and ought and value, becomes simply the prey of delusions. In this matter the skepticism of the Neo-

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

[2] Ibid., p. 17.

> Protestant is very complete; it brings him into the closest alliance with the nihilists. For the meaning is emptied out of most that we consider significant in our ordinary contacts, an accusation that could not be brought against the far less radical skepticism of the subjectivists.[1]

This argument finds further reinforcement in the Barthian fundamental distrust of human power. Lewis reminds us that Brunner underlines the fact of man's utter dependence on God and thus he avoids any hint of a humanistic account of the ministration of divine grace. But, in so stressing this dependence on God, it comes to be assumed that the life of man is of no account except in the immediate impact of the Infinite upon it; the 'Wholly Other', it seems does not become established within the human context, but rather annihilates it. So Lewis points out, "the natural activities of man, as well as his understanding, are annulled as completely as in any nihilistic philosophy, it is all struck out under the 'hammer of God'".[2] God then becomes "all", and man remains "nothing". Man is of no consequence to the Barthians, says Lewis, and this state of affairs prevails, not just as the reflection of certain religious moods, but as the unqualified truth. In no sense whatever, then, does man's own effort avail him anything. If in this situation man can be called free it is only to discover his own weakness, his own impotence, to feel himself obliged and yet know that all efforts to discharge the obligation are essentially self-defeating. Brunner has stated this doctrine in a typical paradox:

> My duty to do good is precisely the sign that I cannot do it. 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

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

[2] Ibid., p. 18.

> 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. For the good that I do, because I ought, is for that very reason not freely done, and therefore it is not really good.[1]

This, Lewis feels, contradicts all that we seem bound to think about duty, and the very conception of duty is altogether absorbed in a different religious conception. "All that is left to man is to witness to, or rather vaguely, to 'mirror' 'the right act of God', to be justified by his faith and yet know that the very acceptance of this justification, while it leads to good works (but by what standards?), is itself the gift of God, to know that, even here, 'God Himself is the agent'".[2] "'Every freedom', we are told, 'other than that which is found in dependence upon God is illusion and slavery'".[3] Therefore, Dr. Lewis concludes, faith also, thus understood, brings the end of all ethics.

> For the obedience of faith comes not from the law, not from general principles, but from the address and gift of God alone. Therefore it is also the real good, because it is that which God does to us and through us, by His Word and His Spirit. For they who believe are led by the Spirit of God. It is not that they ought, they must.[4]

The obscurities which pervade doctrines like this make themselves evident, comments Dr. Lewis, even when they be viewed in a religious rather than an ethical context. It is by no means easy to understand, admits Lewis, what significance 'justification' can have if it does not presuppose any specifically ethical notions. He feels 'justification'

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[1]Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 270.

[2]Lewis, Morals and Revelation, op.cit., p. 18.

[3]Ibid., p. 18.

[4]Brunner, God and Man, op.cit., p. 85.

to be basically irrelevant. But even if its relevance is stressed, it can hardly be said to lead to 'good works'; the business of living from day to day shows no evidence of improvement after this process of 'justification' has taken place. And these matters will certainly be made no plainer without surrendering the initial assumptions about 'special revelation' and man's utter dependence on God, which incidently forms the heart of the theological stumbling-block resulting in the rift between Barth and Brunner. However, we ultimately may think about a historical, special revelation and man's state of dependence before God, and whatever may be the importance of these doctrines in a properly religious reference, it seems, concludes Lewis, that little, if anything, can be left of ethics to those who subscribe to them. Here then we have a point of view diametrically opposed to Brunner's.

Sin and Collective Responsibility and Freedom

Brunner's view of sin is far removed from all that Lewis means by it. On the one hand Dr. Brunner insists that 'the kernel of man's being is responsibility, responsibility is the essence of humanity'. Dr. Lewis has no serious quarrel with this estimate and goes on to suggest that moral evil is more radical than the presence in us of animal instincts which education alone suffices to control. Moral evil involves deliberate choice and rebellion, and this is what makes it a 'dismal sinister phenomenon', to quote Brunner's phrase. But, says Professor Lewis, it is just here that Brunner's account of sin fails us. He affirms that man in his reality is in contradiction to the will of God, and to his own destiny and being. It is not merely that man <u>can</u> sin, but that man <u>has become</u> a sinner. The situation of man

is sinful, and this notion is bound up with the notion and of a totality and unity of all men in sin'. As Brunner also puts it: men in their sin stand in an indissoluble connection—for every individual is in an incomparable unique way also the whole of humanity. 'I am a fallen creature, a prisoner of my own godlessness, and I am this as member of a fallen humanity. Brunner continues, no moral or religious endeavour can get me out of this condition, just because it is I myself who am affected by sin, not merely part of me'. Lewis then concludes, such are Brunner's views and they seem to me very wide of the mark.

Can we really hold anyone responsible for anything he has not wittingly and freely chosen? Moral sense seems to say that we cannot, and if moral sense is right and theologians are wrong in speaking of a solidarity of all men in their sin, then we cannot begin to understand the true situation of man, or the need for grace and the meaning of it, until we revise radically the traditionalist conception of human evil to which Brunner is firmly wedded. Thus Lewis begins his argument.

In opposition to the notion of a "collective" responsibility the belief that responsibility is essentially individual, we have in the final analysis to appeal to immediate ethical insight. It does seem to me, says Professor Lewis, beyond the range of reasonable controversy that no man can answer for another's sin or be guilty of it. Confusion has arisen, though, over the failure to distinguish clearly between responsibility for others and responsibility towards them.

An officer may thus be said to be responsible for his platoon in the sense that it rests with him directly to ensure that the needs of its members are supplied. "It is his duty, for example, to provide

proper billets for them. In this usage, everyone has responsibilities that enter far into the lives of others. We have a certain care which we should show for the interest of others and this is not different in essentials from the more complete responsibility of an official of some kind for a group of persons".[1] If the denial of collective responsibility implied the repudiation of mutual responsibility in the sense of mutual duties, Lewis admits it would be so complete an abrogation of moral ideas and such a foolish misconception of the dignity of the individual as to merit all the abuse which has been showered upon the notion of individual responsibility—in certain quarters. However, there is nothing whatever in this notion to warrant the suggestion that a person need consider no other interest than his own.

To continue the illustration, an officer may also be said to be responsible for the group in his charge not merely in the sense of having to insure their welfare, but also in the sense of being answerable for their behaviour. The officer is answerable for the conduct of his troops in that it is his duty to see that they do conduct themselves in the proper manner, and this is allowed to be his duty only on the presumption that certain conduct on his part, by way of example as well as perception and instruction, will have the desired effect on the conduct of his men. "But his responsibility ends with that which he has done or neglected to do. It is only in an elliptical sense that one man can be said to be responsible for the conduct of others".[2]

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[1] Lewis, Morals and the New Theology, op.cit., p. 78.

[2] Ibid., p. 79.

A parent or officer may be said to be responsible for others, not in the properly ethical sense that they have duties to promote the welfare of others or to seek to modify their conduct in certain ways, but merely in the sense that they will be proceeded against if they fail to ensure the results desired. This is the legal meaning of responsibility. A parent is held responsible in the eyes of the law (within certain limits) not merely for the welfare, but also for the conduct of his children even when it is not assumed that any act of his could have modified it.

"The failure to distinguish between the legal and the moral meaning of responsibility has been a prime source of confusion in the treatment of the problem of moral freedom generally. But it is in connection with the problem of collective responsibility that it impinges on our problem".[1] Regarding the question of one man's 'implication' in the conduct of another, Dr. Lewis begins by stating that one person may be responsible for the conduct of his fellow in the sense that he has a duty to try to promote it, not simply in the legal but also in the moral sense of duty. "Does it not follow then, it may be urged, that the quality of the conduct to which my action is expected to contribute can be laid in part at my door? Our actions, in other words, influence the actions of others as well as their general being".[2] Almost everything that we do has a certain moral impact upon all with whom we come in contact in our daily intercourse. Lewis then asks:

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[1] Ibid., p. 81.

[2] Ibid., p. 86.

> Do we not, therefore, act jointly in the sense required for collective moral responsibility? I do not think so, (replies Lewis); for here also my responsibility in the proper moral sense terminates strictly with my part in a joint undertaking. It may not be possible for an outsider to assign his due share of responsibility to each party. But my responsibility in fact ends with what I have done or neglected to do.[1]

If a man is tempted by his friend to embezzle funds from his employer, it might be thought that the friend was implicated morally in the guilt of the actual criminal. The crime would not have been committed had not the friend held out certain inducements. But the encouragement given to the criminal by another does lessen the moral guilt of the criminal, though he remains solely guilty for the way he has responded to the whole situation. The friend would also be guilty, but guilty for his own action in setting certain temptations before another and proceeding in a way which was calculated to turn him from the path of duty. Each agent must bear his own responsibility and guilt; the responsibility cannot be spread out over the undertaking as a whole.

The guilt of a poor woman who steals a loaf of bread to feed her children is substantially mitigated by environmental conditions of the kind indicated. In extreme cases blame would be out of place altogether. Trying circumstances, even when they spring from social maladjustment cannot always be traced to deliberate human agency. Even if the blame for the circumstances which conduce to violence and crime can be laid at the door of particular members of society, it is for their part in bringing about such conditions and not for the wrongful actions of the victims of their neglect that they are guilty. If the victim is also thought to be guilty it is on the presumption that he

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[1] Ibid., p. 32.

could have resisted the temptations to which he was exposed. So far as he is guilty the victim must bear his own burden. Hence Lewis makes the following conclusions.

> The more we are induced to think of one another in the light of Christ's revelation of the brotherhood of men, the more we shall find ourselves to be involved (in this sense) in the sins of others. No one who is morally sensitive could wish to dissociate himself from the moral attainment of others or wish to be spared the pain which is often the price of this supreme human relationship. But this, albeit crucial for a true view of divine and human relationships in an entirely different matter from partaking of the guilt of another. We simply cannot in the latter way be wounded for the transgressions of others. We cannot at this point bear one another's burdens.[1]

"An equation of the latter involvement with a sharing of responsibility reduces itself to absurdity in one very special way".[2] For it is to God, Lewis points out, that men stand in the complete test and most intimate relationship, a relationship in which man strives to become "one with God". This being the case, would not God then be involved in the sins of the world in a direct way, not in the sense normally intended in Christian doctrines, but rather in a more serious sense, in the sense of himself being morally evil? To this question Lewis adds his own reply: "I am not aware of a theory that has the boldness to countenance that blasphemy".[3]

We sometimes hear it said that God accepts responsibility for evil. In a certain context and if we know what we are saying, such an assertion no doubt has profound significance and conveys much truth. However, it certainly is not true in the sense that God shares the evil

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[1] Ibid., p. 85.

[2] Ibid., p. 85.

[3] Ibid., p. 85.

of humanity. God does not share man's wickedness, for responsibility just cannot be accepted in that sense. As Lewis says: "It just is not transferable".[1]

The problem of freedom is no minor problem; it is one which meets us laden down with numerous difficulties. Lewis agrees, as would many theologians, that it is the hardest, as well as being the most crucial, of all ethical problems. "But so far as the present issue is concerned there does not seem to be any real room for doubt. It would be more reasonable to surrender the notion of responsibility altogether than to seek to preserve it in so objectionable and distorted a form as that which declares guilt to be common".[2]

In dismissing the idea of collective responsibility as ethically unsound, Professor Lewis admits that the question cannot really be settled by argument and proof but must turn in the end upon an "appeal" to immediate ethical insight. Nonetheless, something can be done by way of distinguishing the idea of collective responsibility from a number of quite legitimate notions with which sometimes it is confused and from which, therefore, it is apt to borrow the appearance of validity. Thus collective responsibility is to be distinguished, Dr. Lewis argues, from the emotional involvement of one person in the conduct of another, as when a parent is emotionally involved in the behaviour of his son, from legal responsibility for the conduct of others, as when a father is held responsible in law for the misdemeanors of his child, and from

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[1] Ibid., p. 66.

[2] Ibid., p. 67.

a certain moral responsibility towards others, namely, the responsibility of so acting towards them that their way of acting will in turn be affected in certain desirable ways. And, as a result of this analysis, it is held to be clear that while we may be emotionally involved in the conduct of others, or legally responsible for it, or morally responsible for trying to mould it so far as we can, yet in the end we can never be morally responsible for anything that someone else has done, but only for what we ourselves have done or failed to do.

Freedom and Grace

Certainly one of the extraordinary features of some highly influential and persistent theological views is the equanimity with which their authors, the Barthians in particular, seem able to discard the notion of man's genuine capacity for any kind of responsible action, notwithstanding some half-hearted lip service to freedom. In opposition to these views, Lewis maintains that nothing but harm will result for the cause of religion by toning down or depressing our sense of the soundness of moral distinctions and the freedom of choice which they presuppose. If God is a God who acts, if He may be thought of as being genuinely engaged in even the routine experiences of man, then it is this basic condition of moral activity, namely the freedom by which we function most distinctively as volitional beings, that needs to be emphasized.

Dr. Lewis reminds us that moral freedom is not the only freedom we have. There is an important sense in which intellectual activity and art are free. But here we are not involved with the freedom of choice between real open alternatives. The latter choice is not

determined in any fashion, not even by our own characters, much less by circumstances. The precise occasion for it is set by conditions, both within and without ourselves, conditions which do not finally control, and its scope is limited in like manner. What we ourselves are and the course of circumstances in which we find ourselves determine how far inclination and duty are in accord, and the occasion for properly moral choice presents itself, not at all times nor at random in any and every direction, but rather when our most powerful urges and inclinations at a particular time somehow deviate clearly from the course of action which we believe to be obligatory upon us. Man has the capacity to make audacious choices, and it is in his capacity as such an agent, one capable of exercising his powers to choose, fully realizing the course obligatory upon him, that a man has his most distinctive part to play in the drama of intervention and response by which the purpose of God is achieved in the lives of his creatures.

But at this point we seem bound to face one of our stiffest hurdles, says Lewis, in the form of the alleged dilemma of grace and freedom.

> If our reading of divine disclosure and intervention is correct in exhibiting these as pre-eminently showing concern for our moral welfare, should we not expect our own moral improvement to have a prominent place in the process by which God thus takes us into fellowship with Himself? This is how the matter is commonly understood; if God's concern is especially for our moral well-being, that is presumably an end He promotes, and grace thus comes to be regarded as an influence by which we become morally worthy or are enabled to do what is proper.[1]

Dr. Lewis admits his inability at reconciling these generally accepted ideas of grace with what we feel is certain to be true about our

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[1] H.D. Lewis, Our Experience of God (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1959), p. 270.

responsibility as moral agents and with the ideas of distinctively moral worth and evil, and of the accompanying guilt and remorse usually associated with responsible action.

Lewis expresses his opinion that there may even be what he calls a 'double determinism' of our activities within certain realms. Poets or painters may owe as much to the influence and inspiration provided by their friends, or their enemies for that matter, as to their own genius. Nevertheless, their work is pre-eminently their own work while at the same time also being that for which in a particular sense they are indebted to others. However, when we move over to the sphere of moral activity, this idea of 'double determinism' breaks down. Our moral experience, says Lewis, is a sphere, and the only sphere where we are thrown altogether on our own resources; and we are required to perform in a way which owes nothing directly to either man or God. Lewis does not hold for a moment the belief that all our morally good actions are really themselves the action of God within us. He cannot hold this view because there are too many difficulties involved with such a notion, difficulties which he feels are fairly evident. For example, would not such a notion imply that, among other thing, God must be held to account for man's failures as well as his successes? And moral evil can hardly be ascribed to God, no matter what may be our position with regard to the problem of evil.

However, if we are not to regard the operation of divine grace as a powerful influence in our lives which directly induces within us the desire to do what we ought to do, how shall we think of it? Lewis tackles this question by pointing out that it is not wise or realistic

to include in our idea of God's grace all the good influences to which we are subject. Sometimes we speak this way; for instance, we may ascribe our good education to the bountifulness of God's grace because somehow we always had good and capable instructors. A fortunate upbringing is often ascribed to the goodness of God's grace, which too, implies a very wide connotation of the term. But Lewis thinks it is better on the whole not to extend the term in this fashion to all the good things in our lot which, perhaps out of force of habit, we ultimately ascribe to God. 'Grace' is not the correct term here. "We need a term for the distinctive influence of God upon us which comes through special religious channels and, as the word 'grace' has mainly been used in that sense, there seems to be much to be gained by confining it to this more restricted use".[1]

How then are we to think of the operation of God's grace. Dr. Lewis is clear in giving us his answer.

> In this more determinate sense, the operation of grace appears in more than one form. One of these is the illumination of our minds about worth and duty, and especially about the course to be followed on particular occasions. We have seen that this does not happen independently of our ordinary faculties, but by the heightening and correcting of these in the enlivening of religious awareness; but there is nonetheless provided in this way an insight not otherwise obtainable which may thus properly ascribe to a distinctively religious experience. But in the same way our characters are modified and our interests transformed and elevated. Many temptations which might normally assail us lose their force, ends which might turn us from the course of duty lose the attraction they might otherwise have, and our lives will in this as in other ways be different and better because we are subject to the operation of grace within us. But what we attain in this way is not strictly moral worth, it is virtue perhaps, there being good precedent for using the word 'virtue' to designate admirable traits of character, such as a brave or charitable disposition.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 271.

[2] Ibid., p. 271.

But how is moral excellence to be found? Is grace not operative whenever we must decide between right and wrong? We do right, Lewis would reply, if I understand him correctly, on those occasions when our formed characters, though they be subject to the refining influence of grace, are not of sufficient strength to ensure that we do right or find our firmest inclinations in agreement with our consciences. Divine grace is not operative here, says Lewis, because it is at this juncture that God leaves the matter in our hands. This is that most important step which man must take by himself, for God has permitted us here to co-operate with Him. He desires that we should respond in a way which is totally our own. It has been argued that the person subject to the influence of grace leads a supremely better life than he who is left merely to the secular influences round about him. Dr. Lewis feels this is not necessarily so. Yet, he will show daily admirable qualities of character which are not only virtuous and noble in themselves, but which also keep his behaviour more exemplary and neighbourly. "We may thus properly ascribe to the influence of grace a gain in sensitivity and insight, most of all in moral matters, and in the refinement of character".[1] This is Lewis' primary thought regarding God's gracious activity in the lives of men. With this conception of grace, it follows then that we should begin to see our obligations to those in the world around us in a new light, for our obligations have become subject to the will of God for our lives. The discharge of our responsibilities toward others becomes a channel through which our communion and commitment to God is deepened. "Other pursuits which do not derive their worth expressly

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[1] Ibid., p. 272.

from being undertaken as duties acquire likewise the additional significance of activities we consecrate in the fullness of fellowship with God".[1] But it still remains to be shown how grace acquires the supernatural overlay of mysterious and infinite might giving it the form and significance which the religious consciousness considers its most unique feature and its special task in the total developing process of the Christian religion.

Dr. Lewis is surprisingly orthodox right here. He says "this is where grace brings about a sense of repentance and sorrow for wrong action, as not merely morally wrong, but also a rupture and betrayal of our fellowship with God and contempt of the claims of that supreme blessing".[2] Almost all those things which we treasure most are very closely linked in some way to our personal relationships, our most valuable possessions being our loves and friendships, which are our most intimate of these personal relationships. Conversely, there is no greater cause of frustration and sorrow than the rupture of these intimate personal relationships, especially when we know full well that the cause of the broken friendship is the result of our own action, an action which might have been avoided. But the personal relationship par excellence, the one by far the richest, is, without a shred of doubt, our communion with and in God—the fullness of which we have not began to comprehend. Lewis says that

> even the most devout do not sustain at its height the triumphant sense of the glory and wonder of the presence of God, but the more God's presence is made evident to us the more we treasure it as

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[1] Ibid., p. 272.

[2] Ibid., p. 272.

> our richest prize extending its own inestimable worth to all other gains; and at the heart of this lies the knowledge that it comes about by the initiative of God, it is His own gift of Himself to us.[1]

But innumerable times, man, through his rebellious ways, has marred and strained this fellowship with God. He has been following the devices and desires of his own heart rather than making his paramount concern the carrying out of God's will. The result of his waywardness has been the most searing and tragic agony of spirit he could ever know. Man's wrong doing has brought to him the sense of irretrievable loss and of despair, both of which have been deepened by a sense of guilt. Such an eventuality often brings a more cheerful turn of events, adds Lewis, due to a renewed awareness of God. But grace begins by opening man's eyes to his desperate situation, the realization of which is the beginning of repentance.

Dr. Lewis' concern here is to show that the primary work of grace is the reclamation of the sinner. The spark of hope which aids in converting the extremity of despair into repentance clearly shows the function of grace as being restoring and reconciling while simultaneously inducing despair and shame into the heart of man. Lewis explains: "The sense of shame is an advance into reconciliation which is made more complete with the deepening assurance of God's abiding concern, humiliating and costing though it may be to Him as to ourselves".[2] How can we know this? According to Lewis it is displayed to us "in renewals of the sense of His haunting presence still seeking us out

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[1] Ibid., p. 272.

[2] Ibid., p. 273.

with the gift of Himself".[1] Grace is active, continually repairing the breach between man and God, ever cultivating a richer union between man and his source of life and strength. But grace guarantees no immunity from further lapses, least of all when the overcoming of old temptations presents us with new ones which must be conquered.

Surely the lives of the saints within the Church speak to us and encourage us as we realize a little of their affliction, not despite their devotion, but often because of it. These humble individuals speak to us in a way that shows us there can be no laying down of arms in this constant battle to be waged against our own weaknesses.

> The more they have advanced in the knowledge of God's all-encompassing and reconciling love, the greater also is the horror and despair with which they view their own lapses, enabling us again to understand better how devout and estimable persons come sincerely to describe themselves as the chief of sinners. It is not in immunities that grace 'abounds' but in the inexhaustible possibilities of reconciliation, it does not eliminate sin but reclaims the sinner; and that is its work par excellence.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 273.

[2] Ibid., p. 275.

III

DIVINE GRACE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

The endowment of God to man is really the gift of freedom, a gift by means of grace. If grace is the direct force of omnipotence, there is only one way of preserving the reality of man's personality apart from God so that man is not absorbed by God, and that is to set him over against God. To set the finite against the Infinite, to ascribe value to the human will over against the Absolute will may not be convincing in logic, but how is the personality, which alike gives meaning to morality and value to religion to be preserved, if not thus setting our religious dependence and our moral independence in antagonism?

God's will being regarded as infinite force and man's as finite force, we must either assert God's will with the consequent obliteration of human individuality, or man's will with its consequent isolation from God's succour, or delimit spheres of operation so that what should be all of God and all of man is in part of one and in part of the other. The practical result is disastrous, because the fact is ignored that what God's grace aids is a moral person in God's world, whose essential quality is autonomy.

After considering both Dr. Brunner and Dr. Lewis, I would say the essential quality of a religious person is to be absolutely dependent. If we say that the ethics of Lewis seeks to free morality from religious

authority and motive we must also admit that Brunner's theology seeks to free religion from being an appendage to morality. Spiritual religion requires moral independence; morality becomes external and self-satisfied without religious dependence. Morality requires dependence on the final order of the world as moral; religion requires independence, else evil is merely God's failure and His action mere arbitrariness.

In this chapter we are searching for a synthesis of opinion though we seem to be drawn to an impasse between opinions and dogmatic assertions which appear poles apart. While the problem of free will has been long and widely discussed by both philosophers and theologians, it has taken place mainly within their two separate worlds of thought and study. Here in these pages it is hoped that they might speak and contribute together to both a realization and a solution of this problem involving divine grace and human freedom.

Freedom and Personality

In this section I would like to arrive at a reasonable theological definition of man as he is: a person before God. It is important at the start to realize that the connecting link between God and man cannot be severed, for apart from God man as such would not be man. However, this does not imply that we must rest content to ascribe our whole life to the direct operation of God, even if we believe that the task of religious faith is to give us succour in this vast world of overwhelming forces. If God becomes another great force, in fact the most overwhelming of all forces, then any reality which we should attach to the name personality would be destroyed. "The fact that a man is a man and not a lump of lead is precisely what Brunner teaches

by his doctrine of the retention of the formal image"[1] in man. Man is no mere piece of metal in the clutches of some overpowering lathe-operator, named God. Man is truly free, but free because of his relationship to God, a freedom which Austin Farrer reflects in his latest book, Saving Belief, "God makes creatures make themselves".

Dr. Lewis claims, however, that ethical ideal must not be looked upon as immediate commands from God (as we noticed in Chapter II), and yet morality need not suffer by turning away from religion. In a rather provocative tone he says: "In stressing the dependence of man on God and seeking to avoid any humanistic account of the ministration of His grace, it has come to be assumed that the life of man is of no account except in the immediate impact of 'the Transcendent' upon it".[2] Lewis feels that, whenever man is in league with God, man automatically becomes something less than man. I feel his basic difficulty is that he misunderstands the existential relationship between God and man.

The Christian existentialism of Brunner assists us in our understanding of the nature of man and the nature of his relationship to God. If the following summary seems to have a Barthian flavour, it is because I feel Brunner's salt, here, at least savours with the truth.

All men stand in relation to the Word (Logos). This is a personal relation, one of confrontation, and a confrontation which necessarily involves some response by man. Each human being stands in this relation to Christ—not only in the sense that God plans to save him by his

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[1] David Cairns, The Image of God in Man (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1953), p. 186.

[2] H.D. Lewis, Morals and Revelation (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1951), p. 18.

belief in Christ, but also in the sense that his very personality, his whole being is confronted by the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. The creation of man is effected by God through the logos and our relation to the Logos is a unique one.[1] Man's life is a reply to that creative Word of God. Hence man is personally involved with God, but it is a personal involvement—an involvement of decision because man is a sinner. To be a sinner means to be involved in a revolt against God, to be God-less or away from God.

While man's whole self is involved in his act of response to God's creative call, man's being is not reduced to act or relation. Man is not an "it". Man, though a finite and dependent creature, is granted by God a genuine but limited independence. Man apart from God cannot be truly man. In response to the creative act of God, man's existence is one in which he is responsible to God, for his existence, an authentic, spiritual one, is one of decision. Man's existence is one of continual responsible decision. Though God has made us for Himself and has intended our union with himself through Christ, the detail of the picture is in part left to our creativity. "If this aspect be left out of account, then the existence of man is too much reduced to a soulless, responsive dependence like that of a stenographer on her employer's dictation".[2] Such a reduction of man's person is not in harmony with the Christian doctrine of man as I understand it.

Man's true self is a gift from God. Man's true self is an

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[1] John 1:1-5, Col. 1:16-17.

[2] Carins, op.cit., p. 191.

active use of his endowment in obedience. In the self of every human being, there is something which comes to man from without, something which by himself he did not create. In his acts from moment to moment, man draws on that which is given him, and at the same time expresses and creates himself. But this gift from God is more than something just given to the self, for this gift or this endowment, unlike all others, *is* the self. The response which I make to God is myself; it is myself in action. We *are* endowment in response.[1]

However, sin detracts from man's endowment from God. As a child who spends his money foolishly for candy is given less than a thrifty child, so too it is not unreasonable that God's gift to us as men should be less than what it would have been if sin had not intervened. God is father of all men. He holds us continually in His presence. Our endowment, though lessened by sin, is still, however, sufficient to enable us, standing in that relationship to make our response to Him. This response we make in faith through Christ.

The Christian must believe that every decision of the human will apart from faith is in some degree rebellion against God. Lewis would surely object here. If man is in rebellion against God, he cannot be like him nor is he inclined to be, and therefore the image of God cannot appear directly in his decisions. Yet the image of God in another and wider sense is borne witness to in every decision of man, and this because it is a response to the creative call which brings him with his endowment, not without his response, into existence. God's gift to all

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

men, a universal one, enables man to reply to God in all his decisions —indeed compels him to do so. Our human existence is a life lived before a God who both loves us and at the same time is angry with us. Nevertheless, the believer in Christ looks at man's existence and sees it as an arrow in flight with salvation through Christ as the target. David Cairns puts it thus:

> But faith can see that the real goal and meaning of our life is salvation. The universal image of God is a grace which is given along withour humanity, and this image is seen in our endowment, and born witness to by our response.[1]

And the fact that it is thus given does not mean that it becomes something at our disposal, or ceases to be a gift of God's free grace. For He could at any moment withdraw our life from us.

The main idea of this section, then is that man is in the universal image of God. This is so simply because he stands in an inescapable relation of responsibility to both God and man.

The original being of man is not anything which exists by itself, it is not an independent one, but it is always derived from God and directed to God. This is because of the gift or endowment of the self from God. Man's life is never an independent existence; on the contrary, it is the achievement of dependence. In this fact lies the difference between the freedom of the creature and the freedom of the Creator. The being of God alone is unconditioned, relative freedom—freedom in dependence.

Freedom and Sin

Sin must be positively explained as the product of man's personal

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[1] Ibid., p. 195.

freedom. Man has wilfully chosen his own way and has neglected God's way. Because all men have sinned, all men stand in equal need of God's grace. I can appreciate Brunner's thinking on the subject of sin when he says: sin is unfreedom and unfreedom is sin; it is separation from God and only complete dependence upon God will result in freedom.

However, Dr. Lewis would deny this stand, and for that reason I feel he has strayed from the truth, especially when he argues that we must abandon the idea that all men are equally sinful—if this should mean we must deny important moral differences in the actual character of man. Dr. H.C. Robinson even suggests that Lewis goes so far as to substitute for the universality of sin the widespread fact of moral imperfection. In denying the universality of sin, Lewis is at the same time discrediting the idea of the collective solidarity of the race. It is true that moral responsibility, like air line tickets, cannot be transferred. John is never responsible for what Peter does or intends to do. However, this is remote from the contention that John and Peter are never together responsible for a certain course of action. Certainly, if there is such a thing as collective responsibility, and I feel there is, it means that in a sense I am my brother's keeper, or that I, as John, am responsible in some measure for what Peter does or has done. Actually I am not responsible for what my friend does, but together we are responsible—collectively responsible—for a certain course of action to which each of us has made some contribution. I agree with Dr. Robinson when he asserts that Lewis' discussion of sin is not really concerned with collective responsibility at all, but with individual responsibility.[1] Lewis' main thesis is that we can never be morally

[1] H.H.C. Robinson, Christ and Conscience (London: James Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1956), pp. 27-28.

responsible for anything that someone else has done, but only for what we ourselves have done or have neglected to do, but we can be responsible for the evil influences which we have exerted on another person, not for the actual deed he performs. This is a clear statement that the transference of responsibility is not possible, John being responsible for his conduct and also Peter for his. However, whether John and Peter are collectively responsible for some course of action is another question entirely. But even though Lewis denounces collective responsibility, which simultaneously is a denunciation of the doctrine of the universality of sin, he still argues and even sums up his arguments from the sphere of individual responsibility, and I quote:

> in the final analysis . . . as an immediate assurance of the moral consciousness, and thus independently of any kind of argument, that no person can be responsible for the action of another.[1]

But what about collective responsibility? Professor Lewis assumes that responsibility belongs essentially to the individual and that collective enterprises are invariably just the sum total of a number of single or individual deeds which are done by a number of individual actors. Dr. Robinson has a sound rebuttal to the position of Dr. Lewis:

> One partner's share in a joint undertaking of questionable character may in itself be perfectly harmless and innocent, whereas to the ordinary moral consciousness, aware of other facts, the man may be just as much committed to the whole course of action as anyone else concerned, and consequently involved in the general guilt, and only the acknowledgment of collective responsibility can conveniently find room for this insight.[2]

This is a key sentence in Robinson's argument. He then adds that:

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[1] Lewis, Morals and the New Theology, op.cit., p. 87.

[2] H.W.C. Robinson, Christ and Conscience, op.cit., p. 29.

> what lies behind the moral discrimination of the ordinary consciousness, to which Professor Lewis draws attention and upon which he lays so much stress, is not the conviction that responsibility is always individual, but, on the contrary, the awareness that where several men are wholly committed to the whole joint enterprise they must be regarded as collectively responsible for it, and the moral discrimination in question is in fact a deliberate modification of that collective responsibility on the ground that in one way or another the condition of collective responsibility, namely that all must be wholly committed to the whole enterprise, is not fully realized.[1]

This, I believe, is very true, hence some, rather most, moral actions belong to a class of joint enterprises which are only more or less collective. That is, John must assume more blame for an action than Peter, not because a number of separate judgments upon these single actions is being made, but because moral consciousness in discriminating is dissecting what would otherwise be a single common judgment upon a joint enterprise. This is so because the enterprise in question is, in a greater or lesser measure, only an imperfectly collective one. The very framework of such moral judgment is in fact a realization of collective responsibility, but ordinarily we do not discriminate because we cannot know all the related matters and relevant circumstances which produced the human action in any particular case. Nevertheless, in the eyes of a just and holy God, we do face judgment, not in respect of one course of action or another, "but in respect of the general human enterprise as a whole, the life of the world which is fundamentally but sinfully affirmed as <u>our</u> life, as man's life, these reservations no longer apply".[2] Here we see man in an active enterprise which extends

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 30.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 31.

as far as does human life itself. Within this joint undertaking, which is the whole world, there are many kinds of individual efforts, joint or collective enterprises and rival plots, but they all occur "within a deeper unanimity, a human condition to which Christ speaks when He lays His claim upon human life, a claim which reclaims and redeems".[1]

The actual content of sin is explicable in terms of the category of development, the past survives into the present, whether it be the past of the individual self or of his direct ancestry, or of the society which constitutes his environment. But because man is a person, endowed with some measure of freedom to choose between real alternatives, these powerful influences of the past and present entrenched in the lines of habit are not enough to account for his actual sinning or for the practical universality of sin within the race. Although they may tell us the form of the actual sins which man commits, they do not in the full sense state why man commits them. I feel that any attempt so presumptious as to present an absolute and universal cause for sin would be to abandon the higher category of personality which is what makes man man.

Dr. Wheeler Robinson says: "Evolution may be said to prescribe the conditions of man's probation and discipline; it still leaves us, as indeed the Bible does, with an unsolved mystery of iniquity which throws us back on personal freedom".[2] He who commits sin does so always by his own act of decision; sin then, is man's self-chosen alienation

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[1] Ibid., p. 31.

[2] H.W. Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1934), p. 302.

from God. This sounds very much like Brunner's concept of unfreedom—a state which all men share because all men are part of the same human family. This still provides no solution to the problem of man's sinful state apart from each and every man's ability to make a free audacious choice before God.

If we go back to the doctrine of the Fall of Man to find the answer to the problem, Brunner's doctrine of the Fall,[1] much less than Augustine's (in which the entire race was represented seminally in Adam making Adam's posterity active participants in Adam's sin, hence making all responsible) give no real proof of the universality of evil, and, therefore, the universality of sin. The only proof of the universality of evil is the appeal to our actual experience of life; apart from this experience, every human personality is a new venture, not to be generalized into a conscious machine, or forced into the circle of scientific exploration so as to lose its vital initiative.

Freedom and Revelation

"Revelation is not something which we discover for ourselves and to which we proceed to attribute a value. Revelation is something which apprehends us to give us value".[2] We did not search out God; rather he has searched out us.[3] To quote St. Paul's phrase: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me".[4] The emphasis here

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[1] See Appendix I.

[2] N.H.G. Robinson, Christ and Conscience, op.cit., p. 86.

[3] John 15:16

[4] Galatians 2:20 (Moffatt).

is on the initiative and activity of God through his grace while nothing is implied concerning the activity of the man who is apprehended. It is taken for granted that man must be responsive and subordinate in this encounter, but must he remain entirely passive? Is human personality to be acted upon as raw dough is cut by a cookie cutter? This is our concern in this section.

Here Brunner would say that man's act is simply one of appropriation. Man appropriates God's act of self-revelation in His word. But man's act is nothing more than the acceptance of God's freely given love. The act of man is still real, though. It is one of re-orientating his pattern of life. God's act is one of transformation of that man, whereby man is able to exercise dependence upon God and find freedom.

Here Lewis strongly objects. He does not feel that man must throw up his hands in despair and admit his total incapacity for goodness. To Lewis, the idea that God must first act toward man before man can act for good certainly lessens any basic understanding of personal responsibility and the idea of the dignity of human personality. Hence the task of this section of our present chapter will be to seek out the elements of truth in these two counter views and attempt some reconciliation.

Christianity is the story of the encounter between God and man through Christ, a story to which Christian theology seeks to give a systematic proclamation. Here, this encounter is possible because God chooses to act. And his act is one of self-revelation. This self-disclosure through His Son is to man and for man. "He came to His own and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them

gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name".[1]

God's self disclosure then was for man's judgment and salvation. "Thou shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins".[2] He came to be our Savior. Paul reflecting on Christ's mission is seen in "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself".[3] Christ came as Savior to a lost world; He came wholly as Savior to all. And since Christ came as Savior to a lost world and entirely as such, it is to man's conscience above all, says Robinson, that the revelation is addressed. Yet, that which is addressed in this revelation is a living Reality, the Lord Jesus Christ, not ethical teachings and propositions. Here in man's conscience, man's heart, is Christ's point of contact.

To Brunner this point of contact is the remnant of the divine image yet remaining in sinful man, though a distorted image. For Brunner, this point of contact had to be one which was both pure and purely formal—for this was the home base for the work of grace within the soul of man. Robinson has a good point here:

> If man provides the foundation and grace the building created thereon, and even if man provides the site, and grace the building and foundation together, less is due to grace than would be the case if grace provided the site as well. But personal relationships cannot be subsumed under this mechanical conception, and, in reality, nothing is taken away from the grace and generosity of the giver if a man has hands to receive his gift.[4]

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[1] John 1:11, 12, (K.J.V.)

[2] Matthew 1:21 (K.J.V.)

[3] II Corinthians 5:19 (R.S.V.)

[4] H.H.G. Robinson, Christ and Conscience, op.cit., p. 62.

Dr. Robinson continues:

> If we begin with a mechanical conception of the relationship between God and man we are apt to think of any point of contact in man for the revelation of God as a kind of bridge-head, in the human, of the divine,[1]

which leads ultimately to divided opinion over what is God's creation and what is His grace. If this relationship be looked upon as a personal one "the point of contact will scarcely be conceived as a bridge-head of the divine but as a precise destination of God's self-revelation".[2] Really this point of contact or bridge-head, as Robinson calls it, is not our consciences. It is none less than Christ. Christ confronts me as my Savior in being the Savior of this sinful world. This sinful world is a self-contained kingdom of man in which man is the monarch. The deep-rooted pervasive character of human life in this world is brought out of the shadows and thrown in the clear light in that cruel spectacle, the Crucifixion. Here man's sin is plainly seen—sin for which he is morally responsible. The doctrine of sin is concerned with man's natural attitude to God. However, does this imply that the concern is not with man's attitudes toward his neighbour? Is man, a sinner before God, a total moral corruption? Brunner would answer this "yes, definitely!" Lewis would reply "decidely no!" Robinson, however, has found solid footing on some middle ground which I feel is close to the truth.

"The theory of total moral corruption has been advanced in ethics as well as in theology, but sooner or later it has always come up against the insuperable obstacle that in fact men are not entirely

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[1] Ibid., p. 62.

[2] Ibid., p. 62.

devoid of good".[1]

> If the moral situation of humanity is, as it seems to be, neither wholly good nor entirely evil, it is easy to see how man should come to entertain the idea of moral progress and of ultimate perfectibility: but if they were indeed utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good, they would seem to be completely shut off from all such moral vision.[2]

The very fact that men have some moral insight, regardless of how poorly founded this vision might be, does presuppose that they have some foundation. Hence we have a contradiction of the theory of total moral corruption. A man who is dead in sin may be alive to his responsibilities toward his neighbour; a worldly spirit is not by any necessity oblivious to the demands of good citizenship. Thus, within the framework of the daily intercourse of human relations there is to be found no clear analogy to the hurt caused by man's sin and, consequently, no conclusion can be drawn from their examination, except what does seem to be true in any case, namely, that the effect of sin falls appreciably short of total moral corruption in respect of the relationships amongst men.

Nevertheless, when a man is confronted by Christ, it is not just a portion of his being which is changed. His whole life and existence is brought under judgment, including his relationship to his neighbours as well as his relationship to God. Man is a sinner before God. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God".[3] To man, who has deliberately robbed God of the glory due to his Name, Christ comes on a mission of mercy and grace. He comes for justification—not natural

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[1] H.H.G. Robinson, Christ and Conscience, op.cit., p. 68.

[2] Ibid., p. 69.

[3] Romans 3:23 (R.S.V.)

justice. Our moral ideals, our moral standards, our moral deeds—all are brought under judgment. Our natural morality is sinful. (This squares well with Brunner's contention that morality is evil.)[1] However, it is sinful because it is natural morality. Why is natural morality sinful? ("Why indeed?" asks Lewis.) Because everything natural is full of sin. "In natural morality the finite creature makes the measure of himself finite too, centres his life in himself and in his human world, and so comes under the judgment of the Infinite, which is, however, grace and forgiveness—as well as judgment".[2]

Now moving from the sphere of morality to the sphere of religion, that is, from the purely moral consciousness to the realm of faith answering revelation, there opens a new possibility before man. The claim of morality is reaffirmed on a different plane. "The commandment of Christ that we should love our neighbour as ourselves is not exhausted in a system and balance of claims which make each count as one and none as more than one, not even the agent himself".[3] It is fulfilled rather by increasing immeasurably the importance of our neighbour, by sympathising with him in his joys and sorrows, his successes and failures, by loving him as much as we love ourselves. "The ordinary moral consciousness cannot comprehend this attitude—although, as Robinson says, "under grace it is only the moral consciousness that can understand it."[4] Christ's commandment is foolishness in the sight of the natural man

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[1] Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), p. 71.

[2] H.H.G. Robinson, Christ and Conscience, op.cit., pp. 73-74.

[3] Ibid., p. 74.

[4] Ibid., p. 74

(the carnal mind)[1] for natural morality has no knowledge of God, the Creator, and Father of all. Christ not only judges our natural morality, but to be sure he changes it. "In Christ all things are become new".[2] He recreates and renews our old natural morality. The natural man with his natural morality knows he ought not to steal from his neighbour, but under grace he knows how to love him when his need is presented before him and when God reveals His divine will in the matter. "The change wrought by Christ appears from still another perspective, for the 'I ought' of natural morality and obligation is not replaced, as Dr. Brunner seems to imply, but is overshadowed by the 'Thou shalt' of the divine imperative".[3]

The divine-human encounter at the core of the Christian religion, being both personal and present, is also moral and ethical. "This truth is founded on the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit which underlines and emphasises the contemporaneous character, the here-and-now-ness of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ."[4] "If any one is in Christ he is a new Creation".[5] As the apostles saw a new king upon the throne, knowing the old things had passed away and all things were to them new, so too with the inrush of the Holy Spirit we see a new king upon the throne. We meet a new world of spiritual truth, we share

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[1] Romans 8:7.

[2] Romans 5:17 (A.J.V.)

[3] N.H.G. Robinson, Christ and Conscience, op.cit., p. 76.

[4] Ibid., p. 76.

[5] II Corinthians 5:17 (R.S.V.)

Paul's expression, "For to me to live is Christ".[1] "It is no longer I who live, Christ lives in me; the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God . . ."[2]

The sinner does not know of God's grace, of his lost integrity, until he believes in Christ. And when he believes, the split in his being is both revealed, and its healing begun. For to see the contradiction in our nature is itself the beginning of the cure, the beginning of faith.[3] And faith is only given as we acknowledge that God has removed the barrier between Himself and man through the cross. In faith my relation to God is transformed, and since my very being is identical with that relation, my very being is also transformed by faith.

Prior to faith my life was like a prison: this is the judgment upon sinful man. We are all imprisoned although we do not so much suspect the walls and bars until Christ comes and Himself opens the door. He summons us out and makes us free. Here is the judgment that in the world we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, a judgment expressed in the Christian doctrine of sin, but also, since it is a moral judgment it behoves us in understanding the doctrine to be continually sensitive to ethical considerations.

Freedom and Grace

After having discussed man's sin and God's revelation to man,

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[1] Philippians 1:21 (R.S.V.)

[2] Galatians 2:20 (Moffatt).

[3] Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 501.

what is involved in the operation of God's grace on man? Does man come into harmony with God by making the right use of his natural ability to choose from case to case between good and evil? Or is this harmony to be expected, fundamentally, by an influence of divine grace upon the life of man so that in consequence of this influence, the will of the regenerate now functions in true freedom in the direction of the good? Lewis would take his stand with the exponents of the first view and Brunner would maintain the reliability of the second. In these present day writers we have an echo of the classic Augustine-Pelagius controversy[1] of the 5th century.

Several times in his writings Dr. Lewis attacks the idea of discarding the notion of man's genuine capacity for responsible action. He holds that man's capability for exercising wise choices is a most distinctive asset in the drama of intervention and response by which the purpose of God is realized. To review, Lewis finds it most difficult "to reconcile (page 54) the "widely accepted ideas of grace with what we feel is bound to be true about our responsibility as moral agents and with the notion of distinctively moral worth and evil, and of the guilt and remorse associated with responsible action". Grace to him is the illumination of man's intellect and mind.[2] It is insight at a particular moment into a particular problem to decipher the proper course on a particular occasion. This sounds akin to the knowledge a person acquires after specialized training due to the processes active

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[1] See Appendix II.

[2] H.D. Lewis, Our Experience of God (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1959), p. 271.

in education; in short, a man-made grace. With such a view man still must strain after God, longing for rest and peace, but longing out of anxiety. This is a far cry from Dr. Brunner's concept of grace, a concept which has its clearest and purest expression in God's gracious act in Christ—man's only access to freedom from anxiety, freedom from sin and guilt. However, to understand Brunner's doctrine of grace as opposed to that of Lewis, we must first review his doctrine of sin. See Appendix I also.

Brunner holds that human nature as originally created was free from sin, designed for communion with God and was able to realize the end of its being, though having also the capacity for sin. With this capacity then, man willfully turned his back on God and became concerned with lower things. In this perverse misdirection of the will, sin consists. Sin is contrary to man's true nature and only a radical cure can overcome it.

A new life, then, must be given to men, and must be planted in them afresh. Brunner says that this power to recover life and true freedom which is really a new gift of life is entirely the free and gracious gift of God drawing man to Christ. It is always God who takes the initiative, without being dependent on any initiative of man. Faith is a gift of grace which transforms the very core of man's being. "It is God's gift, God's free gift, not prepared for by anything on our side, if we meet Him and in meeting with Him hear His Word".[1] Outside His Word, however, God is hidden from us. "Faith means being

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[1]Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1949), p. 17.

gripped by the Word of God,"[1] enabling man to produce works good and acceptable to God. Justification, then, is wholly and fully accomplished by the activity of sanctifying grace in the ground of faith. Niebuhr says: "Justification is the assurance of divine forgiveness . . . the Christ who is apprehended by faith, that is, to whom the soul is obedient in principle, 'imputes'[2] his righteousness to it. It is not an actual possession except by faith".[3] God's grace renews the will of man; and renews it in such a way that the will is set free to choose and to follow it unswervingly.

Such a doctrine of grace sounds as if God apprehends man in such a way that he can do no other than respond. To me, such a position leads to both a misunderstanding of the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man, and I do not think this is the intention of the Barthians, nor of Brunner, in particular. Nevertheless, the idea conjures up the picture of man as a mere puppet on a string in which case God is a kind of tyrant. (Here we must not forget that Brunner's "Wholly Other" doctrine of God is a most transcendental one.) However, if man is really created in the image of God, though he has fallen, he is still free to reply to God—using his God-given reasoning powers. Man is not a "thing"—nor can be—if he was truly made in God's likeness. Man is free, but this raises the question: If man is free, in what

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[1] Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 421.

[2] This doctrine of the "imputation of righteousness" has always been offensive to moralistic interpreters of Christian faith. They have made much of the non-moral character of such imputation. (Niebuhr).

[3] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), p. 105.

sense can we say man is free?

First, I think all systems of theology are agreed that in some sense man has free will. Lewis complains that man does not have an absolute free choice, but this is true because only God is absolutely free. The Psalmist says: Only God is Lord.[1] Man is free in the sense that he is responsible to God. By the freedom of the will we really mean that man stands over against God answering with a genuine "yes" and a genuine "no". Let freedom not be confused with license. Freedom is not license but responsibility.

According to Dr. D.M. Baillie, man can know four stages of freedom which are:

(a) The state of Innocence: In this state man is free and has not yet sinned. But innocence is not perfection.

(b) The state of Sin: Man is now a fallen creature, utterly unable to will what is good or to convert himself from evil. He is free only in the minimal sense of having a will. His will is not free in any substantial sense, but enslaved.

(c) The state of Grace: A man is now freed from his bondage, and can freely choose and will what is good, though he does not always do it. This is not the state of independence but one of dependence. Man here has victory over the power of sin by the gift of God's grace.

(d) The state of Glory: The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only. Here is freedom from the wrath of God, freedom from law, freedom

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[1] Psalm 100.

> from sin and death. Here the redemption of man in the final beatitude of heaven is, of course, not regarded as man's achievement, but as something wrought in him by God.[1]

Who finds this state of bliss? Brunner's answer is that all men may. God is not responsible for man's sin and for man's consequent loss of freedom. God does not select from the great mass of man some who are to be saved, purely and simply as an act of divine grace and without any reference to desert, and deny others, who are to be lost. In Brunner God's call goes out to all men. However, only the man who answers and responds to God's grace finds faith and freedom.

But is it true then, that in order to reach genuine freedom we have to pass beyond morality? Is it possible that we cannot resolve the problem of man's free will until we introduce the factor which theologians have intended when they have spoken of divine grace?

The Christian ethic is summed up in: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". However, the central tradition of Christian theology has always taught that it is not human nature to obey that commandment. We cannot even begin to do it by an exercise of our own will. Dr. Brunner says we are able to do it only when God's grace comes to our aid. Dr. D.M. Baillie explains this aptly using what he calls "the paradox of moralism"—the fact that the quest of goodness defeats itself. "It is not by careful cultivation of our characters in the light of an ideal that the finest character is actually formed. That purely moralistic method is apt to lead either to manifest failure

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[1] D.M. Baillie, "Philosophers and Theologians on the Freedom of the Will", Scottish Journal of Theology, IV, no. 2 (June 1951), 118.

or, if it seems to be succeeding to a self-righteous pride, which is really the worst failure of all".[1] True godly persons have sought goodness by a different route. Rather than egotistically concentrating on their own characters, they have first of all sought God according to Jesus' teaching, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you".[2] "True saints have been less conscious of themselves than of God, less conscious of an ethic or an ideal than the will of God, the love of God, which called out the response of their faith and love. Thus they have slowly and gradually come to love their neighbours in God".[3] These persons, when questioned concerning the secret of their joy-filled lives confessed that really they were not good and whatever good was in their lives was not their own achievement but was due to the activity of God's goodness—his grace. There is no infringement upon the dignity or personality of man here, nor is this a reduction of human freedom. The man of God would confess happily that he never knew such freedom as those times when he knew himself to be wholly dependent on the grace of God. Though many problems attend such an admission of trust, the truth underlying the mysterious affirmation that only by divine aid can man be truly free and do and be what he ought to do and be, is that "the best kind of living . . . does not come through sheer volitional effort to realize an ideal, but in a more indirect way, as the fruit of a life of faith in God".[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 121.

[2] Matthew 6:33 (K.J.V.)

[3] Baillie, op.cit., p. 121.

[4] Ibid., p. 122.

Conclusion

As far as Christian faith is concerned, the possibility of salvation lies entirely in the divine will and not in any human quality. Therefore, it is idle to attempt to explain by rational or moral means how salvation occurs. For faith there is no other explanation than that which refers to God's spontaneously active, unfathomable, and loving will. Salvation cannot be explained by asserting that man possesses such intrinsic worth as thereby to evoke the divine act of love. On the contrary, when man is confronted with the divine act of salvation, it becomes apparent to him that there is nothing in man which can motivate and thereby make salvation possible. Faith can say nothing more about the possibility of the salvation which brings true freedom than is given in Matthew 19:26: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible".

> The divine will to save appears to faith as absolutely unmerited love, and salvation by faith as entirely the work of God. When we assert that faith also has the character of a decision, an audacious choice on man's part, it does not mean in any sense whatsoever that the character of faith as entirely the work of God is encroached upon in any way. Even when man answers an affirmation position in relation to God, this is nothing else to the eye of faith than the work of God—his conquest of man.[1]

Freedom is the most glorious thing there is. "It grows the more we grow into communion with God: it subsides the more we separate ourselves from God. It is the fruit of faith alone. For faith is simply belonging wholly and completely to God".[2] The Christian ethic,

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[1]Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: The Muhlenburg Press, 1960), p. 141.

[2]Emil Brunner, Our Faith (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1936), p. 91.

then, to use Augustine's phrase, is: Love God and do what you want.

APPENDIX I

Brunner's Teaching on the Fall[1]

All men see something of the fact of the Fall, but only the Bible takes it in deadly earnest. The Bible asserts two things about sin that seem contradictory; first, that we cannot avoid sin; secondly, that we are to blame for it. Sin is a cleft that runs through our whole nature, a cleft between our original constitution and our sinful wills. This opposition is not one which we can overcome by our own efforts from day to day as if today we could disobey God and tomorrow obey Him. Thus, behind the various sinful decisions we make from day to day, there is a total sinful decision, which is the Fall. It is our own decision, and not something imposed on us. The view that Adam, our historical ancestor, made a sinful decision in the past which involved us in guilt, could not but rouse a sense of indignation in the ordinary man. This indignation the theologians tried to disarm by theories of the seminal presence of Adam's descendants in his loins when he sinned, and other similar devices. But the truth is that we are all our own Adam. This total decision does not determine the particular decisions of our daily acts in the manner that a logical ground determines its consequent, or as a cause determines its effects. It determines them rather in the manner that the Constitution of a State determines the acts of statesmen who put that Constitution into action,

[1]Carins, op.cit., pp. 154-155.

while they are left by it still morally responsible. Brunner claims that the reality which the church calls the Fall and Original Sin is to be found, not in the region of the empirically ascertainable, but "behind" it, not indeed in a timeless existence, or an existence above time, but in a created original existence, which, like the Creation, can only be "seen" from the standpoint of the Word of God, and not from that of experience.

APPENDIX II

Pelagius and Augustine

A.

Pelagius stressed the power of contrary choice or what we call formal freedom. He never tired of praising the inalienable power of man's nature to do what is right. He argued that since God has enjoined His law upon man, man, therefore, must have the power to fulfill it. There is nothing in man that compels him to sin. It is not even impossible for man to lead a sinless life.

This conception of man's freedom as the natural power to choose from case to case and in act after act indicates Pelagius' conception of sin. Sin is not seen as a condition of man's nature, in an inclination, in tendencies of the will. This led the Pelagians to reject the doctrine of an original sin as transmitted from parents to children. The position was that not the soul, but only the flesh is traceable to Adam. The fall of Adam was looked upon as an insignificant act, with no meaning for his posterity. Man's sensual nature, his concupiscence, was regarded as morally neutral.

The apparent universality of sin was explained by pointing to man's sensual nature which, although entirely innocent in itself, becomes the occasion for temptation and sinning. Also, Pelagius mentions the attraction of evil examples as the occasion for the sinning of individuals. He fails to see the ethical unity of the race and the ethical unity

in the individual.

Pelagius' teaching on grace corresponds with those views of human nature and free will. Pelagius did not believe in a real grace, i.e. in a grace conceived of as the divine influence in man, much less in a creative divine influence upon his spiritual powers. To him, grace was first of all an enlightenment of man's reason, enabling him to see the will of God so that he in his own powers can choose and act accordingly. Christ's work merely facilitates the right action of man's will.

B.

In Augustine, the original man was just, and his will was in harmony with God as well as with himself. The will was master of the carnal impulses. He was in a state of not needing to sin and not needing to die. But it lay in the freedom of his will that he was not compelled and, therefore, if he should use his freedom in the wrong direction his state would become one in which it would be impossible for him not to sin and not to die.

The Fall of Adam was a great sin. Pride was the motive. He wanted to be his own master and therefore refused to obey God. Turning from God he had turned to himself. It had made Adam a sinner with a sinner's will.

According to Augustine the consequences were disastrous. The sin of Adam was the sin of the whole human race. We all were in Adam, and all were he. Augustine taught that human nature in its totality was present seminally in the first man. Therefore, guilt is imputed to the whole race. It is the guilt of the entire race by right, because

in Adam's sin the will of his posterity was operative.

Man's restoration comes through grace alone. This grace is in no sense just relatively, but absolutely necessary. It attaches itself to the remnant of the divine image in man, in his need of redemption, and in the capacity for salvation. Grace begins with baptism which is the first act through which God establishes a relation between Himself and man who needs grace. Grace operates as a divine creative act. In this process of renewal the Holy Spirit works faith in man, dispelling the spiritual ignorance which had come over him through the fall. So man assents to divine truth and arrives more and more at a higher knowledge of spiritual things. Grace, in Augustine's view, is irresistible and predestinating.

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