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The Atonement in Modern Thought

Martha Ellen Perry

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THE ATONEMENT IN MODERN THOUGHT

A Comparison of Rudolph Bultmann and Emil Brunner

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ATONEMENT

Among the few major Christian doctrines is the doctrine of the Atonement. Although there are many theories of the Atonement, none has been accepted as the one official theory, and all are an attempt to express the meaning of Christ's death on the cross. These theories, in one way or another, try to answer the question of how Christ's life, death, and resurrection redeemed man, that is, how these events gave man a recognition of his true status before God, an assurance of forgiveness, and a new motivation and power for life. Atonement literally means at-one-ment and in traditional Christian thought refers to the reconciliation of man to God as effected by Christ. The question of how Christ brought reconciliation and redemption and what reconciliation and redemption mean in the life of man has given rise to the Atonement theories. A few of the most common theories follow.

One of the most popular has been the idea that Christ's death is a ransom paid to the devil for man's freedom. The devil made a bargain with God--the soul of the Son of God for the souls of all humanity. Christ, however, was lost to the powers of hell through his resurrection, which the devil had not anticipated. The main point of this somewhat crude expression is that "in Christ God won a decisive victory over the forces of evil, thereby freeing man from the power of sin and the fear of death."¹

In another theory, Christ is thought of as being both priest and victim in his sacrificial death. The blood of Christ is compared to the blood of animals in Jewish sacrifice. Since sprinkling defiled persons with the blood of sacrificial animals purifies their flesh, much more so does the blood of the

spotless lamb of God purify man's conscience. (Hebrews 9:13-14)

The satisfaction theories emphasize the justice of God and the guilt of man. Man has sinned and therefore deserves punishment. Before he can be forgiven, a retribution must be made to balance the scales of divine justice. The substitutionary theories follow from this idea of satisfaction. Some state that Christ in his death experienced the wrath of God toward man, while others posit that God substituted one man's death for that of all humanity. Still others (Brunner, as we shall note, is an example) speak of the vicarious suffering of Christ. He paid the debt of sin and guilt that man's sinful nature prevented him from paying.

Finally, the moral example theory states that Christ's death set a standard of life for man. As Christ suffered in complete obedience to God, so are we to follow his example of losing our lives in service that we may find life.

These theories of the Atonement must not be considered mutually exclusive, for certain similarities can be found in them. Also, a particular expression of the Atonement generally includes more than one theory.

One major problem that has always faced theology beyond the problem of expressing the meaning of the Atonement is communicating this meaning adequately. How can the Atonement be communicated to modern man? Should the traditional expressions drawn from sacrificial, ransom, and juridical analogies be retained or must the meaning of the Atonement be stated in more modern terms? If the latter is correct, what terminology should be used? Some theologians, namely Rudolph Bultmann, have advocated the use of the concepts of existentialism, since these concepts harmonize with modern man's world-view. But is the existentialist approach, (which will soon be examined), adequate for a thorough under-

standing of the Atonement?²

The general purpose of this paper is to discuss the above and other related questions and to note their implications for an adequate understanding of the Atonement. To achieve this aim it is our plan to compare and contrast the basic theologies of two contemporary theologians, Emil Brunner, who represents a more orthodox theology and Rudolph Bultmann, who represents a more liberal, existentialist approach. The general outline is as follows: 1) a brief history of existentialism, a statement of its basic ideas, and an explanation of its importance to theology; 2) a discussion of myth in Christian thought and the demythologizing controversy in theology; 3) an examination of the implications of the above for an understanding of the Christian proclamation, especially the Atonement. Two contrasting approaches to the Atonement will be explored, one primarily subjective and the other incorporating both subjective and objective elements.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF EXISTENTIALISM

DEFINITION AND PRINCIPLES. Existentialism is an inclusive philosophy which tries to "gather all the elements of human reality into a total picture of ~~man~~ man. . . even where this involves bringing to consciousness all that is dark and questionable in this existence."³ This existential approach is not limited to any particular form or era. It has been found in Plato, the Bible, and Saint Augustine, to name a few ancient sources. Today it is seen in such diverse forms as the atheism of Sartre, the Protestantism of Kierkegaard, the Roman Catholicism of Marcel, and the Judaism of Buber. In these varied expressions (a few of which will be noted later) the following general characteristics will be seen: 1) the denial that reality can be grasped primarily by intellectual

means or by the construction of a logical system; 2) the protest against all philosophies that tend to discuss man in the same categories as things; 3) the drastic distinction between subjective and objective truth and the insistence that the former be given priority.

"Subjective" here does not mean biased or based on feeling. Through logic and the scientific method man can arrive at genuinely objective truth. But in ultimate matters, that is, in the understanding of one's existence (which is, according to the existentialists, the fundamental knowledge) the whole man-- emotions and will as well as intellect and reason--is involved. Subjectivity is not detached from man's hopes, feelings, and aspirations; these are placed at the center of concern. Existentialism analyzes the being of man and man's understanding of his existence. Therefore it is concerned about man as an existing individual who must make decisions and accept responsibility for these decisions.

In brief, existentialism asks the following question: What does it mean to exist (in the existentialist sense of the word) and how is this existence different from merely being extant or occurring as an object?⁴ Existentialism's stress on the existence of man has caused it to deny the belief of Idealistic philosophy that essence precedes existence. This means that man was first an idea in the mind of God. This idea (human nature) is the same in all men. On the contrary, existentialism declares that existence precedes essence. There is no "human nature," for man "makes his own nature out of his freedom and the historical conditions in which he is placed."⁵

Finally, the fundamental ambiguity of man is closely linked to existentialism's stress on freedom. Man is a paradox. He is free, yet he is faced with responsibilities and with guilt from wrong decisions. He has freedom to

choose, yet he is determined by forces beyond his control in the social, cultural, and natural order. He is both finite and self-transcendent. Because of these and other paradoxes in man, there are no simple answers to the question of what man should do with his freedom. Man must use his freedom to discover answers for himself. As long as he remains human, man cannot avoid this dilemma; he must enter into the mystery of what it means to exist.⁶

HISTORY OF EXISTENTIALISM. An existential approach can be found in Hellenic philosophy which, according to Barrett, was not as radiant and harmonious as it has been depicted. He states that we now know about Greek pessimism and the negation of life that followed from it. The Orphic religions, with their "powerful sense of sin and the fallen state of man" had a great influence on Plato, who believed that the body is a tomb and that the chief aim of the philosopher is to learn to die. In fact, "the whole impulse of philosophy for Plato arises from an ardent search for deliverance from the evils of the world and the curse of time." In Greek tragedy was expressed "an acute sense of the suffering and the evil of life."⁷

The entire Old Testament is an existential confrontation of man with God. Man is depicted in his wholeness. He is not merely a creature of spirit and inwardness but a man of flesh and blood who dares to confront his Creator and demand an accounting of His ways. One very good example is the Book of Job. Job's confrontation of God is on the level of existence, not intellect or reason. "Remember that thou hast made me of clay; and wilt thou turn me to dust again? Thou didst clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews." (Job 10; 9, 11) Job passionately comes face to face with God and demands justification. The solution to Job's problem is not a rational resolution but a conversion of the whole man.

Certain Psalms rebuke God for man's tribulations and express the physical, temporal nature of man and his being as a creature. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?" (Psalm 22:1) Hebrew thought emphasizes the mortality and the creaturalness of man in contrast to the Creator. This Hebraic picture of man as a being who confronts his world, rebels against it, involves himself in his world, who finds true knowledge in faith, and who realizes his finitude is one which, in one form or another, has been revived in existentialist thought.⁸

The most important precursor of modern existentialism was Blaise Pascal. (1623-1662). He views the human situation subjectively and is chiefly concerned with those conflicts which cannot be resolved by reason. His thought depends upon the awakening of the whole man to his true self and not upon logical demonstration. He was also a forerunner of Christian existentialism because he believed "that man's confidence in his own self-sufficiency must be shattered and a sense of need awakened before the Christian message of forgiveness can be presented meaningfully."⁹ Pascal was aware of the paradoxes in man's nature, of his futile attempts to find a solution to his situation through reason and logic. Man was created in God's image and for fellowship with Him; therefore, in the words of Saint Augustine, 'his heart is restless until it finds its rest in God.' In summary, Pascal saw the contradictions in life and realized that the solution to man's situation came not from logic or reason but from the personal experience of faith. Faith consists of intuition and decision; it is supra-rational and presupposes freedom.¹⁰

Two centuries later the most important figure in Christian existentialism, Soren Kierkegaard, was probing Pascal's themes of the paradox of man and faith.

His was an extreme emphasis on the paradox of Christianity, the impossibility of proving the existence of God or the deity of Christ, the radical and uncertain nature of faith, and the absurdity and irrationality (that is, contrary to reason) of the Christian proclamation. His fundamental principles of existentialism (which he borrowed from Lessing) are similar to those discussed above. In summary they are as follows.

Existential thinking is subjective. Subjective thinking, in contrast to objective, concentrates on the process of thinking as it goes on uniquely in the individual. Therefore, it requires indirect communication. Another's truth cannot be appropriated without an inward process. This is why Kierkegaard refuses to give solutions and demonstrations. His purpose is to arouse the reader to his own struggle by leaving the answer uncertain.

Man is involved in continual striving. He cannot be sure of anything except his own existence, and this fact of his existence is not certain for anyone else. There are no certainties in life. Most people try to achieve security by fitting in with what they can know and control. (As we shall see, this aspect of existential thinking is similar to Heidegger's concepts of authentic and inauthentic existence.) To strive, man must exist in time; yet he is not striving for a finite goal. From the standpoint of experience, time is not mere chronology. Many years may be a trifle, and a moment may have infinite significance. The meaning of events, not their duration, is most important.

Kierkegaard's third thesis is that "accidental historical truths can never serve as proofs for eternal truths of reason, and that the transition by which one bases an eternal truth upon historical testimony involves a leap."¹¹

Existential thinking is opposed to a system of the temporal and the eternal.

The leap of faith is a personal commitment. We can never know whether life has meaning.

Fourth, "the passionate search for truth is better than objective certainty, for we can reach such certainty only by abstracting from existence so as to deal with essences."¹² Objective thinking cannot deal with history as it is, for history is not made up of essences. History is neither a logical system nor a closed system. (This point is also similar to one made by Heidegger.)

Heidegger, an atheistic existentialist of the twentieth century, is of major importance to our study, since Bultmann uses Heidegger's philosophical concepts in his theology. Some of Heidegger's more important concepts will be explained here; their relation to Bultmann's thought will be noted later. The following discussion is mainly a paraphrase from John MacQuarrie's An Existentialist Theology.

Two kinds of statements can be made about anything. An ontological statement tells about the being of something and its range of possibilities. An ontical statement tells about the entity in its relations with other entities. Every ontical statement carries ontological implications. Let us give an example of these two kinds of statements from the theology of Paul. When Paul states that "all have sinned," he is making an ontical statement. He is saying that man can fall into the relationship known as sin. But this statement can only be properly understood if it is clarified ontologically. We must understand how the being of man is such that he can fall into the relationship known as sin; that is, how sin can be a possible way of being for him.

We now proceed to Heidegger's understanding of man. Man's existence is

distinguished from that of things. Man is Dasein (being there). He is not merely extant; he exists in a special way. 1) He transcends himself, that is, he can be both subject and object to himself. 2) He has possibility. He has no essence as do objects; he is never fixed or complete in his being. He has possibilities of decision, which are ways of being that, because he exists, man can choose for himself. 3) Man is individual. Existence is always my own (Jemeinigkeit), unique, and personal. It therefore defies classification or objective study.

If every man's existence is individual, how can we make an analysis which would be true for each Dasein? Dasein has both existentiell (existenziell) and existential (existenzial) possibilities. The concrete practical possibilities of the individual Dasein are his existentiell possibilities. But there are limits within which every individual existence must fall. These are existential possibilities, and their investigation is the subject of the existential analytic of Dasein. The purpose of the analytic is not to describe universal properties of Dasein but to show his horizons of possibility (existential) in which the concrete possibilities (existentiell) of every individual existence must fall.

What method is to be used for an existential analytic of Dasein? Heidegger adapts the phenomenological method of Husserl, who developed it as a reaction against the scientific positivism of the late nineteenth century. Briefly, Husserl's position was that certainty is attained when attention is directed to direct personal experiences, to descriptions of that which shows itself (the phenomenon). No question is raised as to the reality to which these experiences refer; there are no scientific descriptive accounts of observations.

Heidegger's phenomenological method is basically the same. "The

existential analytic consists in the descriptive analysis of that which is revealed to Dasein in his own self-disclosure as existing." ¹³ This method is claimed to yield more secure results than any knowledge we can have of nature. Tillich believes that the phenomenological approach must be applied by theology to all basic concepts. All concepts must be criticized, carefully described, and used with logical consistency.

Heidegger carefully analyzes each aspect of man's being. One example of his analysis is fear. Dasein realizes his possibilities of danger; he understands the world as such that something terrible may appear out of it. Thus Heidegger's choice of Dasein for man. Man is situated in a world where his being is threatened; he is simply there. The existential analytic of man differs from that of science, psychology, history, and other disciplines in that it gives an ontological account instead of an ontical. In our example of fear, Heidegger analyzed it as a way of being, not as a physiological reaction.

The existential concept of existence has two implications. First, man as an existing being is always already in a world. The world is given with his existence. Man is "being-in-the-world." ("In" is understood here in the existential, not the spatial, sense.) Man is bound up with the world; he is occupied in it. He has concern for it in his existence. Second, existence can be either authentic or inauthentic. These fundamental possibilities of existence are important concepts in Bultmann's theology.

Man is always in the world, yet he is quite distinct from it. His intimate concern for the world can lead to his losing himself in it. Inauthentic existence refers to this falling away from the authentic power to be oneself. "Fallenness"

into the world can result in collectivism and depersonalization. Das Man is Heidegger's term for this anonymous, depersonalized man.

Authentic existence means that man, instead of being enslaved to the world, is free for the world. That is, he resolves to be himself in the face of a world that is alien to his being. Authenticity is not part of the essence of man but is the fulfillment of the original possibilities belonging to man.

In summary, man's existence has three fundamental characteristics:

- 1) Possibility, which is grounded in the future. Man stands before a "not yet."
- 2) Facticity, which is grounded in the past. Man exists as a fact. He is thrown into a situation and his possibility is related to that situation.
- 3) Fallenness, which is grounded in the present. Man has fallen into the world in his practical concern for it. These three structures of being constitute care, (Sorge).

Care is ontological. It is not ontical anxiety, but it makes anxiety possible. "Man finds that his being is in advance of itself, i.e. he finds himself already existing before he has found out what it means to exist. He is already concerned about the world and the human community before he has discovered the proper relationship of these factors to his own possibilities."¹⁴

We have seen the past, present, and future that emerge from the three-fold structure of care. Together they make up temporality, which is the original being of man. Temporality makes possible both man's inauthentic and authentic existence. Although man is temporal, he does not exist as an object in time. He is constituted in such a way that at any moment his past, present, and future are disclosed to him and are real to him. Therefore, history is possible for him.

History is an ambiguous term, the difficulties of which can be avoided in

German. History can be either Geschichte or Historie. The former is the historical reality, the stream of historical happening. The varied understandings of Geschichte all have in common the fact that they relate to man as the subject of historical happening. History is to be understood existentially. That is, it is not to be explained in the categories applicable to things but in the existentials that describe man's possible ways of being. Since the primary concern of history is man, Heidegger refers to the material aspects of history as the secondary historical. Their historicity is derived because it stems from man, who is the primary historical. History, then, is not an objective connection of events. Objects enter into history only as they have been of concern to man, and man is never an object. Man exists; he stands before possibilities. Therefore history is made of existence, and existence means possibility.

Historie, the scientific study of historical reality, must now be seen as the study of the possible. It is the disclosure of man in his historical possibilities. It is, however, selective. It is concerned not simply with man's authentic possibilities where he has risen above the level of ordinary existence but with the authentic possibilities that are repeatable or possible for man today.

Heidegger's philosophy of history is essential to an intelligent study of man and (as we shall see) has important implications for theology. If the subject of history is man, and if man differs in his existence from objects of nature, the historian must use concepts different from those used in a scientific investigation of nature. In other words, he must use the concepts of existentiality. "The lessons of history. . . may be understood as simply the under-

standing of authentic possibilities (whether realized or not) which were once actually open in an existentiell situation and which are still repeatable and so present."¹⁵

EXISTENTIALISM AND THEOLOGY. Having noted the fundamental concepts of existentialism and specifically examined the terminology of one of the most influential existentialists, we are ready to discuss more fully existentialism's importance for theology, especially for that of Bultmann. In general, the existentialist approach is valid for theology in the following ways:

First, in its assertion that knowledge of existence is superior to scientific knowledge, existentialism gives definite apologetic possibilities to Christianity. Christian and atheistic existentialists alike are aware of the dehumanization that results from the idolatry of science. Further, both distrust arguments or proofs for the existence of God. The religious person should develop his own subjective experience and concept of subjectivity and not rely on objective arguments.

Second, existentialism deals with the real stuff of human existence--guilt, anxiety, despair, and nothingness. Many good church members are repelled by this philosophy and consider its sober themes to be morbid and harmful. Yet existentialism reminds us that these morbid themes are a real part of human life and that we must be willing to face up to them. Christianity itself is no fair-weather religion. A real study of New Testament thought will reveal that its analysis of human existence can be as penetrating and as disturbing as anything existentialism can offer. The healing powers of Christianity cannot come to grips with the dark forces of sin, despair, and death until these forces are brought radically into the open by our searching thought. Existentialism also reminds us that we n

reminds us that we must not be satisfied with easy answers to man's situation. Answers come only from real wrestling with the problems of existence.¹⁶

Third, existential thinking, as we have mentioned, is part of biblical thought. This is Bultmann's fundamental position. He has taken up the challenge from Luther's insight that theology's "system of dogma rests on a foundation which is not itself a matter of faith, and the concepts of which are not only inadequate for theological problems but obscure and distort them."¹⁷ Bultmann has examined the presuppositions of theological thinking and believes these presuppositions are clarified and secured by an existentialist theology. Tillich has summarized Bultmann's position in these words.

"Theology, when dealing with our ultimate concern, presupposes in every sentence the structure of being, its categories, laws, and concepts. Theology, therefore, cannot escape the question of being any more easily than can philosophy." He adds that neither biblicism nor philosophy can ignore non-biblical, ontological concepts. "The Bible itself always uses the categories and concepts which describe the structure of experience." Certain concepts, for example, time, space, subject, nature, freedom, knowledge, and cause, appear "on every page of every religious or theological text. . . ." If biblicism tries to preserve their popular meaning, it will cease to be theology. It cannot "neglect the fact that a philosophical understanding of these categories has influenced ordinary language for many centuries."¹⁸

As would be expected, man and his being are central in the existentialist approach to theology. "Bultmann tells us that when he goes to the Bible, the question to which he is seeking the answer is the question of human existence. No doubt he is also asking about God, but about God only in so far as he is significant to man as existing. There may be depths of being in God beyond his significance to us, but, if so, they are inaccessible and not the concern of theology."¹⁹ The statements of the New Testament are interpreted as

statements which are significant for my existence. (This point is fundamental for Bultmann's demythologizing.) Bultmann believes that in this approach he is simply following the precedent of the New Testament. Let us now examine the biblical presuppositions and see their relation to existentialist thought.

There is a great gulf between biblical thought and Greek thought (and therefore the western thought that grew out of the Greek.) The latter has assumed that knowledge is capable of being expressed in general statements, and its typical form is thus the systematic scientific or philosophical treatise. There is little of this in the Bible. The biblical knowledge defies classification, for it is the knowledge of human existence before God. The Bible does not make general statements but confronts its readers with existentiell situations. It uses poetry, narrative, prophecy, history, myth, et cetera, to convey its knowledge. Many modern existentialists have used similar methods.²⁰

What is the biblical understanding of man? Man is not simply a part of nature; he is an individual who has been given a personal "I" by his Creator. Some of the main themes of biblical thought are remarkably similar to those of existentialism. Examples are individual responsibility before God, the fall of man from his true destiny into concern for the creature, the consciousness of guilt, the call for decision, the fleeting nature of man's temporal existence, and death. Further, neither biblical nor existential thought gives a direct account of the being of God. This being must be understood as analogous to our own if we are to speak of Him at all. The Bible understands God's being under the categories of existence--i.e. He is the living God Who is personal and historical--rather than under the categories of substance--i.e. the Unmoved Mover, First Cause, the Absolute, and other titles used by certain

philosophies.²¹

We must not be misunderstood at this point. We are not saying that biblical and existentialist thought are the same or that they have the same basis. There are, as we shall note, differences between them and certain dangers in an existentialist approach to theology. What we are saying is that this existentialist approach is not alien to biblical thought. Therefore, we are justified in using existentialist terminology in theology. The extent to which we can use this terminology without causing a distortion of the biblical proclamation is another question (in itself) which we will discuss later.

LIMITATIONS TO AN EXISTENTIALIST THEOLOGY. As we have suggested, there are certain limitations and dangers in an existentialist theology. These limitations will be further noted in our criticisms of Bultmann. One very real danger is that theology could become philosophy.

"If the business of Christian theology is to analyse an existentiell possibility of existence, then it is difficult to see how it can avoid being swallowed up in existentialist philosophy altogether. . . . The concepts of Christian existence could be taken over by existentialist philosophy without any reference to their origin in the cross and resurrection of Christ, and Christian theology would disappear as such."²²

If the existentialist understanding of existence is proclaimed in the New Testament, philosophy can show the nature of human existence without theology.²³

Second, there is a danger of overemphasizing those elements in Christian teaching that are especially congenial to existentialist philosophy. The theologian may neglect any passage uncongenial to existentialism with distortion of the Christian proclamation as a result. This is one of the major criticisms of Bultmann. Since he approaches the Bible with the question of what it means for

his existence, he tends to gloss over or reject those passages for which he can find no existential meaning.²⁴ Third, ideas alien to Christianity may be incorporated into it while disguising themselves in traditional Christian terminology.²⁵ Finally, Christian theology may be merely made part of or adjusted to existentialism.²⁶

THE DEMYTHOLOGIZING CONTROVERSY IN THEOLOGY

With both the values and dangers of existentialism in mind, we turn now to an important controversy in theology today, a controversy which has been one of the results of the existentialist approach to theology and which has led theologians and philosophers to ask whether there can be a rapprochement between existentialism and theology. We refer to the demythologizing controversy in which Rudolph Bultmann is the leading figure. We will attempt to make a fair presentation of his thought, its natural outgrowth from existentialism, and its expression in the Christian proclamation.

MYTH. To understand the meaning of demythologizing, we must first define myth. Bultmann's basic definition is that it is a way of thinking in which the divine and otherworldly is represented as this-worldly and human, in which the transcendent appears as immanent. "The real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is, but to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better still, existentially."²⁷ Mythical

Mythical man believes he is limited by a mysterious power or powers outside himself, and "he describes these powers in terms derived from the visible world. . . ."²⁸ He believes the origin and purpose of his world are to be

found in a realm beyond himself. Myth is next an affirmation of man's sense of dependence, not only upon his visible world but upon the forces beyond it. Finally, myth states man's belief that he "can be delivered from the forces within the visible world."²⁹

The problem of myth, according to Bultmann, is that it uses imagery with an "apparent claim to objective validity."³⁰ The real purpose of myth is to speak of a transcendent power which controls the world and man, but that purpose is impeded and obscured by the terms in which it is set forth. This is the problem of New Testament mythology. Bultmann has claimed that faith is tied down to the imagery of New Testament mythology, yet the importance of this mythology is not its imagery but the understanding of existence which it enshrines.

What, specifically, is the New Testament mythology? It includes several elements. One is cosmology and science, which includes miracles, angels, demons, heaven, hell, and a supernatural Spirit. Bultmann believes that this mythological view of the world is incredible to modern man. Man cannot at the same time use modern electrical appliances and take advantage of modern medical science and still believe in miracles and demons and remain consistent. Further, man thinks of himself as a unity who is responsible for his own thinking, feeling, and willing. Neither divine nor demonic powers from outside harmonize or disrupt his unity. The sacraments likewise are incomprehensible. For example, man cannot conceive of physical food (as in the Holy Communion) conveying spiritual strength.³¹

Markus Barth suggests certain classifications of Christian myths. The first contains all first century cosmology, including those statements that presuppose the belief in a three-story universe. The latter refers to the early belief

in a flat earth with a physical heaven above the earth and a physical hell beneath it. The cosmological statements include descriptions of God or the Son going here and there and of a beginning or end of the world in space and time. The second group is more personal and contains mainly pronouncements about Christ's life (his pre-existence and incarnation), death, resurrection, ascension, parousia, and judgment. The third group contains all New Testament statements that give a sacrificial view of Christ's death and explain the God to man relationship in juridical terms. The final category is the miracle stories in which evidence and proof of the divine presence and power are given in support of faith by supernatural performance. (Bultmann does not believe the early Church or New Testament writers arbitrarily created a myth about Christ. Rather, mythology was so strong in the environment of the early Church that it influenced the testimony given by the Church.)³²

It can be seen that Bultmann groups together many different elements in his conception of the mythological. Why does he object to these myths? He objects to some because they confuse the categories of things and man and thus treat spiritual factors as though they were natural entities. This is his objection to the traditional doctrines of the sacraments and of the Holy Spirit. That is, the traditional expression treats the Spirit as though it were a natural force working in man to influence him.

Bultman objects to other myths, e.g. miracles, because they do not harmonize with modern science. The cosmological myths are inadequate because they are myths. That is, they treat the divine and otherworldly as though it were this-worldly and human. For example, the transcendent God is thought of as being in a spatial heaven above the earth. Next, as we have mentioned, the myths of

demonic possession invalidate the freedom of man. Myths also tend to present an account of Christianity in cosmological terms, that is, in strange and unique but objective terms of certain facts about the universe. This is not the right attitude to take toward Christianity, for Christianity is not a presentation of cosmological statements but a call to decision.³³

Finally, myth does not achieve its intention, which is to make credible the fact that the historical event of Christ's life and death is eschatological. (In Bultmann's definition, the eschatological is that which has meaning beyond his history, an "authentic repeatable possibility.") Bultmann agrees that Christ has a unique significance, but the mythological expressions do not prove the eschatological nature of the historical event.³⁴

The sources of the New Testament myths, according to Bultmann, are three.

- 1) Many forms of the Jewish apocalyptic were imposed on Christ. Examples are the "Son of Man," the "second Adam," the "Redeemer," and the "Messiah."
- 2) The myths of the Gnostics speak of a pre-existent redeemer who descends from heaven, suffers in an earthly form, ascends into heaven, and thereby guarantees man's redemption from fleshly bondage. This myth can be seen in many christological statements, including the ascribing of the title "Lord" (Kyrios) to Christ and the belief in the presence of the deity (Christ) and the participation in his life and death through the Holy Supper.
- 3) Sacrificial ideas about Christ's death are also called mythological, although their source is in Jewish sacrificial practice.

Why were these myths used? The myth was a vehicle used by the Church in its attempt to overcome the difficulties of communication. The New Testament itself bears witness to the fact that the mythological is only the form and not

the content of the Gospel in these ways. First, the myths exclude and contradict each other. The belief in the pre-existence of Christ contradicts the myth of the Virgin Birth. Also, Christ cannot be both a hidden servant and one who proves his divinity through miracle.

Second, the New Testament asks for existential interpretation. To take the mythological statements at their face value (for example, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God) means to miss the point of the statements. The New Testament writers call not for "belief that" but for "faith in" Christ and obedience to him.

Finally, the purpose of these mythological forms was to show that Christ was more than a great figure of history, that the Redeemer was more than an inspiring individual, and that man cannot achieve salvation on his own. Myth is not an end in itself but a tool to show Christ's eschatological importance and to lead man to a true decision of faith.³⁵

Bultmann has been criticized by MacQuarrie and others for including primitive science in his definition of myth. Schubert Ogden, answering this criticism, replies that the characteristic of any scientific world-picture is not its content but the method of arriving at this content. The distinguishing mark of our modern understanding of the world is not the view of it we happen to hold but the insistence upon experimental verification of every proposition. In contrast, mythical man makes and accepts judgments about the world in an uncritical way. The limits between the possible and the impossible, the real and the fanciful, are only very hazily defined. Mythical man therefore can make a whole body of statements which, because they cannot be scientifically verified, are not acceptable today. This is one of the reasons modern man has difficulty

accepting the Christian proclamation.³⁶

Another answer to this criticism is that the Babylonian cosmology was originally not primitive science. Heaven and hell were the spheres of the divine and the demonic respectively. Since the myth represents these spheres in worldly form, the myth appears to deal with primitive science. True, such ideas can lose their mythological character and become scientific ideas. But this is not, Bultmann believes, the case in the New Testament.

Further, we moderns must recognize that myths are not intended to "explain" phenomena, beliefs, customs, and so forth but to express the way those who told the myth understood their existence in the world. For example, demon-possession has been represented as the way primitive man understood disease. Today, however, this belief "would be understood as representing a primitive awareness that the world in which men live can be alien to their existence."³⁷ We must be careful here and exaggerate neither the cosmological nor the existential content of myth. Various meanings were latent in myth; only later were these meanings sorted out. The "Babylonian cosmology. . . included primitive science fused with other elements in the as yet undifferentiated matrix of myth."³⁸

It is evident from this discussion that Bultmann believes that mythological thought forms are unintelligible to modern man and therefore must be changed into meaningful forms before the Christian proclamation can be a possibility of decision. This process is known as demythologizing. This term must not be misunderstood. Demythologizing does not mean "the elimination of myth." It means "the elimination of mythology," and a distinction must be made between the two.

Mythology has several meanings, but the meaning to be understood for our

purpose is "discourse in myths." But this does not mean getting rid of myth, for the content of the myth is to be restated in existential terms. "Demythologizing implies getting rid of mythology (as an outmoded and undifferentiated form of discourse) but it also implies the recognition of myth as the vehicle for meanings which we must now try to express in other ways."³⁹

DEMYTHOLOGIZING. Having seen the general nature of myth and demythologizing, we are ready to discuss the "scope of demythologizing." Markus Barth⁴⁰ believes that form criticism is the root of demythologizing. Form criticism is the theory that the New Testament writings are not merely products of individuals' compilations, creations, or revisions of religious documents. Rather, there are certain constitutive elements in the New Testament--miracle stories, hymns, prayers, preaching, discussion, et cetera--that grew out of the needs of the lives of several churches and were preserved by them.

The form critics considered the New Testament to be a testimony of faith which is centered in the proclamation of God's act in Christ and in His Spirit (Kerygma). They stressed the message of Christ and the relatedness of the New Testament books to the faith and life of Christians.

Form criticism distinguishes between the content of the kerygma and the forms into which it was put. In the various statements in Bultmann's christology, for example, we deal not with references to historical facts but with expressions of faith, with human forms of teaching and with challenges to decision. The New Testament christology is not historically interested; it is kerygmatic; it expresses in different forms the faith of different stages of development. "All its statements about Christ are only 'forms' of the kerygma--they are not the kerygma itself. . . ."⁴¹ Bultmann's emphasis

throughout is upon the Christ of faith, the relation of what is written about Christ to this Christ of faith. This emphasis will be seen later in our discussion of the Atonement.

In our discussion of myth, we suggested a few reasons why demythologizing is considered by Bultmann. Let us now review and expand a few of these points. First, the New Testament cosmology, in which the kerygma is contained, is incredible to modern man, for it does not harmonize with his conception of the world and of himself. Therefore, the kerygma is meaningless. Believing in the mythology can cause a disconnection between man's religion and his everyday life. For example, man cannot believe in demons and use the radio at the same time. A related difficulty is that of communication. A distinction must be made between the scandalon of the Cross and the pseudo-scandala, which are the offenses of the improbable stories.⁴²

Second, the fundamental purpose of myth is not to present a certain world-picture but to show man's understanding of himself. Myth demands an existential and not an objective interpretation; that is, an interpretation of the existentiell self-understanding to which the myths give expression.

Third, the New Testament itself invites an existential interpretation because of the inconsistencies of its myth. These inconsistencies suggest a relation to which these differences are ultimately irrelevant. The New Testament authors themselves have suggested or used the technique of demythologizing. An example of this is Paul's treatment of the Spirit. Although he speaks of the Spirit as an agency that operates like any natural force, he transcends this popular view in his belief in the Spirit as "the possibility of a new life which is opened up by faith."⁴³ This life "must be appropriated by a deliberate

resolve."⁴⁴ Paul urges that the Christians 'be led by the Spirit' (Rom. 8:14) so they will "live after the Spirit, not after the flesh." (Gal. 5:16) Here Paul is giving an imperative, a possibility of decision.

Further, the New Testament's underlying view that man is a free and responsible person cannot be expressed adequately in a mythological mode of thought, since the mythological view of man is that of a natural man composed of certain substances and not of a historical being who has alternative possibilities of existence.⁴⁵

Fourth, myth is not the only vehicle by which human existence may be expressed. In the concepts of Heidegger, Bultmann has found a non-mythological conceptuality in which man and his existentiell possibilities may be described. Bultmann sees Heidegger's philosophy as a "comprehensive phenomenology of man's personal and interpersonal life--a scientific terminology in which the various phenomena that go to make up this life may be relevantly expressed and communicated."⁴⁶ The New Testament interpreter therefore has at his disposal a precise conceptuality with which to translate the myth. (Bultmann's use of Heidegger's terminology will be more fully discussed later.)

Fifth, demythologizing is necessary whenever and wherever Christians are searching for truth. Scientific interpretations are inadequate, for God cannot be objectivized. That is, we cannot make statements about God's being in Himself; we can only say what He means or is to us. We can only speak of Him in faith, in decision, and in obedience. A statement about God will always be a statement about the new understanding of ourselves that is given, produced, and sustained by Him. Theology therefore is anthropology.

Yet in myth this is not the case. God is spoken of in His nature and actions, and man is mentioned only as the object of creation, atonement, and redemption. All statements about God apart from His being for us are not, according to Bultmann, statements of faith. Faith demands decision and obedience, and if our self-understanding is not influenced by anything we say about God, then faith is not a decision.⁴⁷

One question might be raised at this point. Granted that there are mythological and therefore unintelligible parts of the New Testament, must all of these elements, must the entire New Testament be demythologized? Can we not reduce the amount of myth in the kerygma, selecting certain myths to be interpreted existentially and rejecting others?

No, Bultmann replies. If we, for example, believe that physical eating and drinking have a spiritual effect (in the Holy Communion), we must also accept everything the New Testament has to say about unworthy reception of the Communion (I Cor. 11:27 ff.) and about baptism for the dead (I Cor. 15:29). If we start subtracting myths, where do we draw the line? Demythologizing is an "all or nothing" procedure; one either accepts all myth or demythologizes all of it.⁴⁸

We have mentioned that the task of demythologizing is to put the kerygma into existential statements. We have also referred to the fact that Bultmann uses Heidegger's concepts of existentialist philosophy in his interpretation of New Testament myth. How does Bultmann use this terminology? How does it affect the kerygma? The following is a summary of Bultmann's demythologized kerygma from An Existentialist Theology by John MacQuarrie.

BULTMANN'S DEMYTHOLOGIZED KERYGMA. Bultmann believes there is no one New Testament theology; the New Testament is made up of several theologies, each

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with its own terminology and emphasis. He gives primary importance to Pauline theology, which he expounds as a doctrine of man. His exposition is in two parts; man without Christ and man in the Christian faith. These correspond to Heidegger's inauthentic existence and authentic existence respectively.

Man Without Christ. A major concept of Pauline theology is that of soma (body). Bultmann interprets this existentially to mean that 1) man's existence is always somatic, i.e. man is always in a world where possibilities confront him. Soma is a way of being. 2) Man has a relation to himself; he can be the object of his own action. 3) Man has two fundamental possibilities. He can be at one with himself or estranged from himself. When man sins, he falls into sarx (flesh) which here refers to the evil possibilities of somatic existence. (These three propositions immediately remind us of Heidegger.)

Paul speaks of a "spiritual body" and of a "physical body." (1Cor. 15:44) Both are ways of being, the former in the world to come, the latter in this world. Ontologically they are the same, for there is continuity between this life and the next. Ontically they are different, for in this life man is always somewhat estranged from himself, while in the next life he will be at one with himself. Likewise, the dualistic Johannine doctrines of light and darkness, truth and falsehood, life and death, and freedom and enslavement do not rest ultimately upon metaphysical dualism; they too are possibilities of decision and "express the double possibility in man's existence."⁴⁹

Bultmann's interpretation of the New Testament concept of the world of things (ktisis, creation) is similar to Heidegger's. The creation is the work of God, made by Him for man's use and enjoyment. As such, it is good. Creation can also be conceived of as evil because man, by worshipping the creature rather

than the Creator, has given it the possibility of evil. Instead of being a thing of use, the creation has become a threat to man's being. In existential terms, man can decide to build his life on the world. The world can become an alien being in which man loses himself. (inauthentic existence)

Bultmann repeatedly uses the term "self-understanding" in his interpretation of Christian theology. He says that theology is anthropology, that the Christian life is a new self-understanding. Before we reject these statements, let us see what Bultmann means by "understanding."

Understanding as conceived by the existentialist does not refer to intellectual activity which leads to theoretical knowledge. Man is primarily concerned practically, not contemplatively, with his world. The fundamental understanding of the world is "know-how" or knowledge of existence. Theology is primarily concerned with this kind of knowledge. The knowledge of God is existential; that is, it is not a set of propositions about God, but the knowledge that is implicit in our faith in God. Theological knowledge, then, comes from the inside. We cannot speak intelligently about God without an experience of faith.

Further, existential knowledge has its own certainty. The understanding of existence which is given with existence is the basic form of knowledge which yields results more fundamental and certain than any scientific understanding of nature. The possible ways of being are disclosed to man in the analysis of his own existence. Therefore, theology can lay claim to the same truth that belongs to all phenomenological analysis. Theological statements, then, are not mere expressions of feeling but are statements that communicate the existential knowledge to which the most original truth belongs.

Creation is to ^{be} understood existentially. The world, as created by God, is of use to man. It also has the possibility of being hostile to man when man prizes creation above the Creator. We do not reason from the world and its usefulness to a Creator, for this would give us the God of metaphysics, an object of theoretical knowledge, not the God of religious faith. Only through an existential knowledge of God does He disclose Himself to man and only through faith is the world understood as creation.

We have seen that understanding refers to practical concerns. The biblical accounts of creation do not teach a philosophy of cosmic origins or a theistic world-view but confront man with the problems of existence. They teach that man is a creature who has fallen into sin and show man how to understand the world as a factor in his existence. A New Testament illustration of the practical concerns of understanding can be found in Romans 12:2: "be transformed by the renewal of your mind." Mind (nous) refers not to theoretical but to practical understanding. Christian self-understanding is not a theoretical activity but a complete reorientation of the entire personality. It is equivalent to a new life.

We have mentioned that Heidegger's analysis speaks of man as having possibility and facticity. The latter refers to man's stark individuality of existence and his "thrownness," which is that outside man's control which enters into his existence to circumscribe and narrow down his possibilities. The New Testament has a similar concept of man. Paul speaks of the law that wars against the law of his mind, making him captive to the law of sin. The temptation to sin comes from man's being in the world, because his being is made up of both the inward man and his "members" (flesh). (Rom. 7:22-23)

Heidegger's concept of das Man or man's possibility for inauthentic

existence is seen in the Pauline concept of cosmos (world). Cosmos is also a way of being in which man, in his flight from individual responsibility, loses his true self. The New Testament speaks of the cosmos as being under the rule of hostile powers. Paul attributes the entrance of sin into the world not to the powers of darkness but to Adam. Bultmann concludes that it is man himself who has given to the cosmos its hostile character, just as he did to the creation. Inauthentic existence, according to Heidegger, is basically fallenness. His concept of fallenness must be distinguished from the traditional Christian doctrine of original sin. Fallenness is not a general property of man; it is a pure existential possibility.

Evil, according to Bultmann, is a falling away of man from himself, a mistaken orientation of himself away from his authentic being. But this is at the same time sin. To attain or to lose his authentic being is equivalent to recognizing or denying God as Creator. The essence of sin is that man has fallen away from the authentic being God has given him, with the result that he tries to live on his own power.

Bultmann justifies this interpretation of the New Testament through a clarification of certain Pauline terms. Bultmann uses sarx to compare two possibilities of existence. One refers to life "in the flesh," (en sarki) which simply means existing in the earthly environment. In contrast, "after the flesh" (kata sarka) refers to man's rejection of God and his choice of the earthly and natural. Sarx is not associated primarily with the "sins of the flesh." The "wisdom of ~~this~~ world" is a manifestation of life kata sarka because it represents a turning away from God and turning to the man-made.

The distinction, then, between sarx as the natural and sarx as the sinful lies in man's existentiell decision for the creature rather than the Creator. This decision makes the natural evil.

Alienation, as we have seen, is part of Heidegger's concept of fallenness. This leads us to the Christian doctrine of sin, which implies not only moral evil but alienation from God. No genuine concept of sin is possible for Heidegger since God is absent from his philosophy. The alienation of a fallen existence is alienation from the authentic self, not from God. Yet the Christian idea of sin can still be connected to the concept of existence. Paul also understands sin as alienation from the authentic self. "It is no more I that do it but the sin that dwells in me." (Rom. 7:17) The authentic self is lost and sin has taken control.

But what becomes of the traditional Christian belief that sin is alienation from God? Since man has fallen away from his true self, he has also fallen away from the being which God gave him, the authentic existence for which he was created. Sin in the New Testament describes an ontical conception--it is not only man's possibility but his true situation. Bultmann cannot accept this doctrine of original sin, since it seems to deny complete freedom and responsibility.

His argument is that Paul may mean (in Rom. 5:12-19) that since Christ opens to man the possibility of life, Adam opens the possibility of sin and death. Another argument, which he derives from his concept of the cosmos is that everyone is born into a falsely oriented humanity. Man understands himself in the light of this and becomes partly responsible for it. Sarx and sin in the Johannine writings are similarly interpreted.

The final stage of the life of the natural man is death. Briefly, Heidegger's understanding of death is that it is a loss of being, the end of man as "being there." We cannot attain a real existential knowledge of death, since all we know about death must be learned by observation of others' deaths.

Death is always my own; it cannot be experienced vicariously. Death is my own untransferable possibility of being no longer in the world. The possibility of death belongs to man's facticity, for it is always present. Fallenness is related to the flight from death. Fallen man, in his concern for the world, does not wish to think of the possibility of death, for it means for him the shattering of his existence.

The Bible is also most concerned with the existential and not the natural phenomenon of death. Man is called to face death, not to flee from it. Paul's theology shows the relationship between sin and death. "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23) Death is both the punishment for and the consequence of sin. Death is the fruit of life after the flesh, and because of this it is already present. In Bultmann's analysis, this close connection between death and sin is seen. The fallen life, the life of sin, is the fall away from man's true being and is therefore the loss of his being. When man is in sin, then, he is already dead, insofar as he has sustained a loss of being.

This discussion of death concludes our analysis of inauthentic existence. Both Christianity and existentialism agree that such an existence is meaningless and a denial of man's real possibilities. But the new direction demanded of man, the authentic existence, differs.

According to Heidegger, man should not flee from death. Rather, he should "accept and choose it as his own pre-eminent possibility. He is to live in the

anticipation (Vorlaufen) of his own death."⁵⁰ Death is to be made the unifying factor in man's existence. He is to recognize and accept the nothingness of existence. This acceptance, although it delivers man from concern for the transient, also leads to a devaluation of all existence, to a despair. What can "authentic existence" mean if all existence is really nothing?

The Christian alternative is characterized by hope instead of despair. For the Christian, anxiety, besides disclosing man as thrown into a world in which he is not at home, also sets man in quest of his ground of existence. God meets man in this quest and through Christ directs him to new possibilities of existence in which "death is swallowed up in victory." (I Cor. 15:54)

Authentic Existence. We have seen Bultmann's use of philosophical concepts in his analysis of man without faith. It is, we believe, basically true to the New Testament teaching. The question before us now is whether we can take the concepts of existentialism and apply them to the life in faith. This life (authentic existence) is the fulfilling of man's original possibilities which belong to his being as man.

In the Christian sense of the term, man was created in the image of God. His authentic existence is to be a child of God. When he loses this possibility by serving the creature rather than the Creator, he lives inauthentically. The New Testament phrase for authentic existence is kata pneuma (after the spirit). It is not a substance but a way of being in which man is oriented to God.

Conversion is the term used to describe this change "from death into life." It is not an ontological but an ontical change. Man's ontological structure remains the same, but ontically he is reoriented. The direction of his life

is changed. This "new man" is a possibility of existence given by Christ.

The Christian concept of grace is important for an understanding of Bultmann's christology. Grace cannot be understood simply as a quality of God, for this would not explain the experience of it in Christian living. Grace is the event in which God restores the possibility of authentic existence. It is His act of forgiveness which delivers man from past guilt and breaks the power of sin. Grace thus gives a new possibility for the future. Man has been delivered from the wrath (judgment) of God. Authentic existence, then, is given by God; it is His work, not man's.

Justification, the making righteous of one who is not, is closely connected to this concept of grace. For the Christian, righteousness is not something that can be achieved by the resolve of man. It is man's new relation to God that is a result of his recognition that his true life is God's gift. He surrenders himself to God and lives not by his own power but by God's. Grace is an event--the event of God's saving act in Christ. It is God's intervention into man's situation. This work of God in Christ is, for Bultmann, the only way to man's salvation.

Although this event is an event of the past, it is more than a past event. In order for anything to be significant for my existence, it must present me with a possibility of existence. This is what the Christ-event does. "It presents to man the possibility of attaining his true being."⁵¹ Grace (the saving event) is present whenever the word is preached and authentically heard. The past event touches man's existence now. The past event becomes a present event in the preaching of the Word. God did not simply act then, two thousand years ago; He acts now. (More will be said about this "eschatological

event" in our discussion of christology.) How can an event be past, present, and presumably future also? Let us examine Bultmann's idea of history.

We have referred to Heidegger's view of history as both Geschichte and Historie. This basic understanding underlies Bultmann's thought. The myths which are a part of the stories of the saving events are not essential to the understanding of existence given in the stories; they are merely background. This background is the "secondary historical." The "primary historical" consists of repeatable possibilities of existence, present to me today as they were to those in the past. The central theme of the New Testament is such a possibility--the possibility of forgiveness and new life in Christ. Demythologizing, then, would be the task of separating the primary from the secondary historical.

The event that makes authentic existence possible is known as the eschatological event. It differs from Heidegger's "repeatable authentic possibility" in that it is unique. It comes from God; it is God's act of grace. For Heidegger, however, there have been many authentic repeatable possibilities in history.⁵²

Two terms commonly used by Bultmann are the objective-historical and the existential-historical elements of an event. These terms correspond respectively to Heidegger's Historie and Geschichte. Historie (or the historisch), it will be remembered, refers to that part of an event which can be studied scientifically, which can be scientifically verified. The latter gives the existential character of an event; that is, it explains what meaning the event has for my existence. The concern of faith is not with the historisch but with the geschichtlich.

Since Christianity is a historical religion, that is, it finds its source in a man who existed in history and not in mythology, historical research is not irrelevant

irrelevant to the Christian faith. If Christ did not live on earth, the roots of Christianity are destroyed. There can be no saving events without objective events. Faith is not, however, dependent upon historical research. One's relation to his faith cannot be objective and detached; it must be existential. As we have seen, the only one who knows the real meaning of faith is the one who has faith.

There is a close connection here between the saving event and the objective event. We begin with saving events that imply objective events, not with objective events that are transformed into saving events. The geschichtlich and not the historisch is of primary importance for theology. These themes will be more clearly seen in our discussion of Bultmann's christology. Questions that we must consider throughout our theological study are: What constitutes the objective-historical of a particular event? How necessary is the objective-historical? Does Bultmann's existential background tend to make him deny the importance of the historisch?

We have seen that God in Christ has intervened in human life to restore to man the possibility of authentic existence. Man receives the possibility of forgiveness and a new life. How can this new life be described existentially? Man begins this life with an attitude of faith. Faith, declares Bultmann, "is the decision in face of the grace which confronts us in the proclamation of the Word."⁵³ Faith is nearly equated with decision. Bultmann, like all existentialists, places a great emphasis on decision. Yet his definition differs significantly from Heidegger's.

For Heidegger, man's resolve is derived entirely from himself, while for

Bultmann the authentic possibility for which man is summoned to decide is entirely derived from God; it is presented to man by God's act of grace in Christ. Decision, then, is a gift of God, since grace makes the decision possible. Yet there is still genuine decision, for although God makes decision possible, He cannot force it on man without reducing man to the level of an object. God's act of salvation must be a possibility for which man can decide. Other aspects of faith follow.

Faith is always related to a definite ground--faith in the saving work of Christ. It is not piety or general trust but the authentic hearing of the Word, which includes understanding and the making of one's own the knowledge which God has presented to man through Christ. This knowledge is a new self-understanding which we have already referred to as meaning a real understanding of one's existence, as a complete reorientation of the self, not the adoption of a new philosophy of life.

This self-understanding is closely related to obedience, for in the surrender of his self-sufficiency, man commits himself to God for the direction of his life. Man enters authentic existence in this act of obedience. Genuine knowledge of the self comes with this new understanding. Faith is not only a relation of man to God; it is a relation of man to himself. His new relation to God gives him a right relation to himself; it makes him at one with himself. The life of faith gives man true freedom, for man stands before genuine possibilities of decision. Man finds his true freedom in obedience to God, for he becomes free from the tyranny of the mass, the world of things, and the fear of death.

We have now examined Bultmann's demythologizing of fundamental New Testament concepts and we have suggested the relation of these to the Christian kerygma.

We have noted that the Christ-event, the eschatological event, makes authentic existence possible. Let us now turn to that event and examine more closely how Bultmann demythologizes the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The Christ-Event. For Bultmann, the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection are not separate (except as points in historical time) but comprise one single event known as the eschatological event. This event is centered in the Cross.

The Incarnation has been traditionally expressed as the pre-existent Son of God becoming human flesh. Christ, while he was on earth, was both fully divine and fully human. This event happened once, and in no sense can it be repeated.

Bultmann's theory differs from the traditional at several points. He can attach no historisch reality to the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation. As we will note more fully later, the historisch foundation of the Incarnation is the crucifixion. Further, the geschichtlich meaning of the Cross gives meaning to the Incarnation. That is, we do not "begin with the idea of a pre-existent Son who becomes incarnate and atones by his blood for the sins of men." "Rather we recognize Christ as the Son of God when we experience Atonement through hearing and understanding the Word."⁵⁴ The meaning of the Incarnation is that God was acting in Christ's person and fate, not that Christ was God.

Bultmann does not speak of Christ as God in the sense of Christ's being of the same metaphysical nature as God. The expression "Christ is God" is ambiguous, for we must ask whether it refers to the significance of Christ or to his nature. The references to Christ's divinity, Bultmann believes, are ambiguous and are a result of Hellenistic and Gnostic influences. In the New Testament, Christ is spoken of as subordinate to, not equal with, God. The purpose of Christ's titles--Son of God, Messiah, Lord--is to give Christ's

significance for man. A pronouncement about Christ is also a pronouncement about myself.

Does Christ help me because he is the Son of God or is he the Son of God because he helps me? Can I know Christ as God apart from my being saved?⁵⁵ MacQuarrie asks this pertinent question: "Must we have an understanding of Christ as the Son of God, that is to say, must we believe in the incarnation, before we can perceive the Cross as saving event?"⁵⁶ Bultmann would answer no to the last two questions. It is because God speaks to us in the Cross and offers us there the possibility of a new life that we recognize Christ as the Son of God. "Son of God" as used by Bultmann means that Christ calls man into a new situation in which he must make a decision for or against God. All his titles designate Christ as the Eschatological Event, the one who brings the new age in which all who belong to him become new creatures.⁵⁷

This interpretation has been criticized because it omits the numinous character of Christ's life, death, and ministry. Insufficient continuity is made between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. The supreme revelation of Christ in the Cross must have been the climax of a revelation already going on.⁵⁸

Although the Incarnation happened once-for-all, it is also continually re-enacted. The Word of God is a paradox, for this Word is identical with the Word that originated in apostolic preaching and has been handed on by the Church. The Word of God becomes incarnate in anyone who speaks the Word. The abstract propositions of the Word of Christ become an event in the spoken word.⁵⁹

Our earlier references to the Cross gave an indication of its importance in Bultmann's theology. We will now examine its meaning in more detail.

The Cross may be understood as an objective-historical event, but this by

itself is inadequate. As long as one directs his attention only to the belief that "Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate," the Cross has no existential meaning for him. The New Testament also speaks of the Cross in mythical terms drawn from the Jewish cult and Gnostic redeemer myths. The former are evident in the sacrificial theory of the Atonement, where Christ is the sacrifice whose blood atones for sin. Bultmann believes the sacrificial and juridical theories are neither tenable for man today nor true to New Testament thought. He seeks to translate these myths into the existential-historical. For example, the sacrificial theory is translated into the understanding of Christ's death as "the means of liberation from the powers of this world, the law, sin, and death."⁶⁰

The New Testament means more in its proclamation of the Cross than that the deserved punishment of sinners has been remitted. The Cross releases man from the power of sin. The Cross is a cosmic event, that is, it has significance for the world. Its meaning transcends the historical. The Cross is the judgment of the world and therefore the judgment of ourselves as fallen creatures enslaved to the powers of the world. The significance of the Cross comes from its being the judgment of the world and the judgment and deliverance of man.

The meaning of the Cross is its existential meaning, which is making the cross of Christ our own, being crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20), and being raised with him into a new self-understanding. The Cross is not merely historical; it is an event in our lives. Being crucified with Christ means crucifying our flesh (flesh here refers to man's evil), our affections, and our lusts. This includes the overcoming of our natural dread of suffering and the perfection of our detachment from the world. The latter is no mystical flight from the world, but is used in the sense of authentic existence, being free from the world, not

being lost in it.

Must we first believe in Christ and be convinced of his significance before we can discern the real meaning of the Cross? Must we go back to the Jesus of history? The answer is yes for those who knew Christ and who experienced the historisch event of the Cross. For us, however, the Cross is an event of the past. It cannot disclose its own meaning to us. This meaning can be discovered only in the proclamation.⁶¹

By what sign, Bultmann asks, is the Cross of Christ recognized as the salvation-event? It is not so recognized by preparatory instruction or by the recognition of the divine quality in Christ. Such recognition would rob the Cross of its character as scandal. The Cross is recognizable as a salvation event only in the proclamation of it as such. The word of the Cross thrusts a "decision-question" upon its hearer. It asks whether he will be willing to make the Cross his own by surrendering his previous self-understanding and by making the Cross the determining power in his life.⁶²

The only meaning the Cross has for Bultmann is the above existential meaning. There is little or no mention of the wrath of God, Christ's self-offering, vicarious suffering, and love of God as seen in His entrance into human form and in His sacrifice. Since these and other familiar expressions of the Cross cannot be demythologized, Bultmann can say nothing about them.

The Cross and the Resurrection are a single, indivisible cosmic event. The Resurrection expresses the significance of the Cross. What is this significance and how is it expressed?

The cosmic event of the Cross-Resurrection brings judgment to the world and opens for man the possibility of authentic life. If this is true, the Resurrection

cannot be a miraculous proof by which to convince a skeptic to believe in Christ. The Resurrection is an event of faith, and one article of faith cannot be used to prove another. That is, one cannot prove the Cross through the Resurrection. The Resurrection is more than the resuscitation of a corpse--it is the eschatological event. Apart from its credibility, a miracle can tell us nothing about the eschatological fact of the destruction of death. The eschatological (in Bultmann's sense of the word) nature of the Resurrection is that through it Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality. As in Christ's death, says Paul, all died, so in his Resurrection all have been raised from the dead.

This Resurrection is also spoken of in the present tense. Through the sacrament of baptism, Christians participate in the death and resurrection of Christ. It is not that we shall walk in newness of life; we are already doing so. The Resurrection gives a struggling freedom from sin; it enables the Christian to "cast off the works of darkness" (Rom. 13:12). The Resurrection gives us the "power of God" (II Cor. 13:4).⁶³

Thus, just as belief in the Cross is not simply the belief that Christ was crucified, but rather that God offers me a possibility of existence now, so belief in the Resurrection is not simply belief that a miraculous event happened but belief in the miracle of new life in Christ now.⁶⁴ A key statement in Bultmann's understanding of the Resurrection is that "the resurrection is not a mythological event adduced to prove the saving efficacy of the Cross but an article of faith. . . faith in the resurrection is really the same thing as faith in the saving efficacy of the cross, faith in the cross as the cross of Christ."⁶⁵

We have mentioned that we come to believe in the Cross through the word of preaching, or rather, through the way in which the Cross is preached. Christ

meets us in the word of preaching and nowhere else. The faith of Easter is faith in the word of preaching which brings illumination. The Resurrection itself is not an event of past history. The only historisch event of the Resurrection is the rise of faith in the risen Lord. This is all that historical criticism can establish--that the disciples came to believe in the Resurrection. The historical problem of the Resurrection is not of interest to Christian belief in the Resurrection. The historisch event of the Resurrection (the rise of the Easter-faith) means the same for us as it did for the first disciples--the self-attestation of the risen Lord, the act of God in which the redemptive act of the Cross is completed.⁶⁶ To believe in the Resurrection is to believe that Christ speaks to us in the proclamation of the Word.⁶⁷

The apostolic preaching which originated in the Easter-event is part of the eschatological event of redemption. The death of Christ inaugurates the "word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18). This word supplements the Cross and makes its saving efficacy intelligible by demanding faith and confronting men with a demand for decision; Are they willing to understand themselves as men who have died and have risen with Christ?

Through the word of preaching the Cross and Resurrection are made present. This is the eschatological now. "Now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). That is why the apostolic preaching brings judgment.⁶⁸ (Here we see an indication of Bultmann's meaning of eschatology. Although eschatology has traditionally referred to the "last things," i.e. the final day of judgment and the fulfillment of history, these concepts in themselves have no meaning for Bultmann since he cannot demythologize them. The Judgment is now; the fulfillment has already come in Christ.)⁶⁹ In the word of preaching and there alone we meet the risen

Christ: ". . . faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ."

A major criticism of Bultmann's theology of the Resurrection (and one that we would make) is that he destroys the historisch element in the Resurrection. That is, he agrees that a geschichtlich event must have a historisch event as its basis. The historisch event used to support the Resurrection is not the actual resurrection of Christ and his appearances to the believers; rather it is the Cross. Can one historisch event, the crucifixion, adequately support the Resurrection (besides, as we have seen, the Incarnation)?⁷⁰ Can the radical change in the disciples on Easter--from fear to faith, and from cowardice to courage--be explained by a "rise in the belief in the Resurrection"? What does Bultmann mean by the "risen Lord"?

Bultmann's dismissal of the Resurrection seems to be a little too arbitrary. We agree that the primary meaning of the Resurrection does not come from a historisch event. Faith cannot be established or verified by historical criticism. But we cannot agree that "the historical problem of the Resurrection is not of interest to Christian belief in the Resurrection."⁷¹ The "historical problem" of the empty tomb, the nature of Christ's appearances, the inconsistencies in the resurrection narratives, and so forth, is not of interest to the Christian, but the historisch fact of the Resurrection is of importance to the believer. "We cannot be 'raised with Christ' if Christ was not raised."⁷² Or, in the words of Paul, "If Christ is not raised, your faith is in vain." (I Cor. 15:13).

LIMITS TO DEMYTHOLOGIZING. At this point we are in a position to see more clearly some of the limitations of demythologizing which we had mentioned earlier. (We will now review these points and add a few more significant criticisms.)

First, demythologizing's lack of interest in the historisch can lead to a kind of gnosis. The Gnostics of the early Christian era had no need for a historical Jesus who lived, suffered, and died. A mythological redeemer was put in his place. We have noted a few of Bultmann's many negations which include miracle stories, Christ's pre-existence, the parousia, Christ's eschatological teaching, and the objective references to the Resurrection. Bultmann's skepticism includes many aspects of New Testament christology which have nothing miraculous or mythological about them. For example, he denies that Christ thought of himself as the Messiah. His denials make Christ into a somewhat vague figure.⁷³

Demythologizing and an existential interpretation, states MacQuarrie, are a great gain, for they help us understand the present significance of past events. Yet in their concern for the "inside" of events, they tend to make us forget there is an "outside." Gnosticism is an attractive solution here, for once we grasp the gnosis (existential significance) we can be indifferent to the story embodying it. But the Church has rightly rejected Gnosticism. "How can we know that it is a genuine possibility that is being set before us unless it can be pointed out in history? How can we know what can be done except on the basis of what has been done? Bultmann himself recognizes this when he sharply differentiates the Christian story from Hellenistic myths."⁷⁴

Second, can we escape myth? Can the kerygma be completely demythologized without dekerygmatising as the result? MacQuarrie and Ian Henderson, among others, would say no. Myth is a basic and essential form of human thought of all times; it is not merely characteristic of the first century cosmology. It is the only form of thought in which the transcendent can be grasped.⁷⁵

MacQuarrie asks whether demythologizing does what it is supposed to do, i.e.

translate mythological statements into existential statements. Bultmann actually does not completely demythologize (as we shall note later). He still uses analogical statements. MacQuarrie makes a distinction between statements about human existence and statements in terms of human existence. The latter refer analogously to God, (as in talk of an "act of God"). Some symbol and analogy must remain, for they are the only way in which we can speak of acts of God.⁷⁶

Third is a danger mentioned in our discussion of the limitations of existentialism, that of theology becoming philosophy. This would result if one were to make a radical demythologizing of the New Testament. As we will note, Bultmann does not seem to follow his demythologizing to the "bitter end."

Fourth, is myth, as Bultmann claims, the chief stumbling block or at least a major stumbling block to the acceptance of the kerygma today? MacQuarrie suggests that the real skandalon is not myth but the surrender of man's self-sufficiency and the acceptance of the Cross.⁷⁷ Barth disagrees with MacQuarrie and states that Bultmann's position is that the Cross is the real skandalon of Christianity, and he does not try to remove this scandal. The myths put an additional stumbling block before modern man. When we present the kerygma in its mythological wrappings, we are not presenting the true kerygma.⁷⁸

Henderson feels that it is not the mythological but the transcendent that modern man objects to. Today there is not so much quarrel with those who treat the otherworldly as this-worldly but with anyone who maintains there is an otherworldly at all.⁷⁹ Why does modern man reject the transcendent? Although demythologizing within limits and an existentialist theology may help make the kerygma intelligible, are they the sole solution to this rejection?

Thus far it has appeared that the fundamental issue in demythologizing is

that of making the Gospel relevant. This, we agree, is an important aspect of the controversy. But the basic issue, according to Henderson and Ogden, is one which we have been suggesting throughout--the possibility, the limits, and the desirability of a rapprochement between Christianity and existentialism.⁸⁰

Although it is not part of our purpose to discuss all the implications of the "dialogue" between Ogden and Bultmann, a few of his criticisms will help us understand some of the difficulties of Bultmann's position.⁸¹ Ogden's main thesis is that Bultmann is basically inconsistent. Although Bultmann intends to distinguish between theology and philosophy, Ogden questions whether he actually does so, at least whether he does so consistently. Bultmann's contradiction lies in the fact that he, contrary to his expressed purpose, does not completely demythologize the kerygma. If he were to demythologize radically, the difference between theology and philosophy would disappear. Let us explain these statements.

We have already discussed Bultmann's existential approach to the New Testament and his demythologizing. Bultmann is convinced not only that the New Testament can be demythologized but also that it "can be done in such a way as to disclose the truth of the kerygma for the man who no longer thinks mythologically."⁸² But is the truth of the kerygma as kerygma really disclosed when it is interpreted in abstraction, when it is presented as an understanding of human existence? Further, is not the appeal to a unique salvation occurrence an important qualification of Bultmann's original demand for a radical demythologization? Although Bultmann does not think so, Ogden finds evidence to the contrary.

The demythologizing of the Christ-event leads to its dehistoricization. The New Testament statements become not statements about a unique historical occurrence but mythological symbols of a specific understanding of human existence.

The unique Christ-event collapses into self-understanding. "The proclamation of God's decisive eschatological act in Christ becomes indistinguishable from the original demand to understand one's self as a genuinely historical being and is therefore deprived of a strictly independent validity."⁸³ If demythologizing is possible without qualification, then the kerygma can be no more than a specific understanding of human existence logically independent of any particular historical occurrence. If the kerygma has a logical connection to a particular historical event, unqualified demythologizing is impossible.

Bultmann's definition and understanding of theology and philosophy are very similar. Philosophy gives both the is--"the understanding of existence that is given with existence"--and the ought of man. It is a call to decision for authentic existence. This understanding of human existence proclaimed by philosophy is also found in the New Testament. The existential analysis of man's being which has been discovered by philosophy is nothing more than a restatement of the New Testament understanding of human existence. Philosophy can discover the nature of man's existence with no assistance from theology.

What, then, is the difference between theology and philosophy? Bultmann appeals to the unique act of God in Christ. This appeal is Ogden's main objection to Bultmann's demythologizing, for he claims that the act of God in Christ is a purely mythological event. This event is the very thing that makes it necessary for Bultmann to set limits to his demythologizing. The unique event, according to Bultmann, "'first makes possible' the authentic human existence that philosophy also knows about and proclaims as man's original possibility."⁸⁴ Does this answer bear examination? asks Ogden. "Can one really say that Christian existence is a possibility which belongs to man as such and at the same time go on to say

that it first becomes a possibility as the result of a contingent historical occurrence?"⁸⁵

Ogden adds that even though the kerygma is an event that occurs ~~to me~~ here and now, it is either an objective statement concerning more or less extraordinary historical events (in which case it must be rejected as myth) or it is an imperative call to existentiell decision, in which it is demonstratively independent of any particular event.

We feel that Bultmann would disagree with Ogden at certain points. Bultmann does not deny the historisch nature of the Christ-event, although he subordinates it to the geschichtlich. Ogden and Bultmann seem to define "mythological" differently. For Ogden, any expression of a unique act of God is ipso facto myth. For him the Christ-event is "obviously a mythological occurrence."⁸⁶ Bultmann would say that the Christ-event, although it is expressed in mythological language in the New Testament, is rooted in a historisch event. The act of God is neither myth in the traditional sense nor is it the myth of the ancient cosmology.

"Redemption. . . is not a miraculous supernatural event, but an historical [historisch] event wrought out in time and space." God's emissary is a historical figure.⁸⁷ [Christ's] "eschatological activity was wrought out in human fate. . . . Similarly, the word of God is. . . a sober, factual account of a human life, of Jesus of Nazareth, possessing saving efficacy for man."⁸⁸ The language describing an act of God is analogical, "for it assumes an analogy between the fellowship of God and that of man with man."⁸⁹

Further, "mythological thought regards the divine activity, whether in nature or in history, as an interference with the course of nature, history, or the life

of the soul, a tearing of it asunder--a miracle, in fact."⁹⁰ Thus the divine activity is objectified. 'The only way to preserve the transcendental character of the divine activity is to regard it not as a miracle but as something accomplished in the worldly happenings. In the visible event of the natural order is accomplished the invisible act of God.'⁹¹

Despite our objections, we think Ogden has raised some important issues in the demythologizing controversy. His criticisms of Bultmann seem for the most part valid and thought-provoking and cannot be ignored.

THE THEOLOGY OF EMIL BRUNNER

Having discussed the existentialist theology of Bultmann, we turn now to a more orthodox theology as exemplified by Emil Brunner. Our discussion will cover Brunner's view of myth, history, and the Christ-event. This discussion is taken from The Mediator.

MYTH. For Brunner, myth can refer to either pagan (non-Christian) or Christian mythology. The two types of myth differ not in degree but in kind. Pagan myth is a "symbol clothed in the form of an event. . . ."⁹² The Divine is expressed in temporal form. The myth is cyclic and is thus not absolutely concerned with a fact of history. Time, the moment, is a mythological and not a real happening; therefore, it does not challenge man to decision. In pagan myth, God is the unmoved Absolute Who is an object of contemplation. Pagan myth is infinite in variety and extent; there are no limitations to fresh inventions.

In sharp contrast appears the Christian myth. It is the pictorial language' in which the Christian proclamation must be expressed and preserved because of the dangers and inadequacies of translating the proclamation into scientific formulas. This pictorial language is inadequate but it is the only means of

expressing the kerygma. In the Christian mythology, God is not the unmoved Absolute; He is the God Who reveals Himself in history. Christian myth, then, stakes everything upon unique, unrepeatable (in contrast to cyclic), historical events. The event of "the Word made flesh" actually happened and did not just appear to happen as in pagan myth. Redemption is not merely an idea; it is a fact. The Christian myth originates not in thought or speculation but in history.

We believe this differentiation between myths is necessary. There is a vast difference between the language of the kerygma and that of pagan mythology. Brunner makes this important distinction. It is difficult to make an adequate comparison of Bultmann and Brunner in their respective discussions of myth because of the different meanings they attach to it. As will be seen later, Brunner uses many of the traditional, "mythological" expressions in his theology. Perhaps he should have chosen another term than myth for his Christian myth, as it is confusing to speak of myth when it can have two radically different meanings.

Does Brunner demythologize? Markus Barth states that everyone demythologizes in one sense or another; that is, everyone from the Sunday School teacher to the theologian tries to explain the meaning of Scripture.⁹³ In this sense, Brunner demythologizes. He does try to explain the Christian proclamation in the light of scholarship. He shares some of the traditional concerns of the Christian existentialists--decision, the leap of faith, man's responsibility, guilt--but, unlike Bultmann, he does not borrow existentialist concepts for his exposition of scripture.

Brunner's theology remains theology; he does not translate it into anthropology. The Bible's first concern is the glory of God, and the salvation of man comes second. God is at the center of salvation, for God is the salvation of man.

The Mediator speaks primarily of God and His act in Christ. Brunner does not ask the meaning of scripture for my existence. From the above discussion we have concluded that there is no Christian demythologizing for Brunner.

HISTORY. The two theologians have similar concepts of history. Both hold that Christianity could not exist without its historisch connection, although, as we shall see, Brunner places more emphasis on the historisch. History, states Brunner, is the union between the unique event and the common universal element, the blending of Idea and personality. History excludes the idea of an absolutely unique event because of the universal human element that connects all and is common to all. The Incarnation, the coming of God, cannot be historical or it would be merely the culmination of a process. The Incarnation intersects history and eternity: "history---'the Son of David according to the flesh' in its visible fulfillment before our eyes; eternity---'the Son of God according to the Spirit'---in the reality of faith."⁹⁴ If the Christ-event were merely an event of history, it would be subordinated into a universal order, that of history, while really it is in a category by itself. The unique is not a part of history; it is the judgment on the fulfillment of history. The unique is a matter of faith, while a "historical event" which can be perceived like any other historical event never is.

Both men agree that faith and a knowledge of Christ cannot result from historical research but only from the Church's witness to the resurrected Christ (although, as we shall see, they would differ on both the nature of this witness and the nature of the Resurrection.) The assertions of faith come from faith. "Faith is not afraid of the light of historical criticism; but what it sees, it does not see in this light."⁹⁵ We now turn to a discussion of Brunner's

christology and will make a few comparisons with Bultmann.

THE CHRIST-EVENT. An understanding of the person of Christ is essential, for without knowing who Christ was, we cannot properly interpret the meaning and significance of the Cross and the Resurrection. Christ is the pre-existent Son of God. The central idea about Christ is "that the eternal Son of God took upon Himself our humanity, not that the man Jesus acquired divinity."⁹⁶ Christ was divine in the sense of being fully God. Christ was of the nature of God. "Nature" in this discussion should be understood as referring to a quality of being, not something material. "The Divine nature means the divine quality of being, being in distinction from mere appearance. . . the Who (subject) in contrast to the How."⁹⁷ Brunner's fundamental approach to Christ is that of asking "Who is he?" and "What can we discover about him through faith?" not "How did he come to be the God-man?" (Brunner believes that today the question of the Who is neglected and the emphasis is placed on the How.)

Unlike Bultmann, Brunner does not speak of Christ's divinity as referring to the significance Christ has for man with no basis in Christ's "nature." For Brunner, Christ was both fully divine and fully human. He agrees with Luther that this belief is essential, for conquering sin, death, and the wrath of God is not the work of a creature but of the Almighty. Since the Scripture ascribes this to Christ, he is therefore of the nature and substance of God.⁹⁸ Christ's divinity does not refer to his ethical or religious disposition, for this is part of his humanity. Rather it refers to the divine authority in him. God Himself is acting fully in Christ; Christ's granting of divine forgiveness shows this authority. Christ did not simply teach that God forgives; He forgave with God's forgiveness. This forgiveness is a stumbling block to Christ. He is God's final

divine revelation. He does not possess the Word; he is the Word. The Word is the final personal revelation of God, not an intellectual concept.⁹⁹

Throughout his discussion, Brunner emphasizes the mystery of Christ, the Revelation who is both revealed to and concealed from man. Christ, as we have seen, is the God-man, the Mediator sent by God to bridge the gulf between God and man which was caused by man's sin. We must remember that Christ already is the Son, the Mediator when he comes; he does not become the Son-Mediator through his work. He is called the Mediator because of what he is in himself.

Christ's nature was two-fold. The divine Son of God assumed human nature. He did not have a human personality. This statement may be somewhat confusing, since Brunner defines nature and personality differently than do most theologians. "Human nature" usually refers to the sinful nature of man. This condition is termed "human personality" by Brunner. All human personalities have a mystery, an eccentricity that constitutes their present historical reality. This mystery is man's falling away from God's Word, from the Divine Image God created in him.

Christ's mystery was not sin but divine authority. We do not have a personality; we are a personality. Christ assumed the whole of human nature. He assumed the possibility of being tempted but not the corrupted personality spoiled by original sin. He descended into the depths of man's life; he let evil forces work upon him that he might build a bridge to God.

Our beliefs about the Cross are supremely important, for they determine both how Christian our theology is and what our beliefs about revelation are. The Cross, more than any other Christian belief, differentiates the "special" revelation of Christianity from the "general" revelation in other religions and philosophies.

Brunner believes each theory of the Atonement is necessary for an adequate

understanding of it. No theory by itself is sufficient. Further, the Atonement cannot be adequately expressed by doctrines; parables and analogies must be used.

There are two major kinds of Atonement theories. They cannot always be thought of as mutually exclusive, for a theologian (Brunner is an example) may use both approaches in his concept of the Atonement. Also, the theories within a category may differ radically.

The objective theory treats the Atonement as an act of God, an objective transaction in which God actually does something that is absolutely necessary. This act creates a new situation; it does for man what he cannot do for himself.

Generally speaking, the subjective theories deal with an act of man. We have noted in our study three types of subjective theories. The first states that the change wrought by the Atonement is a change in man's understanding of God. Its foundation is the view of Christ's life, passion, and death as a proof of his perfect moral and religious union with God. The Cross is the proof of Christ's fidelity to and love of God. Christ's death is different from that of Socrates only in degree, not in kind. (This is the moral influence theory.) When man sees this picture of the Man who gave himself up so completely to God, the divine love and faithfulness is manifested to him. Man had wrongly regarded God as a Judge who wished to punish him. At the Cross man sees his error and realizes that God is really a God of love. The gulf between man and God, then, is religious error, not sin. The second theory (Brunner's) is that reconciliation effects a change in man's life, not in his religious ideas. Third is Bultmann's theory of self-understanding which we have already discussed and which we will refer to again.

Brunner's objective theory declares the necessity of an act of God.

Why is this act necessary? It is not enough to say that we are far from God, that our life is not like the divine life. There is an actual obstacle between man and God. That is sin, or rather, guilt. Guilt is the element in sin by which it belongs inalterably to the past. Our past, which can never be made good, always constitutes an element in our present situation. "Sin is the perversion of human nature through the perversion of the human attitude towards God."¹⁰⁰ In guilt we see this perversion as something that has actually taken place, and we realize that it can never be undone. No act of ours or asking for forgiveness can remove the guilt. Since our attitude toward God has been perverted, God's attitude to us has changed. The seriousness of our guilt is seen in that the guilt is not merely from our point of view but from God's. Man needs to be reconciled to God.

Brunner uses the concepts of guilt, forgiveness, and sin in a penal theory of the Atonement, believing as he does that juridical expressions are central in biblical thought. The personal nature of God makes guilt all the more serious. God is supremely holy. His holiness requires the destruction of all which resists Him. This is the meaning of wrath, which corresponds to our guilt and sin. The more serious we are, the more we recognize the divine wrath. Man does not have the power to bridge the gap between himself and God. Only an intervention of God can remove the obstacle--this means forgiveness. Forgiveness takes place in a real divine act of revelation--the Cross. This event shows God's holiness and love simultaneously.

"The more serious our view of guilt, the more clearly we perceive the necessity for an objective--and not merely subjective--Atonement."¹⁰¹ In the Cross we see what separates us from God and also see that we are no longer separated from Him. The more we recognize our guilt and sin, the more we recognize

that forgiveness cost God something; it cannot be taken for granted by either man or God. That is, in the first place, God does not have to forgive; He is absolutely holy and man can never repent in proportion to his sin. His present repentance has nothing to do with his previous guilt. Under no human conditions can we expect God to forgive us. Second, as we have mentioned, forgiveness can only be achieved by God as a particular event. This event is the Cross, which is the bridge of the gulf between man and God.

It is the true revelation of God, for it shows both His holiness (wrath) and love. His holiness is seen in that man deserves punishment and God does not ignore guilt. His love is shown by the fact that God transcends the law to show that He has a word beyond the Law which is His real will.. Further, the very fact that God revealed Himself and gave Himself for man is an expression of His love.

God's atoning act cannot be separated from Christ. Christ's Person and Work are the same; Christ is the Revelation and the Atonement. We cannot know Christ without the Cross, and we cannot know the Cross without Christ. The passion of Christ was not something that began on Palm Sunday; the passion was His whole life, for he came to die. Terms used frequently by Brunner in his description of the Atonement are expiation, sacrifice, substitution, and vicarious. Both atonement and expiation refer to substitution for another, the removal of guilt through suffering or penalty. Through his suffering, Christ paid the cost of guilt. His was a vicarious sacrifice, a giving of himself for man.

The Cross is a decisive, unique, unrepeatable event. Although it has its foundation in a historisch event, the final significance of the Cross can never appear historically in its effects. That is, man is never entirely converted.

No one possesses absolute faith. One cannot argue back to an absolute cause for anyone's faith. Only faith really knows the Cross. Historical research tells us of an event in AD 30; faith tells us this event was the Atonement.

Although an objective Atonement is absolutely essential, it does not rule out the necessity for a subjective process. Indeed, "this subjective process is really the aim of the Atonement."¹⁰² Man must be inwardly re-created and his guilt must be removed. Guilt is both subjective and objective. Subjective guilt is man's sense of guilt. This is not the guilt removed by the Atonement, for most men have little sense of guilt. Subjective guilt is not aroused until man comes in contact with Christ. The first act of reconciliation, then, is the removal of objective guilt, the guilt man actually possesses.

This covering of guilt is justification, which is God's declaration of righteousness. God cancels sin. The word of justification is declared through Christ. In this word of justification, the subjective and objective aspects of the Atonement meet. The objective transaction becomes a word to man, God's word. When man realizes it is God speaking to him, he believes. This is faith. The Atonement becomes real in this subjective experience of faith. But this subjective experience is objective in character. My "self" has been replaced by Christ. This subjective-objective experience may be expressed by Irenaeus' phrase (which is also the motto of The Mediator) "for the sake of His infinite love He has become what we are in order that He may make us entirely what He is."¹⁰³

The Atonement is closely connected to the Christian hope. This hope is the removal of death from life, the victory of divine life over death. The Atonement, as we have indicated, is essentially inward. It does give man new moral power and breaks through individualism by forming the new community, the Church. Yet the

changes in man occur only within historical limits. Despite our new birth and new community, we remain sinners. The Christian hopes for a divine fulfillment, a restoration that removes the disturbance of creation, which is death. Thus our new life now is only a foretaste of the future.

Like Bultmann, Brunner believes the Resurrection is both a historisch and a geschichtlich event. For Brunner, however, the ground of the geschichtlich event is found not in the Cross but in an actual Resurrection. Although the Resurrection can be known only in faith, it was an actual occurrence to which the Apostles are witnesses. "The disciples believed in the reality of the Resurrection because it had actually happened."¹⁰⁴ Historical research cannot know of this Resurrection. The difference between a historical picture of Christ and the apostolic witness to the resurrected Christ is that the historian tells of Christ according to the flesh (the "historical Jesus") while the Apostles tell the story of the Christ come in the flesh. The faith of the Church, then, cannot be based on historical research but on all revelation--from the prophets to the apostles.

Both Bultmann and Brunner state that the Resurrection is the meaning of Christ's death, but each means something different by that statement. Bultmann holds that the Resurrection is a mythological event which conveys the meaning of the Cross; the only historisch event connected with it was the rise of the disciples' faith in the Resurrection. It is the belief that Christ's cross had a saving efficacy and the acceptance of the demand for decision and faith.

Brunner states that the Resurrection is the foundation of both the Christian faith and of the Church. There was no Church until after the Resurrection. The Resurrection made a full belief in Christ possible. It is more than a

geschichtlich event. The objective event gives the meaning of the Cross, which is that Christ has achieved victory over death and that we have been accepted by God for eternal life. We see the Resurrection breaking through our own death. The Resurrection and eternal life are both present and future. They refer to the new life now, the removal of death (meaning the human death, the experience of God's wrath), and the life to come.

The Resurrection is essentially a mystery, mystery in the deepest sense of the word. That is, attempts at explanation do not remove the mystery but only enhance it. Brunner emphasizes the importance of faith in understanding the Resurrection. Since we are not witnesses of the Resurrection, our faith is based on the Apostles' testimony. Yet our faith in the Resurrection goes beyond this. The "Word about Christ, in the perception of faith becomes to us the very Word of God, and the presence of the Exalted Lord."¹⁰⁵ We believe in the risen Christ not because the Apostles witness to him as such but because Christ gives himself to us in their testimony.

Admittedly, there are difficulties in the Resurrection narratives. But these inconsistencies do not alter the truth of the Resurrection. The Resurrection is not a historisch event which can be reported by objective observers. "Easter. . . is itself revelation, the divine self-testimony, which, as such, allows of no objectivity because it is addressed wholly to faith."¹⁰⁶ The witnesses of the Resurrection are witnesses of faith; only the disciples were given the revelation of faith. With these difficulties, it is easy for "non-believers" to postulate historical or psychological hypotheses to "explain" the Resurrection. A natural explanation is embarrassing, however, since "in order to do this one has to make everything which the witness of the New Testament puts

down as the effect of the Resurrection into its cause: With in the fact of the Divine Sonship of Jesus."¹⁰⁷

The Resurrection is the goal and meaning of Christ's life. This meaning, as we have mentioned, is the destruction of death, the "proof of the superior reality of redemption. . . over wrath."¹⁰⁸ This "mythological" expression means that the Resurrection creates a new situation between man and God; "through the Easter fact something actually happened; it was not that something was merely said which ultimately might have been said otherwise."¹⁰⁹ In summary, the Resurrection is not only the meaning of the Cross but also the meaning of the whole Gospel. The Cross would not be the Cross of Christ without the Resurrection. That is, if the actual event of the Resurrection were to be taken away, there would be nothing left of the Gospel.

A COMPARISON OF BULTMANN AND BRUNNER

We now come to the final purpose of our paper, that of making further comparisons and contrasts of the two Atonement theories. There are four issues which we feel are of major importance.

First, the men differ in their understanding of Christ as the Son of God. We have noted Brunner's understanding of Christ as God in the flesh, the revelation of God, and the necessity of this understanding for knowing the real meaning of the Cross. Bultmann states that we recognize Christ as the Son of God because he speaks to us in the Cross and offers us the possibility of a new life. Son of God, in other words, is a title which gives Christ's significance for man. Brunner emphasizes God and not man in his theology. Not because Christ brings us beneficia is he the Son of God but because he reveals God to us do we know ourselves as sheltered and healed in him."¹¹⁰

The two men are closer in their concepts of the Cross than would appear at first glance. Both recognize the guilt in man's life, guilt meaning a revolt against God, or sin. Both realize that man cannot remove his guilt by his own efforts, but that he can be restored only by the act of God which bestows forgiveness on him.¹¹¹ Bultmann goes much farther than Brunner in his emphasis on personal decision and appropriation of the Cross. Bultmann's fundamental teaching about the Cross is that it is the gaining of a new self-understanding. If we remember the meaning of self-understanding, we will note that it is quite similar to Brunner's teachings. It is the life of faith, the reorientation of the self.

The importance of the Son of God discussion is more than just the interpretation of the "nature" of Christ. It is related to the Atonement, for it asks whether I know Christ as the Son of God apart from my being saved. The differences in Bultmann's and Brunner's Atonement theories stem from their respective interpretations of the Son of God. Bultmann holds that the Cross is the Cross of Christ because it is the saving event. Believing in Christ means believing in the Cross as the Cross of Christ. Christ is recognized as the Son of God and the Cross is recognized as the Cross of Christ (or the cross of the Son of God) only because the Cross is the saving event.¹¹²

Brunner, however, would say the opposite. The Cross must be the cross of the Son of God in order for reconciliation to take place. Who Christ is constitutes the Atonement. If the Cross is to be thought of as a special act of God, the revelation of salvation, then the statement of a divine act in the Passion of Christ has meaning only on the presupposition that Christ is the God-man and that his death is an expiatory and substitutionary sacrificial

oblation.¹¹³

Third, how shall we classify their theories? Brunner's, as we have seen, is both objective and subjective, and he claims to emphasize both equally. The objective act of God causes the subjective experience of the new man. Bultmann's theory, although it does not deny the importance of the historisch event (and this part of his theory is often ignored), is primarily subjective. There is a change in man's self-understanding. The only meaning of the Cross is that of giving up my previous self-understanding and making the Cross the determining power in my life.

Finally, there is a difference in their idea of how man comes to believe in the saving efficacy of the Cross. Bultmann stresses that the saving event is believed in because it is preached as such. "He (Christ) meets us in the word of preaching and nowhere else."¹¹⁴ The faith of Easter (and therefore faith in the Cross) is faith in the word of preaching. The Incarnation is repeated in the preaching of the Word.

Certainly there is an element, and not a small element, of truth in this statement. We do not experience the saving events in the same way as did the early Apostles; we are dependent upon their witness and upon the preached Word. Our disagreement is that Bultmann says preaching is the only place where God is met; we believe only because it is preached to us as such. Is that not too much emphasis on the preacher and not enough on Christ's own witness to himself in the Word? Further, Brunner would add that there should be more emphasis on the act that is witnessed to.

CONCLUSIONS

We have now concluded our study of the Atonement, and we have seen the

problems involved in two attempts to make the Atonement relevant. What is the value of a study of this kind? Are such studies only mental gymnastics for theologians? A few values suggested earlier in this paper were the importance of existentialist thought today, the influence of existentialism on theology, and the problem of demythologizing, which is becoming more of a live issue in America. We would like to add that a real study of the presuppositions of theology and the various approaches to Christian doctrine and of theological and philosophical issues are more than hair-splitting; they are essential to anyone who is concerned about what the Christian proclamation is, what it says to man today, and how it can best be said. A study of the Atonement is especially important, for our understanding of this, a central doctrine of the Christian faith, depends upon and is dependent upon our understanding of revelation, the nature of Christ, the nature of man, the Trinity, and the Church. In our limited discussion, only a few of these could be indicated, but it is hoped that this discussion will lead to the reader's deeper understanding of the issues involved in the doctrine of the Atonement and to his quest for more knowledge. Thus may he realize that the Cross is a mystery which defies all knowledge.

ENDNOTES

1. Schilling, S. Paul, "How Does Jesus Save?" Religion in Life, Spring, 1949, p. 168.
2. A distinction is made between existential and existentialist. The former refers to that which belongs to existence as such, while the latter is used in speaking of that which belongs to the philosophical system of existentialism. (Reginald Fuller in perface to Kerygma and Myth, pp. xi-xii.)
3. Barrett, William, Irrational Man, p. 19.
4. A difference is made between the existence of man and the existence of things. (MacQuarrie, John, An Existentialist Theology, p. 32.) Man existe; he is outside the world of things. An object merely occurs; it is only extant. (This point will be further discussed later.)
5. Barrett, p.90.
6. Above section a paraphrase from MacQuarrie, op. cit. pp. 5 and 32 and Roberts, David E., Existentialism and Religious Belief, pp. 6-8.
7. Quotations from Barrett, pp. 63-64.
8. Above a paraphrase from Barrett, pp. 65-69.
9. Roberts, p. 35.
10. Pascal discussion from Roberts, especially pp. 35-36, 41, 43, 58.
11. Ibid, p. 94.
12. Above outline and discussion from ibid., pp. 92-94.
13. MacQuarrie, op. cit., p.35.
14. Roberts, p. 154.
15. MacQuarrie, p. 164.
16. Above two points from Roberts, pp. 334-335.
17. MacQuarrie, p. 8.
18. Ibid., p. 9.
19. Ibid., p. 11.
20. Above from ibid., pp. 17-18.
21. Above from ibid., pp. 18-20.
22. Ibid., pp. 242-243.

23. Ogden, Schubert M., "Bultmann's Project of Demythologization and the Problem of Theology and Philosophy," The Journal of Religion, July, 1957, pp. 167-168.
24. MacQuarrie, pp. 4 and 24.
25. Ibid., p.4.
26. Ibid., p.4.
27. Bartsch, Hans Werner, ed., Kerygma and Myth, p.10.
28. Ibid., p.10.
29. Ibid., p.11.
30. Ibid., p.11.
31. Above discussion from ibid., pp. 1-8.
32. Above discussion from Barth, Markus, "Introduction to Demythologizing," The Journal of Religion, July, 1957, p.149.
33. Above a paraphrase from Henderson, Ian, Myth in the New Testament, p. 46.
34. Above from ibid., p.48.
35. Above discussion a paraphrase from Barth, pp. 149-151.
36. Ogden, pp. 158 ff.
37. MacQuarrie, John, The Scope of Demythologizing, p. 213.
38. Ibid., p. 213.
39. Above discussion and quotations from ibid., pp. 214-215.
40. Following discussion from Barth, pp. 145-147.
41. Ibid., p. 147.
42. Above from ibid., p. 151.
43. Bartsch, p. 22.
44. Ibid., p. 22.
45. Above from Ogden, p. 161.
46. Ibid., p. 162.
47. Above discussion from Barth, pp. 151-152.
48. Above from Bartsch, p. 9.

49. MacQuarrie, Existentialist Theology, p. 47.
50. Ibid., p. 126.
51. Ibid., p. 157.
52. The authentic repeatable possibility, as we have suggested, is a heroic act, one that is above everyday existence. History is concerned with an authentic possibility as repeatable, as a possibility for man today. An example would be a heroic death, e.g. that of Socrates. This would contrast to Bultmann's eschatological event, which includes God's acting in Christ's death, for Heidegger's authentic repeatable possibility is an act of man while Bultmann's eschatological event is an act of God.
53. MacQuarrie, ibid., p. 193.
54. MacQuarrie, Scope of Demythologizing, p. 116.
55. Above from Bultmann, Essays, Philosophical and Theological, "The Christological Confession of the World Council of Churches."
56. MacQuarrie, Existentialist Theology, pp. 184-185.
57. Above from Bultmann, op. cit., p. 285.
58. Above from MacQuarrie, op. cit., p. 185.
59. Above from Bartsch, p. 209.
60. Discussion from pp. 182-183 and quotation from p. 183 MacQuarrie, op. cit.
61. Above discussion from Bartsch, pp. 36-38.
62. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I., p. 303.
63. Preceding from Bartsch, pp. 39-41.
64. MacQuarrie, op. cit., p. 187.
65. Bartsch, p. 41.
66. Above from ibid., p. 42.
67. MacQuarrie, op. cit., p. 188.
68. Above from Bartsch, pp. 42-43.
69. Throckmorton, Burton H., The New Testament and Mythology, pp. 133-134.
70. This criticism is made by MacQuarrie, op. cit., p. 186.
71. Bartsch, p. 42.
72. Throckmorton, p. 204.

73. Above discussion a summary from MacQuarrie, Scope of Demythologizing, pp. 21-22.
74. Previous discussion and quotation from ibid., p. 90.
75. Previous paragraph from Henderson, pp. 50-51.
76. Preceding from MacQuarrie, op. cit., p. 215.
77. MacQuarrie, Existentialist Theology, pp. 245-246.
78. Barth, p. 151.
79. Henderson, p. 53.
80. Ibid., p. 22ff. and Ogden, p. 156 ff.
81. The following discussion is a summary from Ogden.
82. Ibid., p. 163.
83. Ibid., p. 165.
84. Ibid., p. 161.
85. Ibid., p. 161.
86. Ibid., p. 166.
87. Bartsch, p. 43.
88. Ibid., p. 44.
89. Ibid., p. 197.
90. Ibid., p. 197.
91. Ibid., p. 197.
92. Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, p. 378n.
93. Barth, p. 153.
94. Brunner, pp. 290-291.
95. Ibid., p. 166n.
96. Ibid., p. 316.
97. Ibid., p. 237.
98. Ibid., p. 239n.
99. The Revelation announces the Kingdom, the royal dominion of God and demands

decision now. The Kingdom is coming soon. This is not the "soon" of chronology but the "soon" of eschatology. It refers to the seriousness of God's call and demand for decision. "Where God is truly known, there the speedy coming of His Kingdom is recognized." This idea of Brunner's seems comparable to Bultmann's "eschatological now"---now is the time of judgment. However, Brunner's eschatological "soon" does not omit the future judgment and parousia. (Brunner quotation from Mediator, p. 421n.)

100. Brunner, p. 443.
101. Ibid., p. 451.
102. Ibid., p. 522.
103. Ibid., pp. 524-525.
104. Ibid., p. 433.
105. Ibid., p. 575.
106. Ibid., p. 575.
107. Ibid., p. 579.
108. Ibid., p. 580.
109. Ibid., p. 580.
110. Ibid., p. 408.
111. Discussion of guilt (Bultmann's view) from Bultmann, Essays, pp. 159-160.
112. Bartsch, p. 41.
113. Brunner discussion from Brunner, pp. 493 and 503.
114. Bartsch, p. 41.

GLOSSARY. Page listed is the first source of term.

Dasein, 9
Das Man, 11
eschatological event, 35
existentiell, 9
existentzial, 9
existenziell, 9
Facticity, 11
Geschichte, 12
Historie, 12
ontical, 8
ontological, 8
sarx, 27
soma, 27
Sorge, 11

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON BULTMANN AND BRUNNER

Rudolph Bultmann (b. 1884). A German theologian and New Testament scholar, Bultmann is one of the most significant figures in contemporary theology. He has had a great influence in both Germany and the United States. He, along with Martin Dibelius and K. L. Schmidt, was one of the pioneers of form criticism. In 1941 his demand for demythologizing caused a great controversy, a controversy which is still very much alive. Ogden states that the sole purpose of most of Bultmann's work is to clarify the significance of the Christ-event and all that it implies.

His major works are as follows: Kerygma and Myth (five volumes), Das Evangelium des Johannes, Das Urchristentum in Rahmen der Antiken Religionen (which has been translated as Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting), Glauben und Verstehen, and Theologie des Neuen Testaments (two volumes). The latter two works have also been translated into English. Other works in English are The Presence of Eternity--History and Eschatology and Jesus Christ and Myth.

Emil Brunner (b. 1889). Also a German theologian, he has been a professor and a lecturer. He is known as a Crisis theologian. Like Karl Barth, he believes that true theology must not be systematic but activistic; it must deal with the freely-speaking God.

His major works are: Man in Revolt, The Mediator, Mysticism and the Word, Experience, Knowledge, and Faith, and The Philosophy of Religion.

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