

Special Revelation as Historical and Personal

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When the Christian theologian speaks of revelation as historical, is he not on a cleft stick? If he talks about history, how can he still talk about revelation, which has to do with absolute truth? History has always worn the mean garment of contingency, which makes any claims to absoluteness seem overweening and presumptuous. In our day this is especially the case. Now that we know that the eternal hills are not eternal and that the fixed stars are anything but fixed, now that we can date not only civilizations and cultures but the world itself, what absolute is there left but that of John Dewey's "Absolutely no absolutes"? Have not the mediating attempts of liberal theologies proven vain? Is not the end of the way the "History and Psychology of Religion School," in which the divine and the human are finally and completely identified? History, it is asserted, can never be more than a documentation of man's religious experience, the record of his quest for God. Obviously in such a context there can be no admission of a "Thus saith the Lord." As Karl Barth, while still a young pastor trained in such liberal theology, once complained, "Both tables of the law slip from the preacher's hand as he approaches the people" ("Moderne Theologie und Reichsgootesarbeit," *Zeitschrift fur Theologie und Kirche*, 1919, p. 317). Is it then really possible to speak of revelation as historical?

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I. REVELATION AS HISTORICAL

To escape this impasse, many religious thinkers have followed the way pioneered by Plato and declared that the realm of time and space is one of flux and change. Revelation for such thinkers is no matter of history at all. It is ridiculous to seek an historical foundation for religious truth. To be sure, one may see in certain events in history the concretion of eternal truths. In the life of Jesus", for example, the idea of sacrificing love is given noble expression; but one could never commit himself to Jesus, for someone will one day surpass him. History knows no absolutes. As Fichte has said, "Only the metaphysical can save, never under any circumstances the historical" (as quoted by Brunner, *Offenbarung and Vernunft*, Zurich, 1941, p. 394).

Need to Escape Relativism and Idealism

So long as we have the mind of the Greeks, we shall never steer the ship of our thought between this Scylla and Charybdis. Historical relativism is that Scylla which makes impossible a revelation in history, by denying any realm transcending history. Idealism is that Charybdis which makes impossible a revelation in history by its flight from the continuum of time and space into the realm of eternal ideas.

The Biblical View of History as the Medium of Disclosure

All this points up the uniqueness of the Biblical idea of revelation, which is that history is the medium through which the eternal God has revealed himself once for all. The foundation is

pronounces a curse upon their heads, it is a malediction big with benediction (Gen. 3:15). And what is this Protevangelium but the promise that God will not cease to act in history till he has destroyed man's mortal foe and undone the mischief which he wrought?

With the lapse of the nations into heathenism, a new start is made in the call of Abraham and the promise that in his seed all nations of the earth shall be blessed (Gen. 12 ff.). This age of the patriarchs is succeeded by that of Moses and the beginning of Israel's national life according to the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant. With the uprooting of Israel from her place in the family of nations, the divine purpose in history is not frustrated; rather, out of the womb of adversity and seeming defeat, the redemptive purpose of God in history emerges enlarged, clarified, spiritualized, the confidence of all the prophets. But the Old Testament idea of history, as the scene of God's acts as Redeemer of his people, is not an end in itself. Its meaning is Jesus Christ,

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whose name is Emmanuel, God-with-us, who came to "fulfill the law and the prophets." The prophets had the Word of God, but Jesus is the Word. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14.). The incarnation is that event in history which gathers up all other revelation into itself. Jesus is the seed of the woman who shall bruise the serpent's head, and when this work shall have been accomplished, then shall the covenant promise be finally fulfilled, then the tabernacle of God shall be with men and he shall be their God and they his people. Thus redemptive history moves from creation to consummation; this is the divine self-disclosure complete.

The Necessity of Divine Interpretation

Having said this much, we must immediately add the obvious, and that is, that this revelation in history, this *Tat-wort* (act-word) of God, as the Germans would say, is no revelation in and of itself. Revelation presupposes someone to whom the revelation is given. In order to have revelation, there must be, as William Temple has said in his Gifford lectures, "the intercourse of mind and event" or "the coincidence of event and appreciation" (*Nature, Man and God*, p. 315 f.) To analyze the character of this "intercourse," whether it is rational or intuitive, whether it involves a communication of general impressions or specific words, is beyond the province of this particular essay. But one thing must be said, and that is, that we cannot, as Christians, speak of historical events per se, as revelation, any more than we can speak of revelation apart from historical events. God must, by his grace, disclose the meaning of his acts.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His works in vain;
God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain.

That is what he has done in the minds of the prophets and apostles who wrote the Scriptures. The Bible, from the perspective of our discussion, is simply the sacred record of what God has done in history together with the inspired authoritative interpretation of these saving events. The implications of this position for various questions currently debated in theological

circles will be treated more fully in subsequent essays of this volume. We can take the time here to summarize for the reader only the most important phases of the contemporary debate.

Special Problems

First of all, there is the question of the "primal history," that is, Genesis 1-11. The traditional, orthodox view (Augustine was a notable exception) is that this portion of Scripture should be interpreted as a literal piece of history, just as—let us say—the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts. By

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contrast, religious liberalism treats the content of these chapters as so many fairy tales, having no more historical value than the fables of Aesop. The neo-orthodox have assayed to straddle the fence,² or as they would prefer to say, to rise above this orthodox-liberal antithesis, escaping the guilt on the one hand of "wooden literalism," and on the other, of flippant "enlightenment." Accordingly it is argued that the opening chapters of Genesis are to be understood, not as scientific report, but as revelation. This distinction between science and revelation is, we might almost say, indispensable to one who approaches the Bible with an informed seriousness. The difficulty is, that the neo-orthodox approach involves the abandonment and thus sacrifices the significance of the opening chapters of Genesis as events in time and space. In the writer's opinion, this is to deny the fundamental character of revelation as historical. This is cryptic Idealism in a contemporary form—the shade of Schleiermacher. What the answer is, to certain specific problems posed by present day science, it is neither easy nor imperative for faith to say, but if the Christian view conceives revelation as "mighty acts of God" in history, then, at the very least, it would seem, we must believe (as our Lord and his apostles did believe)³ that the events reported in the opening chapters of Genesis actually did happen. There was a first man, a first Adam, who was created upright and fell, not into history, but in history, by a willful act of disobedience bringing

"...death into the world, and all our woe";

and this event was followed by the assurance of pardon and the promise of deliverance. This "eventness" is not simply the form of revelation, not even the "indispensable" form. It is the revelation; and the Arius of the subsequent revelation of God in Christ, the Word that became flesh.

The other area of the Biblical witness that is most crucial in this debate is the fourfold Gospel tradition. Never has any segment of history sustained call such a mass of intense critical probing as the period which we "the public ministry of our Lord." If, as we have said, revelation, for the Christian, is first of all God's mighty acts in history, and if this revelation culminates in the Incarnation, when God himself entered the scene of temporal life to perform the decisive act of all history, then it is natural enough that this segment of the horizontal line of human affairs should be scrutinized minutely. This critical sifting has established certain facts and raised certain questions about the Gospel tradition that may never be finally

² Karl Barth; when asked if he believed the serpent really talked, replied, "One should rather ask what he said!" Brunner labeled this an ingenious evasion of a problem that cannot be evaded (*Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, p. 78, footnote).

³ Cf. Matthew 19:4 f.; 24:38-39; Romans 5:12-21; II Corinthians 13:6; Hebrews 11; I Peter 3: 20.

answered, such as: just what is the relation of the Synoptics to each other, and of John to the Synoptics; exactly what sources were employed by the several Gospel historians; to what extent do we have a report of the *ipsissima verba* of our

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Lord and to what extent a summary in the authors' own words; is it possible, from the Gospels, to construct a chronology of Jesus' life, or are the agglutinative materials in the narratives to be construed loosely as serving a mere literary purpose? If revelation is historical, then the Christian can never shun these and other tensions of critical history, nor can any theory of Biblical inspiration survive if lacking the resilience to adjust to these tensions. But there are dangers even more serious than the obscurantist refusal to enter the strife of history. One is to define the historical basis of our faith in Christ as some "irreducible minimum" far below the requirements of the Gospel tradition (Kierkegaard); another is to declare that the form of the Gospel tradition is "mythological" (Bultmann).

As for the former position, Kierkegaard defined the apostolic witness necessary for faith as follows: "...we have believed that in such and such a year, God showed himself in the humble form of a servant, lived and taught among us and thereupon died" (*Philosophische Brocken*, p. 94). This he considered as "more than enough." Emil Brunner, in his massive Christology, *Der Mittler*, the profoundest and most challenging discussion of the problem from a neo-orthodox point of view, elaborates this Kierkegaardian motif. Faith is not interested, as is criticism, in the Biblical history as history, but only as the Word of God. The Eternal cannot be hung as a particularly large pearl in the string of historical events. The eternal as' event, as revelation, has as such no historical extension. "The Eternal in history—revelation, that which is absolutely unique, is not perceptible as that which has historical extent." Revelation "is not the extended fact in history which we call the life of Jesus and the historical personality of Jesus..." (*Der Mittler*, p. 271). If it were, revelation would be a quantum, and each "piece" of the life of the historical Jesus in its time-space movement a "piece" of revelation (*ibid.*, p. 318.) Such direct identity between the life of Jesus and revelation does not exist. If it did, if God's revelation in Christ is a piece of history, then it is subject to that inexorable law of history according to which one fulfillment overtakes and destroys another, till finally all sinks in that cemetery of world history called the Field of Oblivion. Then the *today* of "Today is this Scripture fulfilled," is shorn of its absolute point of reference. It becomes like the cry of the Germans in 1870, when they won back Alsace. "Today" is our hope fulfilled, said they. But forty years later the last echoes of this "today" died as the French entered Strasbourg ("Der Erfüller," *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 8:273-8, 1930).

Brunner has come to realize, however, that Kierkegaard was guilty of a gross overstatement when he defined the historical basis of faith so narrowly, a mistake which had a fateful effect on his own theology. What Kierkegaard did not clearly see was that the question "What is said to us?" when we read the Gospels cannot be separated from the question "Did that happen?" inasmuch as "it is precisely this that is said, that that *happened*" (*Die christliche Lehre von Gott*, 278). Faith cannot, Brunner says, arise or be sustained

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apart from the historical picture of Jesus as we have it in the Gospels and the knowledge of the fact that this picture, in its main outlines, corresponds to reality (cf. *ibid.*, p. 281). Without

Passion history, there can be no message of the Cross! (*Die christliche Lehre von Schöpfung and Erlösung*, p. 289). The Church has always had, he admits, an absolutely central interest in the historical Jesus, only that in the precritical age, this historical Jesus was without question "identified with the sum total of the Gospel tradition" (*ibid.*, p. 289). Brunner rejects the historic Christian disposition to take the tradition without alteration in detail. He feels that this loss is no concern to faith so long as the basic structure, the substance of the tradition, remains unshaken. This insistence on the indispensable character of Passion history is a real advance in the right direction. The evangelical, however, approaches even the details of the Gospel tradition with the greatest possible reverence, for they are the stuff out of which the "substance" of the tradition is made.

As for Bultmann's "demythologizing" of the Gospel history, his fundamental thesis is that the New Testament witness to the Incarnation, as we have it in our Gospels, conceives and states the event in mythological terms which need to be converted into "existential" terms, if modern man is to understand and receive it (cf. D. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ*, New York, 1948, Appendix, p. 211 f.). He does not mean (and in all fairness to Bultmann the point should be made) that the record of the Gospels is a record of imaginary events and that Jesus is in a class with Zeus or Santa Claus. We pause to make this point since the word "myth," in scientific theological discussion, has often been used in a Hegelian sense. David Friedrich Strauss, for example, when he explained the elements in the Gospel story as mythical, made it plain that he was quite indifferent to the question of historical events. Even if Jesus never existed, Christian faith is unshaken, if it but grasp the eternal truths symbolized by the pictorial language of the myth. This is what Albert Schweitzer has called (with approval) "free-thinking Christianity" which can live "from the insights and energies of an immediate religion, which is independent of all historical foundation" (*Geschichte der Leben-Yesu—Forschung*, Tübingen, 1913, p. 541).

Now Bultmann, by contrast, certainly does believe that the central element in the Gospel narrative—"crucified under Pontius Pilate"—is history in the most obvious terrestrial sense. But it is also true that he shows a lordly indifference to most of the Gospel tradition. The end result of Bultmann's approach reveals that a Gospel, purified from mythology, means a Gospel "purified" from history; and when this happens it marks the end of Christianity (cf. N. B. Stonehouse, *Paul Before the Areopagus*, Chapter 5). Bultmann may ask if we believe Christ literally "ascended into heaven." Was he then the first space traveller? And if so, he has yet a long way to go. We would answer that the ascension, to be sure, is not a scientific description of the way in which the glorified Christ entered upon his session at the right hand of the Father. But neither is it a religious myth which must or even

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may be deleted from our preaching in this age of rockets and Sputniks. The Scriptures say that he was taken up into heaven and that a cloud received him out of the apostles' sight (Acts 1:9, 11). We may not be able to explain how this happened, but the event itself must have happened; he must have been "taken up," or the doctrine of Christ's exaltation is simply an idea. Was it not Calvin who said that the Holy Spirit lisps to us in Scripture as a nurse to a child? The theologian must never attempt to speak more plainly than God. If he does, he will end up with a sublimated "Christian Idealism" which dissolves historical revelation into symbols of the Eternal. There is only one objection to such a position and that is that it is not Christianity.

The pith and marrow of what we have said thus far is this: for the Christian, revelation begins with God's disclosure of his purpose in and through our temporality. History is not a God-forsaken stream of meaningless events. We have admitted indeed that no events, *per se*, are revelation. Man can never discover God for himself, in history. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" To man's proud 'not yet' the Bible replies, 'nor ever'" (Brunner, *Unser Glaube*, Bern, 1935, p.11). A truly revelatory situation, then, is one in which God not only does something, but interprets what he does; not only acts, but speaks in, with and through the acts. That is to say, revelation moves in the dimension of personal encounter. The writers of Scripture not only saw what God did and (by faith) what he would do, but they also heard his "still small voice," by which he made known to them his secret. The time has come to develop this phase of our thesis more at length.

II. REVELATION AS PERSONAL

Out of the critical analysis of the fundamental ideas of the past, precipitated by the first World War, there came a little book by Ferdinand Ebner, the thesis of which is that the gift of speech in man is "scientific" evidence that he is made for fellowship. He cannot live alone, apart from his neighbor, but especially apart from God. This idea is briefly summed up in the preface:

It does not appear entirely superfluous to me, here in the foreword, to reduce the fundamental thought in the *Fragments* to as brief a formula as possible. This fundamental thought is: presupposed that human existence in its kernel has a spiritual significance, that is, a significance which is not exhausted in its natural manifestation in the course of a world event; presupposed that one may speak of something spiritual in man otherwise than in the sense of a fiction of a poetic or metaphoric nature, of a fiction demanded on "social" grounds: then this spiritual entity is essentially defined thereby, that it is fundamentally connected with something *outside* of it, through which and in which it exists. An evidence, and, indeed, an "objectively" tangible evidence, of dependence upon a relation of such a sort and one that is therefore accessible to objective knowledge, is to be found in the fact that man is a speaking being, that he has the "Word." He does not, however, have the word on a natural

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or social basis. Society in the human sense, is not the presupposition of speech, but rather itself has as the presupposition of its existence, that the word is lodged in man. If then, in order to have an expression for it, we call this spiritual entity in man, I, and that which is outside of him, in relationship to which the "I" exists, thou, we must remember that this I and this thou are given to us precisely through the Word and in it, in its "inwardness"; not however, as empty words in which dwells no relationship to reality... but rather as a word, that "reduplicates" its content and real form in the concreteness and actuality of its being pronounced in and through the situation created by speech. That, in brief, is the fundamental thought (*Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten, Pneumatologische Fragments*, Innsbruck, 1921, p. 12).

Ebnerian Personalism

This analysis of man's ultimate involvement through speech in a relationship to a "thou," Ebner sets over against any form of religious thought in which man is involved in a soliloquy,

as in the ethical Idealism of Kant, where the transcendental self addresses the empirical self. It was, according to Ebner, Johann George Hamann, "that marvelously profound 'philologist,'" and Wilhelm von Humboldt, who saw the significance of speech in its spiritual roots as of divine origin, something absolutely transcendent. The self which knows no authority outside itself will not allow itself to be spoken to. The autonomous self is the result of the "falling away from God," the refusal to hear God speaking to us, who is "the true Thou of the true I in man...." This absolutizing of the self in its cosmic loneliness, this misunderstanding of the self with itself (Hamann), can mean nothing else than the spiritual death of man, for the true "I" exists only in relation to the divine "Thou" (*ibid.* pp. 17, 21, 26, 113).

A second thinker who came to many of the same conclusions as Ebner, but evidently in an independent way, was Martin Buber. (His views are set forth primarily in his *Ich und Du* [Leipzig, 1923], which appeared two years after Ebner's work; but a notation at the close informs us that a sketch of the work was made in 1916, first written draft in the fall of 1919, and final composition in the spring of 1922.) Buber opens his study with a distinction between two basic word pairs which sum up his fundamental thesis. "The one basic word is the word pair, I-thou; the other basic word is the word pair, I-it" (*Ich und Du*, p. 10). The world of objects is a shallow one, according to Buber, for it does not change me, even when I am concerned with "revealing," "secret" experiences. "O secretness without mystery, O heaping up of information—it, it, it!" (*ibid.*, p. 12). The real world for Buber is the world of fellowship. "In the beginning is relationship" (*ibid.*, p.25).

Brunner's Application to Theology

Though the thought of these personalists has had a general influence on

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the dialectical school of theology, to Emil Brunner belongs the distinction of having pioneered in working out the implications of this approach for the whole range of theological thinking. A partial explanation of this fact, no doubt, is the interest in "the personal" which he always had as a neo-Kantian. As early as 1919 he wrote, "Only the personal is fruitful..." (*Denken und Erleben*, Basel, 1919, p. 27). And in an address before the Kantian Society of Utrecht he argued that the I first realizes itself in the thou-address of the categorical imperative.⁴ Brunner testifies that it was the work of Friedrich Gogarten, first of the dialectical theologians to express special appreciation for Ebner, that quickened his own sense of the importance of the personal dimension. His initial major effort in this direction was contained in his Uppsala lectures which appeared under the title, *Wahrheit als Begegnung* (Berlin, 1938), a small but highly stimulating volume and perhaps the most original of any that he has written. In the preface of this work he states his thesis: "The Biblical concept of truth is truth as encounter," encounter, that is, between the Divine Person and the human. He concedes that the implications of such a statement for all spheres of church doctrine and practice are immeasurable and we have in his *Dogmatics*, of which two volumes have now appeared, the first attempt ever made to unfold Christian teaching from the perspective of truth as personal encounter.

⁴ "My personality is called into existence through the 'thou shalt'" ("Das Grundproblem der Philosophie bei Kant und Kierkegaard," *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1925, 1-2:39). As late as 1925, Stephan dismissed the Ebnerian speech-philosophy in Brunner's attack on Schleiermacher as simply a variation on his critical neo-Kantian ethical approach ("Der Neue Kampf um Schleiermacher," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 1925, 19:166-7).

The limitations imposed by our subject forbid that we follow the interesting implications (sometimes aberrations) for the various *loci* of theology as drawn by Brunner, the great theologian of personalism. We must content ourselves with the less ambitious assignment of evaluating the contribution of these men to our thought about Christian revelation. The sensitive reader will have perceived that this personalistic emphasis is but a species of the genus, existentialism, and will have anticipated that it has the weakness and the strength of that larger movement. Well, what is the weakness of existentialism? Is it not irrationalism? Ebner once said,

Either God has a personal existence or He does not exist at all. One cannot, however, comprehend His personality in a speculative way, but only by relating himself personally to him—that is, by making Him the thou of his own I—which indeed is required by man's spiritual life and by God Himself. And when this happens all speculation and every form of theological and metaphysical erudition *eo ipso* ceases (*Das Wort*, p. 168).

How true this is. We rationally analyze things; we meet persons. And God is personal. We cannot discover him at the end of a syllogism. But yet, how

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untrue it is, if Ebner means to imply that God's self-disclosure to man bypasses his rational facilities. Emil Brunner appears to draw this conclusion

God and the medium of conceptuality are mutually exclusive. God is personal and discloses Himself only in the medium of personality, hence in a personal way, not through being thought, but through actual address, summons, command. For God is the Lord. What does not address us in a way commanding obedience is never God. One cannot be related to God by way of thinking, without having thereby, at the same time, ceased to be related to God. To know God does not mean merely to know about God, but to be personally encountered of Him: thou art the man" (*Philosophic and Offenbarung*, p. 50).

I can accept the last sentence in this paragraph, but not the first. Surely, to know God means more than to know the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* definition of him. But are we to believe that learning that definition in any way hinders one from coming to a true knowledge of God? Rather, it helps, does it not? In fact, it is an indispensable help. This is not to say that only Presbyterians have a true revelation of God, but it is to say that though revelation involves a personal encounter with God, yet the rational faculty is always supremely active in the encounter. This is evidenced by the very fact that speech is the vehicle of communication between two persons and speech is under all circumstances rational or it is *glossalalia*. It should be remembered that the Spirit who inspired the early Christians to speak in tongues also inspired them to interpret the tongues. (In reacting against this irrationalism, some scholars go so far as to suggest that there is no such thing as "personal revelation.")

A further precaution is in order. One should never, in the interest of a truly existential approach to the question of revelation, so stress the "crisis experience," the "divine-human encounter," the personal confrontation with God on the individual level, as to impugn or obscure the finality of the Biblical witness. We have said that revelation consists of event and interpretation. God acts in history and discloses the meaning of his acts. But the disclosure of

meaning like the acts themselves is for the Christian a once-for-all disclosure. The interpretation of the prophets and apostles of what God has done in history is itself a part of the revelatory situation. As God acts uniquely within the history of Israel, so he interprets uniquely to the prophets and apostles. Their testimony, their witness, their interpretation is itself revelation. This is the meaning of the doctrine of inspiration and its relation to the larger theme of canonicity. Not that all which the prophets and apostles, as the inspired teachers of the Church, have said is contained in Scripture, but what is contained is sufficient for faith and practice and will never be superseded. The question of canon and Scripture will be treated in its proper place. Here we pause only to underscore the fact that although God continues to reveal himself to men from age to age in an individual way, this revelation is mediated through the once-for-all revelation which we now

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have in the form of the Sacred Scriptures. It is only in and with the Scriptures that the Spirit convicts of sin, unrighteousness and judgment to come and bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God. (In the writer's judgment Paul Tillich's discussion of revelation is weak at this point. See, for example, the second chapter of Volume I of his *Systematics*, especially section two on "The Mediums of Revelation.")

Positive Exposition

However, when purged of an unbiblical irrationalism, and guarded from an immediacy that impinges upon the idea of canon, the emphasis on the personal element in Christian revelation is most salutary, and without it an essential dimension would be lacking in our appraisal of the Christian point of view. The God who reveals himself to us is not an idea, He is not even—as Pierre van Paassen would say—"The Great Anonymous" (*Earth Could Be Fair*, p. 49). He has a name. We designate things by universals, but to have a name is the prerogative of a person. This is the heart of Old Testament religion. And because God's name is revelatory, it is sacrilege to take it in vain (Exod. 20:3). The final name of God is Jesus Christ.

Since God is personal, he has not only a name, but a face. When man fell, he hid himself, (as Luther translates) from the "face" of God (Gen. 3:8). Cain, feeling the anguish of the curse, complains: "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold thou halt driven me out this day from the earth, and from thy face shall I be hid..." (Gen. 4:13-14). Throughout the Psalter, like a sigh, we hear the prayer, "Cast me not away from thy presence, hide not thy face from me." Someone has said that man's most ultimate and deepest loss is the lost face of God. By the same token, when God would reveal himself to his people as Redeemer, he instructs Moses to pronounce upon them the following benediction:

The Lord bless thee and keep thee: The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, And be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace (Num. 6: 23 f.).

In this context, Emil Brunner, in a beautiful figure, compares God in the act of revelation to "a tall man, (who) stoops down to a little child and lowers Himself upon His knee, so that the child may look into His face" (*Offenbarung and Vernunft*, Zurich, 1941, p. 413). For the same reason, he also feels, the Bible, when it would represent the final revelation of God to man, that consummation of personal meeting, speaks of a seeing "face to face" (*ibid.*, p. 185).

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This is indeed the end of all revelation, to see the face of God. But this final disclosure, this eschatological revelation, has already broken in upon man in the person of Jesus Christ, "...in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). God, in himself, is the invisible One, whom no one at anytime has seen or can see; but he has shined in our

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hearts, Paul tells us, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ (II Con 4:6). "He that hath seen me," said Jesus, "hath seen the Father" (John 14:8, 9). Because God is personal, the final revelation of himself is a person.

One implication of this aspect of our discussion is too obvious to be drawn, but too significant to leave implicit, and that is that the Christian view of revelation as personal, involves decision, response to God. God meets man in the act of revelation not as an Idea, an Unmoved Mover, but as a Person who speaks to us and requires a response from us. The response, whether it be negative or affirmative, is not itself revelation, but it is the necessary corollary of revelation. To say that revelation is historical and personal means, in brief, that God has come into our midst and because he has so come, we can never be the same again.

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