

Emil Brunner: The Origins of a Theological Mind, 1914–1924

Emil Brunner was born on 23 December 1889 in the Swiss city of Winterthur in the canton of Zurich.¹ His father, Heinrich Emil Brunner (1859–1926), was the youngest of six children, born into a “totally unbelieving family” in Oberrieden, on the south shore of Lake Zurich. This was a period of considerable political and social tension in German-speaking Switzerland, with liberals pressing for the secularization of the region’s educational system, and conservatives wishing to retain its religious orientation. To his family’s dismay, Brunner’s father decided to attend a Protestant teacher training school (*Evangelisches Lehrerseminar*) in Unterstrass, also in the canton of Zurich, which had been founded in 1869.

The *Evangelisches Lehrerseminar* at which Brunner’s father studied during the period 1874–8 had gained a considerable reputation as a centre of pedagogical and spiritual excellence under Heinrich Bachofner (1828–97). After qualifying as a teacher, Brunner secured a position at a Protestant school in Winterthur. Bachofner’s strongly Pietist spirituality had a profound influence on Brunner’s father, which was further consolidated by his marriage in 1884 to Sophie Hanna Müller (1862–1934). Sophie’s father was the pastor of the village of Dussnang, in the canton of Thurgau, noted for his emphasis upon biblically grounded theology and preaching. The couple had four children: Hanna Sophie (“Hanny”, 1886–1961), Maria Lydia (1887–1968), Emil (1889–1966), and Frieda Emma (1896–1964). In April 1893, the Brunner family left Winterthur to settle in the city of Zurich, where Brunner’s father had been appointed as primary teacher at the Gabler School House in the suburb of Enge.

¹ Frank Jehle, *Emil Brunner: Theologe im 20. Jahrhundert*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2006, 19–32.

Theological Studies at Zurich

Brunner's childhood was deeply shaped by his parent's strong religious beliefs, and their growing involvement in the Religious Socialist movement. Like many in Zurich at this time, Brunner was influenced by the pastor and writer Hermann Kutter (1863–1931), who developed a vision for a religious socialism that was both politically engaged and religiously grounded. Although Kutter argued that the essentially secularist Social Democrats were far more alert to social issues than their Christian counterparts, he insisted that a strongly Christian foundation was essential for any viable programme of social reform. Brunner was instructed and confirmed by Kutter at Christmas 1905.²

Yet although Brunner would remain concerned with political and social questions for the remainder of his life, it became clear to him at an early stage that the questions that really interested and concerned him were theological in character. In October 1908, aged 18, Brunner began to study theology at the University of Zurich.³ His key concern was to find an “intellectually satisfying statement of his faith”.⁴ Initially, he appears to have been particularly attracted by Zurich's church historian, Walter Köhler (1870–1947), a specialist in the thought of the Reformation. Brunner's prize-winning early essay “The Religious Ideals of Erasmus of Rotterdam” (1910) clearly reflects Köhler's influence.

Yet even at this early stage, Brunner had become aware of the importance of the English-speaking world. He attended the eighth conference of the World's Student Christian Federation held at Oxford from 15 to 19 July 1909,⁵ at which he met leading figures in the international ecumenical movement – including the American Methodist layman John R. Mott (1865–1955). Brunner's Oxford visit reveals two of his most distinctive characteristics, which mark him off from many other Swiss theologians of his age – an ability to speak English, and a willingness to engage directly with the ideas and movements of the English-speaking world, crossing the barriers of language, nationality, and denominations.

The most significant early intellectual influence on Brunner came from Leonhard Ragaz (1868–1945), a close associate of Kutter, who was Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology at the University of Zurich.⁶ Critiquing capitalism for its commodification of humanity, Ragaz developed a theological foundation for a reaffirmation of the value of individuals in the sight

² For Brunner's relationship with Kutter, see Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 90–8.

³ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 33–47.

⁴ “Intellectual Autobiography”, 5.

⁵ For the importance of this event and its immediate predecessors, see John R. Mott, *The Christward Movement among the Students of the World*. London: World's Student Christian Federation, 1909.

⁶ For Brunner's relationship with Ragaz, see Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 98–108.

of God.⁷ He reinforced Brunner's growing conviction that personal and social transformation was impossible without a foundation in the living reality of God. Like Brunner, Ragaz recognized the importance of English-speaking theology. During his 1907 visit to Boston, Ragaz became familiar with the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918), especially his *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907). Rauschenbusch's influence is evident in Ragaz's subsequent writings, particularly his sermons of 1909.⁸ In 1914, Brunner dedicated his first significant published writing, *Das Symbolische in der religiösen Erkenntnis* ("The Symbolic Element in Religious Knowledge"), to Ragaz.

So what does *Das Symbolische* tell us about Brunner's ideas at this time? Theologically, it positions Brunner neatly within the mainstream of Swiss liberal Protestantism in the period before the Great War. Brunner regarded Immanuel Kant and F. D. E. Schleiermacher as having inaugurated the modern discussion of central theological themes, particularly in shifting the emphasis from allegedly "objective" conceptions of religious knowledge to subjective religious experience.⁹ Religious knowledge is essentially experiential; "revelation" is essentially enlightenment.

The work echoes the anti-metaphysical approach to theology – especially Christology – characteristic of the liberal Protestantism of A. B. Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack.¹⁰ Jesus of Nazareth was to be regarded as a religious exemplar or prototype, embodying the ethical values of the kingdom of God.¹¹ "Brunner regarded Jesus as a man possessing special religious knowledge, not a God-man who is identical with God as an object of religious knowledge."¹² There is an obvious and significant soteriological deficit in Brunner's understanding of Jesus of Nazareth at this point, partly reflecting any sense of ontological distinction between humanity and Jesus.¹³ Jesus may clarify our understanding of God; he does not fundamentally alter our relationship with God. It is interesting to note that Brunner's Christology

⁷ Leonhard Ragaz, *Das Evangelium und der soziale Kampf der Gegenwart*. 2nd edn. Basle: C. F. Lendorff, 1907. For a good account of Ragaz's ethics, see Robert Barth, "Leonhard Ragaz (1868–1945)." In *Schweizer Ethiker im 20. Jahrhundert: Der Beitrag theologischer Denken*, ed. Wolfgang Lienemann and Frank Mathwig, 9–32. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2005.

⁸ Leonhard Ragaz, *Dein Reich komme! Predigten*. Basle: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1909.

⁹ *Das Symbolische in der religiösen Erkenntnis*, 2–3. For comment, see Yrjö Salakka, *Person und Offenbarung in der Theologie Emil Brunners während der Jahre 1914–1937*. Helsinki: Kirjapaino, 1960, 34–52; Heinrich Leopold, *Missionarische Theologie: Emil Brunners Weg zur theologischen Anthropologie*. Gütersloh: Mohn, 1974, 22–33.

¹⁰ See Friedrich W. Graf, "Der 'Kant der Kirchengeschichte' und der 'Philosoph des Protestantismus.' Adolf von Harnacks Kant-Rezeption und seine Beziehungen zu den philosophischen Neukantianern." In *Adolf von Harnack: Christentum, Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft*, ed. Kurt Nowak, Otto Gerhard Oexle, Trutz Rendtorff, and Kurt-Victor Selge, 113–42. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003.

¹¹ Stephan Scheld, *Die Christologie Emil Brunners*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steinbeck, 1981, 50–6.

¹² Scheld, *Die Christologie Emil Brunners*, 50.

¹³ Scheld, *Die Christologie Emil Brunners*, 82–3.

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seems to rest on his epistemological presuppositions, suggesting that his understanding of the role of Jesus of Nazareth was shaped by an essentially philosophical framework.¹⁴

There are aspects of *Das Symbolische* which merit further discussion, perhaps most notably the manner in which its ideas – especially the ethical role of Jesus of Nazareth – echo the views of Ragaz, and the manner in which Brunner draws on Henri Bergson to develop his notion of “intuition”.¹⁵ Yet for our purposes, the importance of the work lies in its illumination of Brunner’s theological starting point. In his “pre-dialectical” phase,¹⁶ Brunner is clearly deeply embedded within the liberal Protestant consensus, even if his ideas are tinged with the hues of the prevailing forms of liberal Protestantism at Zurich, rather than at Berlin. Yet this initial statement of Brunner’s theological perspectives reveals someone who is at home with the ideas of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Harnack.¹⁷ At this point, Brunner does not stand out from his cultural and theological background.

Pastoral Ministry and Contacts in England

Brunner – like his Swiss colleagues Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Eduard Thurneysen (1888–1974) – had little sympathy at this stage for the purely academic study of theology, or any notion of theology as an ecclesially disengaged activity. All three saw theology as linked to ministry, and above all to preaching. Brunner was studying theology in order to begin public ministry within the Swiss Reformed church. His initial pastoral responsibilities were in Leutwil, a small town in the canton of Aargau, some fifteen kilometres from the neighbouring village of Safenwil.

Brunner moved to Leutwil in September 1912 to deputize for pastor August Müller, who had become seriously ill. Following Müller’s death in office on 3 October, Brunner was ordained on 27 October 1912 at the Fraumünster

¹⁴ Scheld’s puzzling suggestion that Brunner is quite close to Chalcedon at this point in his development seems to rest on a misunderstanding of Brunner’s concept of “symbol”: Scheld, *Die Christologie Emil Brunners*, 87.

¹⁵ Salakka, *Person und Offenbarung*, 38, 40. Brunner’s undated *Habilitationsschrift* at Zurich (1915?) concerned “The Significance of H. Bergson for the Philosophy of Religion”: Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 64.

¹⁶ Brunner scholarship is divided over the periodization of his theological development. Salakka – writing before the publication of Brunner’s *Dogmatics* – suggested that three phases could be discerned: a “pre-critical” phase (1914–20), a “dialectical” phase (1921–8), and an “eristic” phase (1929–37). Others have added a fourth: his “dialogical” phase, which is best seen in his later writings, particularly his *Dogmatics*. See Roman Rössler, *Person und Glaube: Der Personalismus der Gottesbeziehung bei Emil Brunner*. Munich: Kaiser Verlag; Leopold, *Missionarische Theologie*.

¹⁷ For some divergences at this point between Schleiermacher and Brunner, see Salakka, *Person und Offenbarung*, 46–7.

in Zurich, and served as interim pastor (*Vikar*) at Leutwil until April 1913, when he returned to Zurich to complete his academic studies and examinations. Although Karl Barth was pastor of the nearby village of Safenwil throughout Brunner's Leutwil period, there are no indications of any direct contact between them. On 31 July 1913, Brunner was examined on his thesis "Das Symbolische in der religiösen Erkenntnis" – published the following year under the same title – and graduated *summa cum laude*.

Brunner's sermons of this period clearly echo the themes of the religious socialism articulated by Ragaz. In a sermon of 12 January 1913, Brunner played down any thought of Christianity offering hope in the face of death; its primary role was to transform the situation of the living.

When [Jesus] speaks about the "Kingdom of God", he is talking first of all about this side of things. He does not want to bring a trusting hope for those who are dying, but speaks about a great future for the living. To put it briefly, the "Kingdom of God" will come on this earth – not as a rapture [*Entrückung*] into a better world through the entry door of death, but as a transfiguration [*Umgestaltung*] of our earthly life.¹⁸

Brunner was succeeded at Leutwil by Eduard Thurneysen (1888–1974), who served as pastor in the community from 1913 to 1920.¹⁹ Brunner's close friendship with Thurneysen began around this time. A significant correspondence developed, indicating a growing restlessness with some of the conventional theological wisdom of their age, catalysed to no small extent by the outbreak of the Great War in the late summer of 1914. It was during his period as pastor of Leutwil that Thurneysen developed a relationship with Barth, which would prove to be so theologically significant.

By the summer of 1913, Brunner was fully equipped to begin professional ministry in the Swiss Reformed church. Yet he chose not to do this, believing that his vocation as a theologian and churchman – the two were closely interlinked in his mind – demanded that he become proficient in the English language, not least in order to sustain and develop the contacts that he had made at the Oxford conference of 1909. In an unusual move, without any real parallel amongst his Swiss theological contemporaries, Brunner spent the academic year 1913–14 teaching French and Latin at high schools in England.

Brunner's first such appointment was at Winchester House School in Great Yarmouth, a port in the East Anglian county of Norfolk. This beautiful Victorian building was set in extensive grounds on a cliff top on England's east coast, with impressive views of the sandy bays around. Yet Brunner's experience at Great Yarmouth was not a success in terms of its academic

¹⁸ Text in Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 54.

¹⁹ Thurneysen had previously served as assistant secretary of the Zurich YMCA (German: Christlicher Verein junger Menschen) from 1911 to 1913.

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outcomes. Winchester House seemed more concerned about the reputation of its sports teams than its examination performances in either French or Latin.²⁰ In December 1913, Brunner wrote to Thurneysen, admitting that his time in Great Yarmouth had been something of a “fiasco”.²¹ He resigned, and moved to London to consider his next move. Undeterred by his earlier unhappy experience, Brunner managed to find another teaching position – this time, as a teacher of French at West Leeds High School in Yorkshire. This proved much more satisfactory.

Brunner found his time in England to be politically stimulating, bringing him into contact with leading British socialists such as the future British prime minister Ramsay MacDonald (1866–1937) and the future chancellor of the exchequer Philip Snowden (1864–1937). At the more intellectual level, Brunner was “particularly impressed” by the “Guild Socialism” then being articulated by the leading young Fabian theorist George Douglas Howard Cole (1889–1959).²² He also became acquainted with the future archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple (1881–1944),²³ whom he met through the “Brotherhood Movement”, a British form of Christian socialism which flourished in the years before the Great War.²⁴

However, the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 forced Brunner to return to Switzerland as quickly as possible. Having already undertaken military training in the infantry at Zurich in the late summer of 1909, he was placed on active service until early 1915. He was posted to the 69th Fusilier Battalion (*Füsilierbataillon*), which was stationed close to the French border.²⁵

The Swiss Crisis of Identity, 1914–1919

It is impossible to make sense of the emerging theology of the three great Swiss Protestant theologians of the twentieth century – Brunner, Barth, and Thurneysen – without understanding the nature of the national crisis through which Switzerland passed during the years 1914–19. Switzerland had expanded its territory after the resolution of the chaos resulting from the Napoleonic wars by the Congress of Vienna (1815), adding the canton

²⁰ For the origins of this emphasis on sporting achievement, see J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology*. Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000.

²¹ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 52.

²² “Intellectual Autobiography”, 7. On this approach to socialism, see A. W. Wright, G. D. H. Cole and *Socialist Democracy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979, 72–99.

²³ For Temple’s later links with Brunner, see F. A. Iremonger, *William Temple: Archbishop of Canterbury. His Life and Letters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948, 370.

²⁴ Paul T. Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880–1940*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, 148.

²⁵ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 59.

of Geneva; it also reaffirmed its commitment to political and military neutrality within the new European order then in the process of emerging.²⁶ It had no desire to become entangled in future European wars.

This doctrine was reaffirmed with the outbreak of war between the European Great Powers in August 1914.²⁷ Switzerland may have affirmed its neutrality; this did not, however, safeguard its territorial integrity. Pre-war strategic analysis had made it clear that the small nation was vulnerable to opportunistic territorial annexation by France, Germany, or Italy. Its neutrality had to be enforced through military mobilization.

Although Switzerland remained neutral during the Great War, it was profoundly affected by the conflict. In the east, the peoples of the Suisse Romande felt a natural affinity with France; the sympathies of western Switzerland lay firmly with Germany.²⁸ The fault lines reflected deep convictions about cultural identity between France and Germany.²⁹ Tensions soared. There was an open recognition of a massive gulf between the German- and French-speaking communities, which might easily have led to permanent fissure and national disintegration. At times, it seemed as if the nation would split, with the German-speaking cantons siding with Germany, and their French-speaking counterparts with France.

This tension expressed itself within the Swiss Christian socialist movement. Two of its leading lights – Hermann Kutter and Leonhard Ragaz – took very different positions on the “German question”. Kutter openly supported the German cause; Ragaz argued that Swiss Christians ought to oppose the war without taking sides, developing an anti-militarist theme that would recur in his later writings.³⁰

The impact of the war on Swiss industry and commerce was devastating,³¹ paving the way for industrial unrest. Food rationing had to be introduced in 1917. The national debt spiralled out of control. A national

²⁶ Edgar Bonjour, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität*. Basle: Helbing & Lichtenbahn, 1978, 37–41.

²⁷ For a critical account of this development, see Max Mittler, *Der Weg zum Ersten Weltkrieg: Wie neutral war die Schweiz? Kleinstaat und europäischer Imperialismus*. Zurich: Verlag NZZ, 2003, 357–61.

²⁸ Jeannine Luczak-Wild, “Als der Graben aufklaffte: Vermittlung zwischen Westschweiz und Deutschschweiz? Das Scheitern der *Internationalen Rundschau* 1915.” *Schweizer Monatshefte für Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur* 4 (1997): 39–44.

²⁹ Gerd Krumeich, “Ernst Lavisse und die Kritik an der deutschen Kultur, 1914–1918.” In *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang Mommsen, 143–54. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996.

³⁰ See Dittmar Rostig, *Bergpredigt und Politik: Zur Struktur und Funktion des Reiches Gottes bei Leonhard Ragaz*. Berne: Peter Lang, 1991.

³¹ For the economic issues, see Roman Rossfeld and Tobias Straumann, eds., *Der vergessene Wirtschaftskrieg: Schweizer Unternehmen im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2008. For its religious aspects, see Christine Nöthiger-Strahm, *Der deutsch-schweizerische Protestantismus und der Landstreik von 1918*. Berne: Peter Lang, 1981, 69–206.

strike was called in November 1918, raising serious fears of a Bolshevik-type revolution in Switzerland, and causing a crisis within Swiss socialism.³² Serious economic difficulties were exacerbated by political tensions. For Brunner, as for many others, the imperial German war policy called into question the basis and legitimacy of culturally assimilated forms of Protestantism.³³ Karl Barth and Brunner alike regarded ethics as grounded in theology,³⁴ and interpreted the *ethical* failure of the German churches in encouraging war through a *Kriegstheologie* (which often seemed to reflect pagan rather than Christian themes) as ultimately a *theological* failure,³⁵ demanding a radical theological correction.³⁶ So what could be done to recover from this theological crisis? How could theology recover its vision? This sense of unease is evident in the preaching of Barth, Brunner, and Thurneysen during this period, reflecting anxiety about the present situation and uncertainty about what lay ahead.³⁷

During the Great War, Brunner served in various temporary positions, including assisting Hermann Kutter at the Neumünster in Zurich during the summer of 1915. Finally, Brunner was given his own pastoral respon-

³² Markus Mattmüller, *Leonhard Ragaz und der religiöse Sozialismus: Eine Biographie*. 2 vols. Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1957–68, vol. 2, 502–34. The writings of Barth, Brunner, and Thurneysen from this period suggest they saw this strike as a social and religious watershed, forcing reconsideration of earlier social and religious assumptions. Barth initially supported Ragaz, where Thurneysen supported Kutter: for the issues, see Barth's letter to Thurneysen of 8 March 1915: *Karl Barth–Eduard Thurneysen Briefwechsel*. 3 vols. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974, vol. 1, 33.

³³ The term *Kulturprotestantismus* is often used to refer to this phenomenon. Recent studies have raised questions about whether this term is misleading, and suggested that it ought to be used with caution when referring to Wilhelmine Germany: see especially Friedrich W. Graf, "Kulturprotestantismus: Zur Begriffsgeschichte einer theologischen Chiffre." *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 27 (1984): 214–68; Gangolf Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik: Zum Verhältnis vom Liberalismus und Protestantismus im wilhelminischen Deutschland*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1994, 26–262.

³⁴ For the context, see Folkart Wittekind, *Geschichtliche Offenbarung und die Wahrheit des Glaubens: Der Zusammenhang von Offenbarungstheologie, Geschichtsphilosophie und Ethik bei Albrecht Ritschl, Julius Kaftan und Karl Barth (1909–1916)*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.

³⁵ See especially Karl Hammer, *Deutsche Kriegstheologie, 1870–1918*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1971; Günter Brakelmann, *Protestantische Kriegstheologie im 1. Weltkrieg*. Witten: Luther Verlag, 1974. For Barth's concerns about the apparent theological endorsement of militarism and nationalism in 1914, see Arne Rasmusson, "Church and Nation-State: Karl Barth and German Public Theology in the Early 20th Century." *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Theologische Tydskrif* 46 (2005): 511–24.

³⁶ For a good account of Barth's view of the relation of theology and ethics around this time, see John Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998, 11–39, challenging contemporary suggestions that "dialectical theology" was morally vacuous – as found, for example, in John Cullberg, *Das Problem der Ethik in der dialektischen Theologie*. Uppsala: Lundequist, 1938.

³⁷ See, for example, Thurneysen's 1917 sermon, speaking of a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction and restlessness, and uncertainty about the future: Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Suchet Gott, so werdet ihr leben!* 2nd edn. Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1928, 133.

sibility. He was installed as pastor of the mountain village of Obstalten in the canton of Glarus, in eastern Switzerland, on 13 February 1916. One of most significant developments for Brunner around this time was his engagement to Kutter's niece Margrit Lauterburg (1895–1979) in May 1917, followed by their church marriage in October of the same year at Bremgarten, a small town near Berne.³⁸

Barth served as pastor in the village of Safenwil from 1911 to 1921, and was a close neighbour of Thurneysen. Although it is impossible to establish either the date or the location of Brunner's first meeting with Barth, circumstantial evidence suggests that this probably took place at Thurneysen's home in Leutwil in the middle of February 1916. Thurneysen and Barth had studied theology together at the University of Marburg during the period 1908–9, and had developed a close friendship.³⁹ The two remained in close contact throughout the 1910s, and regularly met up. Brunner's first letter to Barth is dated 1 April 1916, praising a sermon of Barth's, yet registering hesitation over some of its theological gambits. It was a pattern of affirmation mingled with reservation that would continue over the coming years.

Brunner and Dialectical Theology: The Origins of an Ambivalent Relationship

It would not be until 1920 that Brunner began what could legitimately be termed a “dialectical” phase in his theological development.⁴⁰ Before then, he is best seen as remaining within the pre-war theological liberal Protestant consensus, despite his growing misgivings about some of its assumptions, and his increasing willingness to explore alternatives – including the ideas beginning to be developed by Barth and Thurneysen.⁴¹ Although a cooling of the friendship between Brunner and Thurneysen in early 1916 is suggested by a somewhat belated invitation to Brunner to attend Thurneysen's wedding,⁴² it seems that by late 1918 Barth and Thurneysen had come to see Brunner as a useful dialogue partner in their theological discussions. He was someone who needed to be kept on side, even if there were questions about his commitment to their vision of “dialectical theology”.⁴³ Setting the

³⁸ For Brunner's period at Obstalten, see Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 69–85.

³⁹ Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, 38.

⁴⁰ For his theological development during the period 1913–18, see Walter J. Hollenweger, “Wurzeln der Theologie Emil Brunners: Aus Brunners theologischer Entwicklung von ca. 1913 bis 1919.” *Reformatio* 13, no. 12 (1963): 579–87.

⁴¹ Gabriele Lunghini, *Emil Brunner*. Brescia: Editrice Morcelliana, 2009, 27–39.

⁴² For an analysis of the changing relationship between Brunner and Thurneysen around this time, see Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 107–14.

⁴³ John W. Hart, *Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner: The Formation and Dissolution of a Theological Alliance, 1916–1936*. New York: Peter Lang, 2001, 11–20.

Barth–Brunner correspondence alongside the Barth–Thurneysen correspondence for the period 1916–20, it becomes clear that Barth and Thurneysen saw themselves as sharing common themes, which they increasingly considered Brunner to fail to grasp.

Yet despite this incomplete harmony the three young theologians agreed to set out what amounted to a common public theological programme at a series of lectures, given at Leutwil from 4 to 6 February 1917. Thurneysen intended these lectures for his congregation to be delivered by colleagues who were sympathetic to a “new way” of doing theology. This “Bible Week amongst the People”, hosted by Thurneysen, was addressed by Brunner, Barth, and Gottlob Wieser (1888–1973) – all younger theologians, representing an emerging school of thought (at present, without any agreed name).

On Sunday 4 February, Brunner delivered the opening lecture, on “Awakening the Bible”. Wieser’s lecture, delivered the following day, dealt with the theme of “Hope in the Bible”. On 6 February, Barth spoke on “The New World in the Bible”. Barth’s lecture, now widely seen as a manifesto for his reforming theological agenda, seems to have generated the most interest on the part of the audience.

In a letter of 17 January, Thurneysen had hinted that he would prefer Brunner’s talk to be entitled “The Word of God in the Bible”.⁴⁴ In the event, Brunner’s address was somewhat critical of any such idea, preferring to speak of the “Spirit of the Bible” rather than the “Word of God”. Echoing the pre-war approach of Ragaz, Brunner called on his audience to allow the Bible to inspire and empower them, leading to the transformation of society:

What we need now is the Spirit of the Bible [*Bibelgeist*], not the sayings of the Bible [*Bibelsprüche*]; God, not statements of faith; power, not doctrines. This living word and living power are asleep in the Bible. But we must try to wake them up, to draw them out . . . If the Spirit of the Bible awakes within us, there would be an earthquake, compared with which all revolutions are but a children’s game. And the end result would be the kingdom of God on earth, the rule of righteousness, truth, and love.⁴⁵

Brunner’s lecture helps us locate him on a theological map at this stage in his development, not least in relation to his explicit distancing of himself from excessively cognitive approaches to doctrine or the interpretation of the Bible. Yet his approach was not what Thurneysen hoped for, either pedagogically or theologically.⁴⁶ As he later remarked to Barth, not only had the audience found Brunner difficult to understand; his proposals stood at some distance from their own.

⁴⁴ Cited Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 88 n. 9.

⁴⁵ Cited Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 88.

⁴⁶ Thurneysen to Barth, 20 February 1917: *Karl Barth–Eduard Thurneysen Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 175.

The truth of the matter is that Brunner did not see himself as part of any theological alliance or axis at this time. There never was any close relationship, personal or intellectual, with Barth. There was a friendship, certainly, reflected in Barth allowing Brunner to read his landmark Romans commentary in proof in November 1918. As a result, Brunner's review of the work was the first to be published, attracting considerable attention for that reason.⁴⁷ Brunner rightly declared that Barth's approach opened the way for a "theology focused on the Word of God".⁴⁸ Yet it is not entirely clear whether, and to what extent, Brunner himself wished to be aligned with the specifics of Barth's approach. In reviewing Barth's Romans commentary, Brunner – much to Barth's irritation – presented himself as a neutral assessor of its approach, not as one who himself espoused and advocated such a position.

The simple truth is that at this stage Brunner was finding his own way, trying to reconstruct his vision of theology in the light of the trauma of the Great War, and the deep and fundamental questions about theological method that this had raised in his mind.⁴⁹ Given that the cultural ideology of an earlier generation could not be sustained after the distress of the Great War, what was to replace it? How would this affect his reading of the Bible? Of the Reformed tradition? Of his theological mentors at Zurich? He welcomed the stimulus of others – such as the little volume of sermons by Barth and Thurneysen (1917)⁵⁰ – while declining to identify himself with them.

Brunner's writings of 1918–19 indicate two main concerns with the approach of Barth and Thurneysen. First, although there are clear signs that Brunner was beginning to appreciate the problems associated with subjectivist theological approaches by the beginning of 1918, he had no time for a simple inversion of such an approach, focusing on the alleged objectivity of divine revelation. In a letter to Thurneysen of January 1918 thanking him for the gift of a copy of *Suchet Gott*, Brunner expressed concerns about its "almost dangerously one-sided" approach, which seemed to him to

⁴⁷ "Der Römerbrief von Karl Barth", 29–32.

⁴⁸ For reflections on the origins and significance of such approaches to theology, see Dietrich Korsch, "Theologie als Theologie des Wortes Gottes: Eine programmatische Skizze." In *Transformationsprozesse des Protestantismus: Zur Selbstreflexion einer christlichen Konfession an der Jahrtausendwende*, ed. Martin Berger and Michael Murrmann-Kahl, 226–37. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.

⁴⁹ For the impact of the Great War on European thought, see Dietrich Korsch, "La modernité comme crise: Stratégies conceptuelles en philosophie sociale et en théologie au sortir de la première guerre mondiale." In *La théologie en postmodernité. Actes du 3e Cycle de théologie systématique des Facultés de Théologie de Suisse Romande*, ed. Pierre Gisel and Patrick Evard, 33–63. Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996.

⁵⁰ Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Suchet Gott, so werdet ihr leben!* Berne: G. A. Bäschlin, 1917. Thurneysen presented Brunner with a copy of this book as a wedding present. This collection of essays includes Barth's "New World in the Bible", which is mistakenly dated to the autumn of 1916. Following the inclusion of this lecture in Barth's *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*, it was omitted from subsequent printings of the sermons.

rupture any links between God and human morality.⁵¹ For Brunner, there was a “little spark” of divine truth in the world, “a seed of believing objectivity”. Hints of his later notion of the *Anknüpfungspunkt* are found here, in an emergent form.

Second, Brunner was puzzled by the elusive theological substance of slogans such as “let God be God”. Such an emphasis on the absolute priority of God seemed to him to be unhelpfully abstract, lacking content. Could such an approach be anything other than a *critical tool*, countering what could now be recognized as an excessively culturally determined vision of theology? Its iconoclasm might help identify and eradicate false starts; but could it function as a positive and constructive foundation for a theological programme? Could it bear theological weight? Brunner indicated that he had experienced such problems with such theological slogans back in 1916, when trying to absorb the theological significance of Hermann Kutter’s slogan *Gott machen lassen* (“letting God matter”).⁵²

Brunner in America, 1919–1920

Although Brunner continued to socialize with Barth, Thurneysen, and Wieser, his own horizons were being extended following the end of the Great War, when international travel became possible once more. The ecumenical pioneer Adolf Keller (1872–1963), pastor of St Peter’s, Zurich, recognized the importance of developing international connections between Switzerland and the United States as a means of encouraging theological reconstruction and ecclesial reconciliation. As a result of Keller’s initiatives, in July 1919 Union Theological Seminary, New York, announced that a one-year fellowship to the value of \$1,200 would be offered to an outstanding Swiss Protestant theologian. Leonhard Ragaz had no doubt that Brunner was the ideal candidate, not least on account of his fluency in English, and approached him. Would he accept the award if it was offered to him?

Union Theological Seminary was then one of the most prestigious Protestant institutes of theological education in the United States, with an international reputation. Although it had been founded as a Presbyterian seminary in 1836, a series of controversies in the late nineteenth century led to the school divesting itself of its denominational links, and becoming a non-denominational seminary.⁵³ Its move to Morningside Heights

⁵¹ Letter to Eduard Thurneysen, 30 January 1918: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 17–21, especially 19. The letter would be forwarded to Barth. For an assessment of the Barth–Brunner correspondence, see John Hart, “The Barth–Brunner Correspondence.” In *For the Sake of the Word: Karl Barth and the Future of Ecclesial Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger, 10–43. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.

⁵² Letter to Karl Barth, 9 June 1916: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 5–7, especially 6.

⁵³ Robert T. Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, 121–57.

in 1908, next to Columbia University, gave it a new academic status. By 1921 many regarded Union as one of the premier institutions of theological education in the United States – a “theological university”, as some of its distinguished faculty put it.

Brunner realized that exposure to American theology and church life would enhance his own intellectual development.⁵⁴ Yet despite the attractiveness of the possibility, he was hesitant. It would mean being absent from Switzerland for eight months. How would his congregation cope without him? His first son, Hans Heinrich, was only a year old, and his wife Margrit was expecting their second child around Christmas 1919. And in any case, what would he gain from studying at an American seminary? Yet all these objections were overcome. Margrit insisted he should go to America. An extraordinary meeting of the Obstalten congregation granted him leave of absence, and arranged for his pastoral responsibilities to be covered initially by Ernst Stähelin of Basle, and then by Max Vatter of Lucerne.

Brunner accepted the invitation. He sailed from Calais, and disembarked in New York on 14 September 1919. He later recalled that this visit to New York established important contacts that he would maintain for the remainder of his life.⁵⁵ Yet his experience of American culture and church life seem also to have brought home to him that the European experience could not be absolutized as a theological norm. America offered Brunner a critical perspective from which he could see the European situation. There was no “crisis” in America, paralleling that which had overwhelmed Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Great War.

By the early 1920s, American philosophers and theologians had come to take an optimistic attitude towards industrial progress, scientific advancement, the efficiency of large-scale organizations, and the increased benefits of technology. There was no sense of an economic or political “crisis” arising from the Great War. The conflict had had surprisingly little impact on American culture and thought in comparison with western Europe.⁵⁶ There were religious tensions within the American context; yet these were quite distinct from their counterparts in Germany and Switzerland, and would express themselves in the emergence of “Fundamentalism” in the 1920s. If there was a cultural crisis in America, this did not arise directly from the Great War, but from the Wall Street crash of October 1929.

Brunner, Barth, and Thurneysen: Continuing Debate

Brunner returned to Obstalten in the summer of 1920, and resumed his pastoral ministry on 6 June. On 29 August, Barth and Thurneysen, who

⁵⁴ For an excellent account of Brunner’s period in America, see Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 123–44.

⁵⁵ “Intellectual Autobiography”, 8.

⁵⁶ Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1995, 145–200.

were vacationing at the Bergli, paid Brunner a visit at Obstalten, and arrived in time to hear him preach at the morning service. They pronounced themselves unimpressed by his sermon, declaring his preaching to be “cheap, psychological, boring, and churchy”.⁵⁷ Brunner was taken aback by both the substance and tone of his visitors’ comments. Although he was careful to frame his subsequent extended letter of response in terms of grateful appreciation of doubtless merited and helpful criticism,⁵⁸ Brunner seems to have been wounded rather than enriched by their reactions.

By late 1920, Brunner seems to have come to the conclusion that Barth’s approach to theology was becoming increasingly radical, accentuating rather than alleviating his misgivings concerning what he regarded as its excessively negative and critical tone. On this return from America, Thurneysen drew Brunner’s attention to two important lectures given by Barth during Brunner’s absence, in which he had begun to speak of God as “wholly other”.⁵⁹

These theological trends were given definitive formulation in the second edition of Barth’s *Romans* commentary (1922). In this radical revision of his 1919 work, Barth argued for an “infinite qualitative distinction” between time and eternity, and God and humanity. This notion of “distance” is expressed both ontologically and epistemologically: God is in heaven, and humanity on earth; God can only be known through a sovereign and free act of self-disclosure.⁶⁰

Brunner was profoundly uneasy about these developments, particularly when he got round to reading Barth’s review of Franz Overbeck. Although scholars sympathetic to Barth tend to present Brunner’s response to Barth at this time as muddled and compromised, lacking the critical brilliance and insight they hold to be characteristic of Barth, there is another way of understanding things. Brunner believed that the emerging “dialectical theology” was iconoclastic, not constructive, and that it failed to recognize the moral and theological complexity of culture and religion. How could such

⁵⁷ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 165–6.

⁵⁸ Letter to Thurneysen and Barth, 2 September 1920: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 42–5, especially 43, “Euer Keulenschlag war für mich etwas schlechterdings Wertvolles.” Brunner’s description of their comments as a *Keulenschlag* (“being hit with a cudgel”, or “a crushing blow”) indicates the ferocity of their comments.

⁵⁹ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 158. The two lectures were “Der Christ in der Gesellschaft”, given at Tambach in Thuringia, Germany, on 25 September 1919, and “Biblische Fragen, Einsichten, und Ausblicke”, given at Aarau, the capital of the northern Swiss canton of Aargau, on 17 April 1920. The “Tambacher Rede” is now seen as a milestone on the road to the formation of the “Confessing Church” in the 1930s. For the texts, see Karl Barth, *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie: Gesammelte Vorträge*. Munich: Kaiser Verlag 1925, 33–69, 70–98. Barth’s important review of Franz Overbeck’s *Christentum und Kultur* (1919) should also be noted, particularly his suggestion that theology needs to begin all over again.

⁶⁰ See the analysis in McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 241–90.

a theology be lived out in the world? Surely theology could be both critical and constructive? Surely the Christian gospel had something *positive* to say, rather than offering aggressive intellectual and cultural negations?

Brunner is often accused at this point of wanting to have it both ways – to say both “Yes” and “No”. Yet his position is completely consistent and principled. For Brunner, theology is “critical” in that it offers a basis for judging all things, affirming some and rejecting others. By its very nature, it must say “Yes” in some cases, and “No” in others. This is not about inconsistency, nor does it betray a muddled or subjective eclecticism. Brunner’s approach is similar to the strategy of “critical appropriation” advocated by writers such as Augustine of Hippo, as the early church wrestled with its relationship with Roman imperial culture. Brunner’s strategy of critical appropriation came to be placed on an increasingly rigorous conceptual foundation in the mid-1930s – as, for example, in the “law of the closeness of relation” (*Gesetz der Beziehungsnahe*), which we will consider later (pp. 137–40).

In his critical letter of 2 September 1920 to Barth and Thurneysen, Brunner uses the analogy of a watchdog (*Hofhund*) to make the point that his own approach, based on Kant’s critical philosophy, allows him to discriminate between friend and foe; in marked contrast, the “dialectical” approach sees everything as a threat.

For Kant, the “No” is critical, i.e., like a watchdog which barks at everyone except its owners, who belong in the house. The dialectical watchdog barks at everyone as a matter of principle. But Kant gets results.⁶¹

More fundamentally, Brunner queried whether the notion of God as the “totally other” compromised the crucial theological insights of the biblical theme “the Word became Flesh”.⁶²

An interesting and important divergence can be seen at this point between Barth and Brunner over the manner in which the Danish existentialist philosopher Søren Kierkegaard is to be interpreted and theologically appropriated. At this point, Barth tended to emphasize the critical side of Kierkegaard’s thought, as in the famous preface to the second edition of his *Romans* commentary (1922):

If I have any “system”, it is restricted to bearing in mind, as much as possible, what Kierkegaard called the “infinite qualitative distinction” between time and eternity, in its negative and positive aspects. “God is in heaven, and you

⁶¹ Letter to Thurneysen and Barth, 2 September 1920: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 42–53, especially 44. Brunner’s important distinction in this letter between “Hofhund” and “Haushund” is difficult to render in English.

⁶² Letter to Thurneysen and Barth, 2 September 1920: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 45.

are on earth.” For me, the relation of this God and this person, the relation of this person and this God, is, in a nutshell, the theme of the Bible and the totality of philosophy.⁶³

Brunner, in contrast, highlighted Kierkegaard’s emphasis on the “subjective” aspects of truth, seeing this as an important corrective to purely objective understandings of the nature of theology.⁶⁴ Brunner’s “dialogical” approach to theology, which attempted to provide a theological defence and contextualization for affirming both objectivity and subjectivity, can be seen as being partly rooted in his reading of Kierkegaard.⁶⁵

Yet despite these clear points of divergence, both in theological substance and their reading of Kierkegaard, Brunner continued to engage in dialogue with Barth and his circle – including Friedrich Gogarten (1887–1967) – even though he was conscious of being seen, at least in some respects, as an outsider. His relationship with Thurneysen became formal and cool; at one point, the two did not correspond for over four months.⁶⁶ Yet Barth seems to have respected Brunner enough to allow him to see drafts of the revised version of his *Romans* commentary as early as May 1921,⁶⁷ which clearly stimulated Brunner in his attempt to forge his own approach. Barth, however, does not appear to have found Brunner stimulating; indeed, he eventually came to the view that he was simply wasting time in engaging him. With the benefit of hindsight, Barth later realized that he ought probably to have engaged more thoroughly and critically with Gogarten at this formative stage in his development.⁶⁸

The Quest for Recognition: *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube* (1921–2)

The published version of Brunner’s *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube* (“Experience, Knowledge and Faith”) was completed in September 1921. An earlier version of this work, with the same title, was submitted to the

⁶³ Karl Barth, *Römerbrief*. 8th edn. Zurich: Zollikon, 1947, xiii. Barth’s attitude to Kierkegaard is complex and ambivalent. For comment, see Lee C. Barrett, “Karl Barth: The Dialectic of Attraction and Repulsion.” In *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Theology: 1 – German Protestant Theology*, ed. Jon Stewart, 1–41. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012; Philip G. Ziegler, “Barth’s Criticisms of Kierkegaard: A Striking Out at Phantoms?” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 4 (2007): 434–45.

⁶⁴ See the 1930 essay “Die Botschaft Sören Kierkegaards”: *Ein offenes Wort*, vol. 1, 209–26, especially 217–18.

⁶⁵ Curtis L. Thompson, “Emil Brunner: Polemically Promoting Kierkegaard’s Christian Philosophy of Encounter.” In *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Theology: 1*, ed. Stewart, 65–103.

⁶⁶ For the points of tension, see Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 168–70.

⁶⁷ Letter to Barth, 12 May 1921: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 58–9.

⁶⁸ Karl Barth, letter to Friedrich Schmid, 14 August 1964: Karl Barth, *Briefe, 1961–1968*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975, 264.

Zurich Cantonal Directorate of Higher Education on 3 February 1921 as the basis of Brunner's second attempt at *Habilitation* – being allowed to teach or supervise research for the University of Zurich Faculty of Theology. This normally required the submission of a *Habilitationsschrift* – an independently produced piece of research, which would be defended before a panel of academic judges. The *Habilitation*, which has no direct equivalent in the British or North American university systems, can be thought of as a second academic dissertation, establishing a scholar's professional credentials for university teaching and research. Brunner's hopes of a future academic career depended on this work being well received.

Brunner's first (and unsuccessful) attempt to secure *Habilitation* took place in July 1915. Encouraged by Leonhard Ragaz, Brunner reworked his *Symbolische in der religiösen Erkenntnis* to serve as a *Habilitationsschrift* on the theme of "The Significance of Henri Bergson for the Philosophy of Religion".⁶⁹ Brunner seems to have assumed that his application to the Zurich Faculty of Theology *pro venia legendi* (a Latin phrase probably best rendered as "for permission to lecture") would be unproblematic. Yet Ragaz soon discovered that his colleagues at Zurich regarded any such move on Brunner's part as premature. There was clear resistance to allowing Brunner to teach on behalf of the Faculty. Some of Ragaz's colleagues had concerns about what they regarded as a superficial approach to theological issues. On 28 September 1915, Ragaz wrote a somewhat awkward letter to his protégé, suggesting that the time might not be quite right for Brunner to proceed with his case. Might it not benefit from further reflection and preparation?

Having waited more than five years, Brunner believed it was time to try again. Once more, Ragaz attempted to smooth the way for his protégé – this time, with greater (but not total) success. On 12 May 1921 Brunner wrote to Barth to inform him that his *Habilitationsschrift* had been accepted. "Yesterday I finally had notification that the Faculty at Zurich have accepted my *Habilitation*, although in the face of strong opposition from a minority."⁷⁰

Yet the *Habilitationsschrift* was a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for being allowed to lecture or supervise students at Zurich. The Faculty of Theology had to be satisfied on other grounds. And there was a problem. Brunner had made himself a controversial figure at Zurich, partly on account of an article he had published in 1920, calling into question the methods of academic theology and its relevance for clergy.

Although Brunner had originally suggested the somewhat pedestrian title "The Theological Preparation of Clergy and the Question of the Reform of the Theological Curriculum" for this three-page article, the editor of the journal to which he submitted it changed it to the somewhat more

⁶⁹ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 62–7.

⁷⁰ Letter to Barth, 12 May 1921: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 58.

provocative “The Poverty of Theology”.⁷¹ In this paper, Brunner made some fundamental criticisms of academic theology in relation to the needs of pastors, focusing especially on epistemological questions, such as the dangers of a false objectification of knowledge. Yet it seems to have been the title as much as the substance of the article that rankled some at Zurich – especially the New Testament scholar Paul Wilhelm Schmiedel (1851–1935) and the church historian Walther Köhler (1870–1946), both of whom were widely regarded as representing the classic liberal theology that had hitherto dominated Zurich’s faculty of theology.⁷²

Schmiedel and Köhler produced a highly critical minority report, alleging Brunner’s work to be full of “misjudgements”, to lack familiarity with recent developments in the philosophy of method, and to be disproportionately biased towards American scholarship.⁷³ Yet five of the seven faculty members appointed to reach a decision on the matter supported Brunner, even if they did so with qualifications, including concerns about the clarity of his writing. In the end, the decision was taken: Brunner would be granted *venia legendi* at the Zurich Faculty of Theology with effect from the academic year 1921–2.

We must linger over that criticism that Brunner made too much use of American scholarship in his *Habilitationsschrift*. The real issue seems to have concerned Brunner’s interest in the “psychology of religion”, a discipline which is widely conceded to have its origins in the United States in the final decades of the nineteenth century.⁷⁴ What seems to have irritated some of the Faculty of Theology at Zurich was that Brunner’s criticisms of Schleiermacher were not primarily based on a detailed analysis of German-language theology and philosophy but on some empirical findings, derived from American psychology of religion, which called into question the reliability of Schleiermacher’s approach. The problem was not that Schleiermacher was being criticized, but that he was being criticized on the basis of work that was, in the first place, *American*, and in the second, *empirical*.

Given the importance of this point, we must give further thought to Brunner’s encounter with the psychology of religion during his time at Union Theological Seminary in the academic year 1919–20.

Brunner and American Psychology of Religion

It is clear that Brunner conceived at least some of the themes of *Erlebnis*, *Erkenntnis* und *Glaube* during his time at Union Theological Seminary.

⁷¹ “Das ‘Elend der Theologie’.” The title parodies Karl Marx’s *Das Elend der Philosophie* (“The Poverty of Philosophy”), first published in German in 1885.

⁷² Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 170–3.

⁷³ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 171.

⁷⁴ For its cultural significance, see Robert C. Fuller, “American Psychology and the Religious Imagination.” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 42, no. 3 (2006): 221–35.

Brunner's critique of Schleiermacher's "psychologism" is partly based on the views of American psychologists of religion,⁷⁵ especially George Albert Coe (1862–1951), whom Brunner encountered at Union Theological Seminary.⁷⁶ In a letter of 8 October 1919, Brunner declared that the psychology of religion was the "most original" contribution that America had to offer modern theology.⁷⁷ He actively sought to pursue further studies under Coe's direction.

In early February 1920, he wrote to his wife telling her that, under Coe's direction, he had now acquired the resources he needed to begin his project.⁷⁸ It was not so much that Brunner believed that Coe could help him develop psychological resources to criticize the (somewhat tenuous) empirical foundations of Schleiermacher's notion of "feeling";⁷⁹ it was more that the sources that Coe encouraged him to read and study – such as William James (1842–1910) – seemed to Brunner to indicate the inevitable outcome of any psychological approach to religion: the elimination of distinctively Christian ideas about "God" in favour of loose talk about a generic notion of "the divine".

By this time, William James had a commanding reputation in Europe.⁸⁰ His works had been translated into German, and discussed at the International Congress of Philosophy at Heidelberg in September 1908.⁸¹ While European scholarly interest focused mainly on James's pragmatic conception of truth, at least some of the wider implications of his psychological approach appear to have been appreciated.

Yet many would argue that G. Stanley Hall (1844–1924) did far more to establish the professional academic credentials of the discipline in the United States.⁸² Hall's student James H. Leuba (1867–1946) published numerous articles and four books on the psychology of religion, and used his editorship of the *Psychological Bulletin* to ensure that articles concerning this field were published regularly. By the end of the Great War the psychology of religion was well established in American academic life, and

⁷⁵ See, for example, *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, 52–3.

⁷⁶ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 135–8.

⁷⁷ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 136.

⁷⁸ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 137.

⁷⁹ There has been sporadic scholarly interest in Coe in recent years: see, for example, Ian Nicholson, "Academic Professionalization and Protestant Reconstruction, 1890–1902: George Albert Coe's Psychology of Religion." *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences* 30, no. 4 (1994): 348–68.

⁸⁰ Jaime Nubiola, "The Reception of William James in Continental Europe." *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2011): 73–85.

⁸¹ Theodor Elsenhans, *Bericht über den III. Internationalen Kongress für Philosophie zu Heidelberg, 1. bis 5. September 1908*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1909.

⁸² Hendrika vande Kemp, "G. Stanley Hall and the Clark School of Religious Psychology." *American Psychologist* 47, no. 2 (1992): 290–8; Sheldon H. White, "G. Stanley Hall: From Philosophy to Developmental Psychology." *Developmental Psychology* 28, no. 1 (1992): 25–34.

was having a growing influence in mainline denominational seminaries. By the end of the 1920s, the movement was in decline, partly due to the growing influence of behaviorism.⁸³ Brunner studied in America when the movement was at its peak.

In the 1920s, Union Theological Seminary represented something of a theological laboratory, fusing together some traditional – and also some highly redacted – themes of Protestant theology with the pragmatism of William James and John Dewey. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45), who spent the academic year 1930–1 as a Sloan Fellow at Union, was puzzled, and even a little disturbed, by the dominance of pragmatic conceptions of truth, and their somewhat uncritical theological appropriation in the seminary.

The destruction of philosophy as the question of truth, and its recasting as a positive individual discipline with practical goals – as most radically carried through by Dewey – alters the heart of the concept of scholarship, and truth as the absolute norm of all thinking is restricted by what proves to be “useful in the long run.” Thinking is essentially teleological, aimed at serving life.⁸⁴

This development was almost certainly under way during Brunner’s time there, a decade earlier. Yet he makes little reference to it, apart from noting the general American tendency to emphasize practice over theory – a theme he would return to during his 1928 Swander Lectures at Lancaster Theological Seminary (see pp. 54–60).

The primary source for Brunner’s reflections in *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube* appears to have been Coe’s *Psychology of Religion* (1916).⁸⁵ This standard text was widely used in American seminaries and colleges at this time, including Coe’s own Union Theological Seminary. While Brunner clearly found much in this work to arouse his suspicions, he also found much to ponder, including Coe’s analysis of the “social immediacy” of religion.⁸⁶ Negatively, Brunner reacted against what he regarded as the reductionism of this approach; positively, it brought home to him the distinctiveness of religion as a human phenomenon, and the importance of the theme of the “self-finding of the ‘I’ in the ‘Thou’” (*das Sichfinden des Ich im Du*).⁸⁷ This emergent insight, only partly explored in *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, required a more robust intellectual framework if it was to be

⁸³ Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, “Psychology of Religion 1880–1930: The Rise and Fall of a Psychological Movement.” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 10 (1974): 84–90. The movement recovered in the 1950s: see Kate M. Loewenthal, *The Psychology of Religion: A Short Introduction*. Boston, MA: Oneworld Publications, 2000, 6–11.

⁸⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Report on My Year of Study at Union Theological Seminary in New York, 1930/1.” In *Works*, vol. 10: *Barcelona, Berlin, New York: 1928–1931*, 305–22. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008; quote at 310–11.

⁸⁵ George Albert Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916. See *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, 52–3.

⁸⁶ Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, 246–62. See *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, 53.

⁸⁷ Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, 246–62. See *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, 53.

developed further; Brunner would develop such a conceptual scaffolding a few years later through engaging Kierkegaard, Ferdinand Ebner (1882–1931), and Martin Buber (1878–1965).

The published version of Brunner's *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube* (1922) was widely read, and attracted considerable attention, going through five editions. Brunner here offered a highly critical account of “earlier half-truths”, aiming to retain what was valid in earlier approaches, and reject what was not, before coming to his final conclusion – namely, that some understanding of the “pure objectivity” (*reine Sachlichkeit*) of faith was fundamental to both theology and apologetics.⁸⁸ For Brunner, theology had to move on from Schleiermacher and Ritschl, and even more from the trends that he regarded as having so impoverished and misled theology in recent years: its historical relativism, its mysticism, Romanticism, and obsession with the “kingdom of God”.⁸⁹ While some might feel that Brunner's critique of Schleiermacher and Ritschl is unduly dependent on Paul Natorp's neo-Kantianism at points, there is no doubt that Brunner has distanced himself from the hitherto dominant Schleiermachean tradition.

Although *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube* was based on Brunner's *Habilitationsschrift*, submitted in the first half of 1921, the published version reflects a knowledge of two seminal works of the “dialectical movement”, which Brunner read after completing the first version of the typescript – the second edition of Barth's *Romans* commentary, and Gogarten's *Die religiöse Entscheidung* (“The Religious Decision”).⁹⁰ Brunner was clear that his developing views were not caused by his reading of such works, but that they represented parallel developments. His theological development was that of independent alignment with the emerging “dialectical theology” movement, not of being its “follower”.

It is far from clear that *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube* is a work of “dialectical theology”. Barth and Brunner both criticized Schleiermacher; despite occasional convergence, however, the essential points of their criticisms were somewhat different. In particular, Brunner's criticisms of “psychologism” reflect a first-hand knowledge of American psychology of religion which is quite absent from Barth. Yet the difference between Barth and Brunner which is most evident relates not to their critique of Schleiermacher, but to their proposals for a positive alternative. Brunner remained convinced that Barth and Gogarten offered only a “No”, where a partial “Yes” was clearly required.

Karl Barth had meantime left his pastoral ministry in Safenwil, having been appointed to a full-time position as Professor of Reformed Theology

⁸⁸ *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, 89.

⁸⁹ *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, 90. See particularly Coe's discussion of the differentiation of human experience into “I's” and “thou's” through social dynamics, enabling the affirmation of both: Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, 256.

⁹⁰ *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, iv.

at the University of Göttingen in Germany.⁹¹ Brunner's role at Zurich, however, was more of an adjunct position. He remained as pastor of Obstalten, while becoming involved to a limited extent in the teaching and research of Zurich's Faculty of Theology. Brunner's correspondence of the period suggests he developed a sense of isolation in his rural parish, speaking of his "Obstalten Patmos", or his "long wait in Glarus".⁹² Lacking a physical community of scholars with whom he could interact, he was forced to read books, and engage in discussion through correspondence.

The Limits of Humanity: Reflections on Revelation and Reason (1922)

Nevertheless, Brunner made the most of his situation. In May 1922 he delivered his *Habilitationsvorlesung* – his inaugural lecture as a *Privatdozent*. He used this lecture – entitled *Die Grenzen der Humanität* ("The Limits of Humanity") – to probe some aspects of his emerging understanding of theology. For Brunner, the limits of humanity are reflected in what can be known of God. His theme, although framed anthropologically, is actually about the need for revelation. A properly biblical theology, he argued, as reflected in the writings of the Protestant reformers, "is not orientated towards experience, nor towards humanity, but towards God".⁹³

Brunner argued that the "crisis of humanity" is such that the grounds of true knowledge lie outside and beyond us. Human thought is ultimately an "after-thinking" (*Nachdenken*) that is determined and justified through a "pre-thinking" (*Vordenken*) that lies beyond us. We must, he insisted, recognize that a *Logos* underlies our own reasoning – a *Logos* that we do not establish and control, but which rather, as the "origin of all thought and existence", grounds and directs us.⁹⁴ The ultimate foundation and criterion of human thought lies beyond us, and is not subject to our control.

Knowledge of God therefore has a transcendent origin and foundation; it is something that must be mediated to us. Accentuating the "distance" between God and humanity, Brunner declared the centrality of the concept of revelation. What humanity could not know and could not achieve was disclosed by God.

⁹¹ For the theological context Barth now encountered through this new position, see the masterly survey of Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Protestantische Universitätstheologie in der Weimarer Republik." In *Der heilige Zeitsgeist: Studien zur Ideengeschichte der protestantischen Theologie in der Weimarer Republik*, 1–110. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.

⁹² See his letter to Barth of 9 June 1923: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 73.

⁹³ *Grenzen der Humanität*, 7.

⁹⁴ *Grenzen der Humanität*, 12.

In this eternal instant, in this absolute moment the impossible happens, the wonder of faith. Here the barriers of time were broken down, here God – not humanity – speaks and acts.⁹⁵

The idea of a “sense of distance” (*Distanzpathos*) is central to Brunner’s analysis at this point.⁹⁶ “We gain a standpoint on the far side of humanity precisely because we recognize its distance, with unconditional awe and absolute pathos.”⁹⁷ God’s self-revelation allows human nature and culture to be “seen from there” (*von dorthier gesehen*). It is the flash of light which shows us up as we really are. It is “divine illumination, not human knowledge”, giving us an objective and external perspective on our own situation.

Yet even at this stage there is a clear divergence between Brunner, on the one hand, and Barth and Gogarten on the other. For Brunner, it is not enough to declare that “God speaks”. Once the debate over the *possibility* of revelation is settled, the issue of its *substance* must be engaged. The question of the content of that speech is significant. It is indeed important that God speaks; but what does God say? To use a metaphor favoured by Brunner in *Der Grenzen der Humanität*, the flash of divine revelation is not merely something that is itself *seen*; it is something that makes it possible for humanity to *see*. Revelation discloses the way things really are. It allows us to see our world and ourselves from the divine perspective. Sometimes it may abolish false understandings, and demand that we say “No” to certain cultural norms or philosophical fashions – and here Brunner echoes Barth. But it also establishes the truth about things, offering a positive foundation for theological construction and cultural engagement. Revelation is about a divine “No” *and* a divine “Yes”.

It is quite clear from the correspondence between Barth and Brunner, and from an examination of their published writings from 1919 onwards, that it is not correct to speak of the “development” or “emergence” of differences between the two thinkers – for example, during the important period 1929–31.⁹⁸ The two writers had quite distinct approaches to theology

⁹⁵ *Grenzen der Humanität*, 15.

⁹⁶ This idea – alternatively expressed as *Pathos der Distanz* – is an important theme in Nietzsche’s philosophical writings, where it articulates primarily the distinction between those who rule, and those who are ruled: Volker Gerhardt, *Pathos und Distanz: Studien zur Philosophie Friedrich Nietzsches*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988, 5. It is easy to see how this notion could be transposed to articulate the “distance” between God and humanity. See further Peter Köster, “Nietzsche-Kritik und Nietzsche-Rezeption in der Theologie des 20. Jahrhunderts.” *Nietzsche-Studien* 10/11 (1982): 615–85.

⁹⁷ *Grenzen der Humanität*, 14. Similar comments about the “pathos of distance” can be seen elsewhere in his writings at this time – for example, “Das Grundproblem der Philosophie bei Kant und Kierkegaard”, 33–4.

⁹⁸ As rightly pointed out by both McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 327–74, and Hart, *Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner*, especially 204–17.

from the outset. These differences still allowed them to collaborate programmatically in combating certain theological trends they both regarded as unacceptable, not least those which compromised their mutual insistence that “God is God”. Yet such convergences often turn out to be opportunistic, lacking any grounding in a consistent and coherent shared vision of the nature and tasks of theology. They are to be seen as a critique of mutual enemies rather than an affirmation of a shared theological platform.

Furthermore, the term “dialectical theology” was used in several different senses by those emphasizing the priority of divine revelation.⁹⁹ It is historically improper to suggest that Barth was the proper claimant to the notion of “dialectical theology”, with others deviating from, or fundamentally misunderstanding, its essential content. From the outset, “dialectical theology” was a porous concept, open to different ways of interpretation, both intellectually (in terms its core methods or ideas) and sociologically (in terms of who made up the circle of “dialectical theologians”).¹⁰⁰ Paul Schempp (1900–59), for example, wrote of his perception of a “front” of dialectical theologians in 1928, whose leading members were Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, and Friedrich Gogarten.¹⁰¹ Theophil Steinmann similarly grouped Barth, Brunner, and Gogarten together, while recognizing that there were some significant points of divergence between them.¹⁰² At this stage, “dialectical theology” was a socially negotiated, as much as a theologically determined, notion.¹⁰³ And, as we shall see, many chose to adopt Brunner’s version of the notion – not least in the English-speaking world – unaware that this was actually a specific way of understanding the notion, which did not command universal assent with the movement.

The inherent theological tension between Brunner and Barth was unquestionably compounded by personal differences. Brunner, for example, was much more willing to seek common ground, both in his dialogue with other

⁹⁹ For a contemporary reflection on such terms, and their theological implications, see Ernst Neubauer, “Die Theologie der ‘Krisis’ und des ‘Wortes’: Ihre allgemeinen Voraussetzungen und Prinzipien.” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 7 (1926): 1–36.

¹⁰⁰ For the complex reception history of this notion, see Dietrich Korsch, “Ein großes Mißverständnis: Die Rezeptionsgeschichte der eigentlichen ‘dialektischen Theologie’ Karl Barths.” In *Karl Barth im europäischen Zeitgeschehen (1935–1950): Widerstand – Bewährung – Orientierung*, ed. Michael Beintker, Christian Link, and Michael Trowitzsch, 347–61. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2010.

¹⁰¹ Paul Schempp, “Randglossen zum Barthianismus.” *Zwischen den Zeiten* 6 (1928): 529–39.

¹⁰² Theophil Steinmann, “Zur Auseinandersetzung mit Gogarten, Brunner, und Barth.” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 10 (1929): 220–37, 452–70.

¹⁰³ See Rudolf Bultmann, “Die liberale Theologie und die jüngste theologische Bewegung.” *Theologische Blätter* 3 (1924): 73–86. Bultmann’s reviews, especially of the second edition of Barth’s *Römerbrief*, provide an illuminating account of his attitudes towards the movement: Matthias Dreher, *Rudolf Bultmann als Kritiker in Seinen Rezensionen und Forschungsberichten*. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005, 151–86.

theologians and with representatives of secular culture. This willingness to accommodate – though within limits – is also evident at several points in the early 1920s, when Brunner appears to make use of some decidedly Barthian rhetoric in his writings, without actually commending or adopting Barth's theology. It is arguable that these tensions were only manifested – for they were not caused – by the appearance of Brunner's *Mediator* in 1927, when Brunner's positive exposition of his vision of theology enabled the fault lines with Barth to be more clearly discerned.

The Critique of Schleiermacher: *Die Mystik und das Wort* (1924)

Yet Brunner was not yet ready to begin to construct his own positive theology at this stage in 1923. Demolition work still remained to be done. He planned a “new attack” against the theology of Schleiermacher, seeing this as the final preparatory step for his own theological reformulation and repositioning. The resulting work, published in 1924, under the title *Die Mystik und das Wort* (“Mysticism and the Word”),¹⁰⁴ is a somewhat disappointing work, whose polemical agenda leads to oversimplifications which reduce its value as a serious piece of theological analysis.

Brunner's stated object in writing this work was “to uncover the opposition between what Schleiermacher aimed to articulate and the faith-world of the apostles and Reformers; the inner impossibility of an alliance between every kind of a mystical philosophy of immanence and the Christianity of the Bible”. For Brunner, there were only two possibilities: “either Christ or modern religion”.¹⁰⁵ Brunner here deploys a somewhat problematic dichotomist mode of analysis to assess theological strategies, in effect reducing these to what he considers as the biblically based Christianity of the Reformation and the subjectivist turn of modern religion, exemplified by Schleiermacher, which conceives divine immanence in mystical terms, and locates it in the immediacy of self-consciousness. For Brunner, such a “religion of feeling” (*Gefühlsreligion*) is ultimately nothing more than paganism.¹⁰⁶

Brunner can be seen as partly echoing an established tradition of criticism of Schleiermacher's mystical turn. A. B. Ritschl, for example, was severely critical of those who allowed mysticism or metaphysics to intrude into theology.¹⁰⁷ Yet it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Brunner's polemical

¹⁰⁴ Lunghini, *Emil Brunner*, 39–45.

¹⁰⁵ *Die Mystik und das Wort*, 10.

¹⁰⁶ *Die Mystik und das Wort*, 386–7.

¹⁰⁷ Albrecht B. Ritschl, *Theologie und Metaphysik: Zur Verständigung und Abwehr*. 2nd edn. Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1887. Max Reischle, *Ein Wort zur Controverse über die Mystik in der Theologie*. Freiburg im Breisgau: J. C. B. Mohr, 1886.

context of the early 1920s has shaped his analysis,¹⁰⁸ leading to a full frontal assault on Schleiermacher, when a more scholarly and reflective analysis would have been more productive and persuasive.¹⁰⁹ As Christine Helmer rightly points out, Brunner’s criticism of mysticism actually reflects a lingering philosophical pre-commitment on his part – namely, a neo-Kantian trajectory deriving from Natorp and others, that “problematizes mysticism in the context of the neo-Kantian distinction between nature and spirit”.¹¹⁰

It is also questionable whether Brunner’s pitting of a “biblical-Reformation” conception of “faith” against Schleiermacher’s category of “religion” is quite as straightforward as Brunner indicates, partly because it is not an appropriate or plausible comparison. Why did not Brunner compare what Calvin says about *fides* with what Schleiermacher says about *Glaube*? Or Schleiermacher’s view of *Religion* or *Frömmigkeit* with Calvin’s view of *pietas*?¹¹¹ Brunner’s critique of Schleiermacher is clearly dogmatic, not historical, and seems curiously inattentive to the specific intellectual backdrop against which Schleiermacher developed his approach.

Despite the shallowness of his critique of Schleiermacher, Brunner’s *Mystik und das Wort* articulated a fundamental distinction that would remain central to his theological development: namely, that there are only two ways of conceiving the relationship between God and humanity. This relationship either begins with humanity, and reaches out to God, which Brunner holds to be the way of philosophy; or it begins with God, who reaches out to humanity, which is the way of revelation.¹¹²

Brunner’s thinking at this point was catalysed by his reading of Ferdinand Ebner’s *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten* (“The Word and Spiritual Realities”) in February 1922, a year after its publication, when it was recommended to him by Paul Walser, a pastor in the eastern Swiss village of

¹⁰⁸ See the points made by Stephan Gratzel, “L’importance de la théologie dialectique pour la philosophie de l’existence.” In *Mythe et philosophie: Les traditions bibliques*, ed. Christian Berner and Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, 229–35. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002.

¹⁰⁹ This was Barth’s conclusion: Karl Barth, “Brunner’s Schleiermacher-Buch.” *Zwischen den Zeiten* 8 (1924): 49–64.

¹¹⁰ Christine Helmer, “Mysticism and Metaphysics: Schleiermacher and a Historical-Theological Trajectory.” *Journal of Religion* 83, no. 4 (2003): 517–38. Brunner, of course, had distanced, perhaps even dissociated, himself from neo-Kantianism in the 1923 article “Das Grundproblem der Philosophie bei Kant und Kierkegaard.”

¹¹¹ See this comparison in Brian A. Gerrish, “From Calvin to Schleiermacher: The Theme and Shape of Christian Dogmatics.” In *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, 178–95, especially 180–1. See also the general study of Paul E. Capetz, *Christian Faith as Religion: A Study in the Theologies of Calvin and Schleiermacher*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998.

¹¹² See, for example, the clear formulation of this point in the 1925 essay “Gesetz und Offenbarung: Eine theologische Grundlegung”, 53–4.

Hundwil.¹¹³ A year later, Brunner wrote to Ebner, thanking him for writing the book, explaining how it had helped him develop “greater clarity” in his thinking about Christ. Perhaps most importantly, it helped him distinguish *die Mystik* from *das Wort*, thus allowing him to develop a more sustained critique of Schleiermacher and his legacy than otherwise would have been possible.

By now, Brunner’s theological programme was gaining wider attention internationally. In 1924, Hugh Ross Mackintosh (1870–1936), Professor of Christian Dogmatics at New College, Edinburgh, reviewed both *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube* and *Die Mystik und das Wort*, suggesting that they marked the emergence of a new school of theology, capable of challenging and possibly overthrowing the predominant Ritschlian paradigm.¹¹⁴ He singled out four representatives of this school – Barth, Brunner, Gogarten, and Kutter – while indicating his own view that Brunner was the most important. Brunner’s tone, Mackintosh felt, was unfortunately and unnecessarily shrill and loud. Perhaps, he suggested, “Brunner felt he could only get a hearing for certain truths by uttering them at the top of his voice.” While Brunner offered what seemed to Mackintosh to be a “one-sided picture”, it was painted with such “emphatic colours” that it could not but “catch the eye”. It was only a matter of time, he suggested, before this picture was expanded and solidified.

By the time this review was published in December 1924, Brunner’s life had taken a new turn, allowing him the opportunity to do what Mackintosh rightly discerned to be necessary. On 7 February 1924, Brunner was formally invited to accept the chair of systematic and practical theology at the University of Zurich.¹¹⁵ Brunner and his family initially moved into temporary accommodation in Zurich, before finally settling into 12 Klusdörfli, close to Waldrand am Zürichberg.¹¹⁶ Brunner now had time for writing, and a scholarly community within which to develop and test his ideas – both essential requirements, if he was to develop a positive statement of his own views, rather than critiquing those of others. It is at this point that his rise to international theological eminence may be said to have begun – and at which our examination of his theology becomes considerably more engaging.

¹¹³ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 191–2.

¹¹⁴ H. R. Mackintosh, “The Swiss Group.” *Expository Times* 36, no. 2 (1924): 73–5.

¹¹⁵ The possibility of this move had been under discussion for some months. See Brunner’s letter to Barth, dated 23 January 1924: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 87–93; and Barth’s reply, dated 26 January 1924: *Karl Barth–Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel*, 94–6.

¹¹⁶ Jehle, *Emil Brunner*, 203.

