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“Christ died for our sins, He was buried, He rose again”—that, with all that goes with it, with the whole saving work of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, so gloriously set forth in the Scriptures and so splendidly summarized in the Catechism of our Church, that and that alone constitutes the gospel.

—J. Gresham Machen



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Christianity and Crisis Theology

By CORNELIUS VAN TIL

THIS brief study of Barthianism was prepared by Dr. VanTil for publication in *Cheng Yen Pao*, the official magazine of the China Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. We publish it by kind permission of the editors of that magazine. Dr. VanTil is professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, and the author of the volume, *The New Modernism*, which is an extended appraisal of Barthianism.

IN recent times it has become quite clear that Christianity and Modernism are two mutually exclusive religions. But a third party has appeared upon the scene. It is the *Theology of Crisis*. Its chief exponents, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, were trained as Modernists. But they have been very critical of Modernism and its great theologians, Schleiermacher and Ritschl. Moreover, they claim the paternity of Luther and Calvin. Their language is frequently that of historic Protestantism. As a result, many orthodox Christians seem to think that the old gospel has found a new and powerful expression through their mouths. We believe that this is not the case. Without in the least presuming to judge the hearts of its exponents, we shall offer evidence to prove that the *Theology of Crisis* is but a new form of Modernism.

The Bible

Barth and Brunner refer to their position as being a *theology of the Word*. But both Barth and Brunner accept the results of negative or "higher" criticism. Both oppose the orthodox doctrine of the words of Scripture as being identical with revelation. The words of Scripture are said to become the words of God but not until they are accepted as such. Thus the theology of the Word is after all but a theology of experience, and not a theology of the Word at all. On this basic point we are back to the position of the old Modernism. (Cf. Barth: *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I, 2, p. 590; I, I, p. 105; also Brunner: *Revelation and Reason*)

Revelation

Barth and Brunner also speak of

their position as a theology of revelation. But they oppose the orthodox idea of a *finished* revelation. According to them revelation is always an *act*. And it is never an act until it is *interaction* between God and man. And to take his part in this interaction man must become more than man. Through the Holy Spirit man's act of accepting revelation becomes God's act of receiving His own Word. God can be known by God only. Thus we are back to the modernist idea of God coming to self-consciousness in man and man coming to self-consciousness in God. (Barth: *K.D.*, I, 1, pp. 313ff; Brunner: *Die Mystik und das Wort*, and *Revelation and Reason*)

God

Barth and Brunner speak much of the transcendent God. Yet they reject the orthodox doctrine of God. For them God is identical with His revelation. And as already noted revelation is a process of interaction of God with man made divine. Barth argues that God's transcendence means His freedom to become wholly identical with man and to take man up into complete identification with himself. For Brunner, God is virtually identical with what he calls the divine-human encounter. Both are vigorously opposed to the orthodox idea of God's self-contained intertrinitarian existence. Both virtually identify God's intertrinitarian activity with His works of creation, providence and redemption. Thus we are back to the God of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, a god made in the image of man. (Barth: *K.D.* I, chapter on "The Freedom of God"; Brunner: *Revelation and Reason*)

Man

Barth and Brunner speak of man as having been created in the image of God and as having fallen into sin. But these ideas, they say, are not to be taken as orthodoxy takes them. The Genesis account is not to be taken as historical narrative. There was no historical Adam. There was no paradise. There was no fall.

The notion of a state of perfection is rather an ideal for the future. It

intimates God's intention for man, and therefore by revelation as interaction is man's ideal for himself. But God's intention may be thwarted by man; which by the process of interaction means that man never lives up to his own ideal. So we are back again to the level of Modernism. In the evolutionary process man forms for himself high ideals but, because of the situation of which he is a part, he never fully lives up to them. (Barth: *K.D.* III, 1; Brunner: *The Mediator*, p. 146; *Man in Revolt*, pp. 85f)

Christ

Barth and Brunner want to interpret all things Christologically. And their Christ, they contend, is the Christ of the Scriptures. This claim, too, must be denied. Their Christ is not the Christ of the historic Christian creeds. He stands for the process of interaction between God and man. God is nothing but what He is toward man in Christ, and man is nothing but what he is in Christ toward God. Identification with Christ is God's ideal for man and through revelation as interaction, Christ is man's ideal for himself. He is the true Adam. So we are led back again to the old modernist notion of a Christ who is naught but an idealized man. A Christ who is a mixture of a God who does not exist apart from Him and a man who does not exist apart from Him is not the Christ of the Scripture. (Barth: *K.D.* I, 2; Brunner: *The Mediator*)

Salvation

Barth and Brunner speak much of God's sovereign grace. By the sound of the words they use, one would even think they were Calvinists. For to them God's election is the source of man's salvation. But election, they say, must be understood Christologically. It is therefore a process. Creation itself is taken up into this process of election. A man does not really exist except in so far as he exists in Christ. Self-consciousness presupposes Christ-consciousness. All men are reprobate, but they are reprobate in Christ. Judas, says Barth, "is not against Jesus" (*K.D.* III, 1, p. 508). He is not wholly for Jesus. Neither is any one else. All men

are elect; they are elect as reprobate (*Idem*, p. 526). Judas represents the principle of evil that is found in all men and Peter represents the ideal perfection in Christ that is found in all men. Christ unites the reprobate and the elect; both are destined for participation in God's glory (*K.D.* II, 2, p. 460). (For Brunner: *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, p. 52). Thus the sovereign grace of the Crisis theologians has been made quite acceptable to the natural man. It is but the auto-soterism of the old Modernism in a new dress.

The Church

Barth and Brunner speak of election as the heart of the church. But as they reject the orthodox doctrine of election so they also reject the orthodox doctrine of the church. For them the church is identical with the process of election as both are identical with the process they call Christ. All men are involved in this process. As vessels of wrath they are outside but as vessels of mercy they are inside the church. As Scripture itself is full of contradictory systems and is but a witness to the truth so no creed can be anything but an arrow pointing toward the truth. Thus we are back again to the level of the old Modernism with its notion of the church as a local improvement association. (Barth: *K.D.* II, 2; Brunner: *The Divine Imperative*, p. 300; *Man in Revolt*, p. 78)

The Commandment

Barth and Brunner speak of interpreting ethics Christologically. There is no God apart from Christ as there is no man apart from Christ. In Christ the commanding God and obedient man have coalesced. There is no other good but Christ and there are no other duties but those to Christ. Christ is the standard of good and evil. The disobedient disobey in Christ. God's judgment upon them is reconciliation in Christ. Men cannot know that they have sinned except in the light that they are forgiven in Christ; self-consciousness is identical with Christ-consciousness. Thus ethics is identical with the process of election. As Esau all men disobey but as Jacobs all men obey in Christ. What God wills of us is the same as that which He wills for us and is doing within us. Thus we are back to the old Modernism according to which Christ is the impersonation of ideals which men have set for themselves in the course of the

evolutionary process. (Barth: *K.D.* III, 1; Brunner: *The Divine Imperative*)

The Last Things

Barth and Brunner deal constantly with the last things. But for them the last things have no connection with the calendar. They are not *pre* or *post* or a millennialists. There was no creation out of nothing. There was no historical Adam. God did not reveal Himself directly in nature and history. The Virgin birth, the death and the resurrection of Christ did not take place in history, but in super-history. And super-history is not measured by hours and days of ordinary history. There is no difference of date between the first and second coming of Christ. There is no difference of date between what Christ did, or rather *does*, for us and what He, through the Spirit, does within us. In Christ God has time for us; in Christ He is buried with us,

with all men. In Christ our time becomes God's time; we, all men, are risen with Him. All revelation events are aspects of the one great Resurrection Event, of which God and man are the two correlative aspects. Thus we have virtually returned to the old Modernism, which reduces historic Christianity to a monistic process philosophy. (Barth: *The Resurrection of the Dead*)

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Our conclusion must be that the gospel preached and taught by Barth and Brunner, though couched in orthodox sounding terminology, is still virtually identical with the gospel of the old Modernism. It is an emasculated gospel, a gospel without God, without Christ, without grace, a gospel to the liking of the natural man and withal a gospel of despair. It is a new Modernism more subtle and dangerous than the old.

The Contest with Pharaoh

The Power of God Manifest on Behalf of His Covenant People

By EDWARD J. YOUNG

AS Moses prepared to go before the king of Egypt, he heard the word of the Lord, "—I will lay my hand upon Egypt" (Exodus 7:4a). It was a critical time. The people of God, the Israelites, were in bondage to a hostile oppressor. During the time of their servitude, they could not serve the Lord as an organized body. Their plight was hard, and they groaned for deliverance.

The situation, however, was far more crucial than appears upon the surface. It was a critical time, because God's people were in bondage, but it was also a critical time for a far more profound reason. For the first time in history, the people of God, the descendants of Eve, the heirs of the promise, were to come face to face with the onslaughts of the adversary. The Egyptian people did indeed desire to keep the Israelites as their slaves. That would have been to their advantage. But behind the scenes of history, there are spiritual forces at work. Satan, the adversary, would delight to keep the people in perpetual bondage. For, if the Israelites should be delivered and

leave Egypt, it would mean that they could be organized into a nation. The theocracy could then be established upon the earth. The Temple of God could be erected. Israel could be a light unto the Gentiles to point them to Mount Zion, from whence would come the Deliverer.

This must be prevented at all costs. Jerusalem must not be established; the Temple must not be built. The theocracy must not be established. Israel must remain as a helpless, unorganized group, for, if the Theocracy be founded, out of Zion will come forth the Law and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. This simply must not be. To destroy Israel now; to keep her in perpetual bondage; this will be to preclude the coming of Jesus Christ. This will be to avert Calvary. Satan must work now, and he must work fast.

There are always people ready and willing to do the bidding of Satan. And such were the Egyptians. Of course, they may not have realized that they were being made the instruments of a hostile power, but that does not