

AN OUTLINE OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD

- (1) God is unknown and unknowable except as He makes Himself known.
- (2) God is totally separate from the world. He is infinitely above creation. God is not the world and the world is not God. Neither can ever become the other.
- (3) God is spirit. God is not man raised to the Nth power. He is not of the human order. Man to be sure must use human terms and thought patterns to think and speak of God, for being man he has no others. But this is as far as anthropomorphism goes. The nature of God is Spiritual.
- (4) God is unity. There is one God, not many gods. Monotheism is the only view open to the Christian.
- (5) God is personal. That is, He is aware of Himself and can distinguish Himself from other beings and can make free decisions. He is not law or idea or force or ideal. God is a personal being even as man is a personal being.
- (6) God is moral. His primary characteristics are absolute righteousness (He is eternally opposed to sin) and absolute love (He is always motivated by a selfless concern for others).
- (7) God is purposive. He has rational ends in all that He does. There is a purpose behind the world and man is the chief object in that purpose. For God's ultimate aim is building in the arena of the universe, a race of men who truly reflect Him in moral Character.
- (8) God is sovereign. On the grounds that He is Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer and Judge of all things (These are the chief works of God) every being must recognize Him as absolute Lord. Man is wholly responsible to God.
- (9) God is Father. This is the way Jesus most frequently thought of Him. The word Father in its richest sense fully describes God. All that has been said of Him above, pours meaning into this term.

Note:

There are certain attributes usually discussed in a consideration of God as: all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing, eternal, infinite, unchanging. No statement has been made in this outline concerning them for we feel that it would not further the purpose at hand. For the same reason the idea of the Trinity has not been discussed.

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1942-1945

AN OUTLINE OF THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF CHRIST

Christ was God-Man. Jesus had two natures-the human and the divine. He was perfect man and perfect God. He was all that man is, save sinfull and all that God is, save nothing. He called Himself both Son of God and Son of Man. Jesus was God in the flesh.

Christ is Revealer. Only in Christ has man a complete revelation of God. If man would see God as He is, he must look at Christ. But Christ also is a revelation of man. It is only by looking at Christ that man can see himself as he ought to be. By seeing that, he also sees himself as he is actually.

Christ is Redeemer. Through Christ God reconciled the world unto Himself. Mankind is redeemed through the Son. In no other name is there salvation. By Christ's life and more particularly by His death and resurrection God was enabled somehow to bring man into fellowship with Himself and thence to work out His purpose in him.

Christ is Exemplar. He is farmore, we must never forget, but Christ is man's example. Man is to imitate His filial and fraternal love. As the Master lived so, the subjects must try to live.

Christ is Friend. He lives today and forever to be a friend of all who trust Him. Christ is ever present, with those who desire His presence, to guide, encourage, empower, forgive, and comfort.

Christ is Victor. Before His birth Christ was; after His death Christ is. Through Him the world was created; through Him the world was redeemed; to Him has all judgement been given. In Christ all things consist and have meaning. At the cross He defeated all forces which oppose God. Potentially He has brought in the Kingdom. Eventually He shall take His rightful place as Lord of Lords. Every knee shall bow. He is the victor over all. And every one who dwells in Him will share in His victory.

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"Would'st shape a noble life? Then cast
No backward glances toward the past,
And though somewhat be lost and gone,
Yet do thou act as one new-born;
What each day needs, that shalt thou ask,
Each day will set its proper task."

Goethe

AN OUTLINE OF THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MAN

- (1) **MAN IS MAN.** There are roughly three levels of existence: human, subhuman, and divine. These levels must be kept distinctly separate. Man shares certain qualities with the animal, but there is an infinite PLUS. He also shares some features with God, but there is an infinite MINUS. Man is eternally on the human level. This does not, dispense with an evolutionary process.
- (2) **Man is IMMORTAL.** The human being is undying. There will be changes, as physical death, but a man will never cease to be. Immortality is a part of the very nature of man.
- (3) **MAN IS PERSONAL.** He knows that he is; he can distinguish himself from other beings; and he is capable of self decisions. Man is a personal being even as his creator is a personal being.
- (4) **MAN IS MORAL.** There is in man an inner voice saying "you ought". This faculty we call conscience. It makes clear that there is a right and that there is a wrong. Hence man is a moral being. He has capacity for character.
- (5) **MAN IS FREE.** He has the power to decide whether and how he shall act within certain limitations. Man can even say No to God. This freedom made sin a possibility and an actuality. It is opposed to all fatalistic and deterministic philosophies concerning man.
- (6) **MAN IS SOCIAL.** There is a capacity and a craving in man for fellowship with God and for fellowship with man. He is not only an individual; he is bound to the race. Man is a social creature. Likely he could not even exist by himself.
- (7) **MAN IS THE IMAGE OF GOD.** He shares certain features with God, as those listed above, which differentiate him from all other creatures. Moreover, at his creation Man possessed an original goodness which reflected the character of God. It was, however, untried and untested by personal decision and is more properly termed innocence. These two considerations lead to the statement: Man was created in the Image of God.
- (8) **MAN IS SINFUL.** The Image of God in man can never be wholly destroyed. Nonetheless it has been defaced. Man has refused God as God. The creature is out of fellowship with the Creator. An infinite breach lies between them. This separation from God is termed a state of sin. Out of this sinful state proceed sinful deeds---acts contrary to God's law. Man is a sinner in both state and deed.
- (9) **MAN IS GUILTY.** Refusing God is refusing what is best for man. Hence, sin is its own punishment. God being God, must permit the fruits of sin, suffering, death and hell, to punish the sinner. Man has sinned. He is deserving of punishment and he is ever aware of it. This is guilt. Man is a guilty creature.
- (10) **MAN IS IMPOTENT.** Sin, separation from God, does something to the moral nature of man. There is a radical defect, a weakness of will. He is impotent to rectify his sinful condition alone. If the breach between God and man is to be bridged, man must look beyond himself for the means.
- (11) **MAN HAS A DESTINY.** God has a purpose for the world. That purpose primarily concerns man. He is destined to be like God in character. Holy as he is Holy. Self-less as He is self-less. The Image of God in the creature is to be perfect because the creature shall have perfect fellowship with the Creator. Man, however, is always free to refuse his destiny.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE "NEW LIFE"

1. Man has a new standing before God. Past failures are wholly forgiven when fellowship with God is restored. In God's sight man is now righteous. God reckons him such in the present in the view of what he shall be in the future when salvation is complete.
2. Man has a new nature. He is regenerated - recreated by his fellowship with God. He is transformed into a "higher" being. He has new desires, new ideals, new understandings. His personality is intricated about one central aim and his will is re-energized. Truly the man in Christ is a "new creature".
3. Man has a new power. The reconciled man comes into possession of a new dynamic through which he is far more able to do and be what God wants him to do or be. God not only reckons man righteousness, He also gives him a power where by he can gradually become actually righteous. (Man is becoming what he is.) The branch receives vitality from the vine and bears fruit. (Goodworks do not save a man but a saved man can and will do good works.
4. Man has a new rule of Life. It is the rule of love. God has given one commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." All other commands are contained in this first one, that is, you can't love God without loving man. Christ said that there is a second command like unto the first: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." To love God and man is to do God's will. It includes all ethical demands, made upon the creature. The new man labors in everyway possible that this will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Every personal sin which conflicts with it he must be opp sed to. (hate, anger, covetenous, etc.) and so with every social evil (war, slums, labor conditions etc.)
5. Man has a new hope. The hope of transformed man is that God's purpose shall ultimately be realized, that His Kingdom shall actually be set up, that His will shall truly rule all, that the reconciled individual shall finally be all that God desires. This hope shall never disappoint us says Paul.
6. Man has a new Peace & Joy. This new life is the life man was created for. It intrigates the personality and releases ones best. It quenches all fear concerning the past present & future. It does away with all antagonism between man and his God. The creature & creator dwell together as Father and son. This could bring nothing else but inner peace and "joy unspeakable & full of glory".
7. The new life is a way of trust & opedience. Only as man continues to trust God and obey His will can the Christian life continue. If man fails to trust or disobeys without repenting and beginning anew his fellowship with God is severed again and the new life fades, "Trust & Obey for there is no other way".

This is one in a series of eight outlines on "THE CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF LIFE " prepared by Chaplin Joseph W. Mathews - 27th Div. US Army They were used in study classes while in Hawaii in 1943.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SALVATION

SALVATION IS THE BRIDGING OF THE GAP -- The healing of the breach between man and God. It is man being brought into right relation with the Divine, making possible the realization of God's purpose for him. Salvation is the process where-by man as he actually is, is being made what God wants him to be.

SALVATION IS DELIVERANCE -- Man is delivered FROM a state of separation From God and TO a state of fellowship with God. He is delivered from self-love and pride to love for God. (If separation is thought of as sin or death then fellowship with God is righteousness of life). And in direct proportion as this is true, man is delivered from sinful acts to righteousness acts; from the fruits of sin to the fruits of righteousness; from the end of sin (hell) to the end of true righteousness (heaven).

SALVATION AND FORGIVENESS -- Salvation brings forgiveness for the past. When man is reconciled to God all moral failures and sins are blotted out by God's forgiveness. And man, henceforth, is considered righteous. He stands before God just as if he had never sinned. (This is justification).

SALVATION AND NEW LIFE. Salvation brings power for the present. When man is brought into fellowship with God he finds a new dynamic. He becomes a new creation. And a "New-Life" is made possible. He has power beyond himself which enables him to daily grow more and more like God in character.

SALVATION AND GODS PURPOSE -- Salvation brings hope for the future. For, it prepares the way for the realization of God's great designs. It has significance for this present world. But salvation, fully realized, is for the world to come, when sin and all its effects shall be cast out; when God and goodness rule supremely; when dwelling with God is a race of holy men truly reflecting Him in character; and when God's total will shall have come to pass. This is the Christian hope.

SALVATION IS NOT BY HUMAN EFFORT. -- Man cannot span the gulf and restore relationship with God. Salvation, hence is not by moralism (doing good deeds). It is not by legalism (keeping a set of rules). It is not by ceremonialism (performing certain rites). It is not by mysticism (thinking away the breach). These are human efforts and they are not enough. Man cannot save himself.

SALVATION IS BY DIVINE EFFORT -- Man cannot come to God, so, God comes to man in Christ. God invaded the human race to do something for man that man could not do for himself. Christ reconciled man to God. (Christ is the bridge). He enabled God to forgive man, to empower him; and to ultimately work out His purpose in him. Salvation then is a gift to man from God--man can do nothing to earn it.

SALVATION IS APPROPRIATED BY FAITH -- Salvation is from God alone: Man can do nothing to earn it, but he must receive it. Salvation, that is effective, hence, is divine grace plus human faith. "We are saved by grace through faith." Christ's work saves no man unless that work is appropriated by a living trust in God.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF "THINGS TO COME"

God's Purposes--All that God has planned from the beginning will be realized in the last day. In that day the Creator shall "take His great power" and be truly God; every knee shall bow; right shall force wrong from the throne; and the Kingdom will come in all fulness.

Life Eternal--Man shall never cease to be. There will be changes but the human personality exists forever. Death is but a transition from one stage of existence to another.

Resurrection of the Body--The New Testament speaks of a Resurrection of our body. The "new body" will not be the same as the one we now possess. It will be vastly different; yet it will be related to our present body. There will be ties of similarity. The new "house" of the personality is spoken of as the temporal body transformed and glorified.

Final Judgement--Certainly, God judges man in the here-and-now but there is a final judgement. Every creature must give an account before the Sovereign Creator. Reward and punishment will be meted out. The Almighty shall justify His every act.

Heaven--For those who survive the final judgement there is prepared a "reward". Heaven is eternal fellowship with God. There man shall be forever his Father and absolutely like Him in character. That's the Heaven of it.

Hell--The very opposite to Heaven is Hell. Hell is eternal separation from God. Man who was made for God is shut off from Him forever. This has been looked upon as the greatest of miseries and consequently the most horrible pictures have been used to describe it.

End of outline by Chaplin Joseph W. Mathews

The mysteries of life will never be fully explained or understood; but we can make honest and insistent attempts to know God, "whom to know aright means life eternal." One of our first tasks as Christians is to seek to know the mind of Christ and to let nothing bar our minds from the absolute truth so far as we can discover it. And Christ, will bring to our open minds splendid vistas of life and truth.

Ralph M. Pierce

AN OUTLINE OF THE CONCEPTS OF REVELATION

1. God is unknown and unknowable except as He makes Himself known. Man through his own power (reason, intuition and experience) can know that God is, but he cannot know what God is.
2. It is imperative, hence that God have a Word for man (something to say about Himself) and that He utter that Word to man. We term this Word of God and the utterance of it Revelation.
3. The Word of God, about God spoken to man and for man is the Eternal Christ. He is God speaking to Man.
4. This Word of God is uttered and is to be heard in conscience, nature, history and religious movements, but only imperfectly and incompletely. These forms are not adequate to convey God's voice completely and man is not able to hear it perfectly in them.
5. The Word of God was perfectly and completely and finally uttered in the Historical Christ - - all that He was, all that He said, all that He did (person, words and works).
6. The Historical Christ, the Eternal Word made manifest, is the criterion of all "Words" of God. The voice of God heard in conscience, nature, history and religion is to be judged and evaluated in the light of The Word.
7. The Word of God can only be heard and apprehended by faith. In a manner of speaking, faith completes the Word of God. God utters it in Christ; man hears it by obedient faith in Christ. God's Word, hence, only becomes God's Word to an individual when it is heard by faith.
8. The primary source of the Word of God for Christian men is twofold: fellowship with the living Christ thru prayer and the Scriptures. The Bible is the written Word of God because and in so much as, it contains Christ - anticipated in the Old Testament and recollected in the New.
9. God's Word in Christ is primarily a word of reconciliation. Reconciliation suggests a healing of a breach between God and man. In this word of reconciliation we arrive at our basic Christian beliefs about God, Man, Sin, Salvation, the New Life, the Order of God and Things to Come.

both are not only eligible to but also in fact do engage in religious experience. Thus with such a distinction made, Dewey's thesis has an appeal to men regardless of their belief in the supernatural. Agnostics, atheist, and believers of all creeds and doctrines are free to join hands in accepting the religious.

Second, by defining religious as an attitude and by showing that this attitude can and does enter into the actualizing of ideals into experience, Dewey makes an appeal to all men who seek to bring ideals into existence to accept the religious. This includes the aforementioned composer, the artist, the carpenter, the scientist, and the representative; in short, it includes all men, since all men in some way or another seek to actualize ideals in experience.

Third, by redefining "God" as the unified ideals in relation to the actual, Dewey has made an appeal for all those who see ideals to cooperate and work together since each is striving for some ideal, the redefined "God." This attempts to overcome the feeling of loneliness which Dewey feels is inherent in the strict naturalistic world. Thus men are given a sense of oneness in that all are in their own way seeking the unified ideal.

Fourth, by urging religion to accept the redefined "God" and to thus destroy the dualism which it has created in human endeavors, Dewey attempts to break down the last barrier which keeps men separated in their attempt to actualize ideals in experience. If this were followed, all men together would be free to employ the attitude which is religious in all their loftier human endeavors. Although the ideals which form the content of "God" would change, the unity would be permanent and all men could join together in a common faith in the ideals of man, a faith which would not be confined to sect, class, or race.

etc. "The simple decision to work entails the idea that the things with which we work, in their origin and activity, are subject to laws which our thinking can master."* Our intercourse with others, when we demonstrate anything to them, summon them to action, etc., presupposes this idea of process as subject to law. We recognize as real only that in the world which can be integrated into such a context of law, and regard as fantasies assertions which do not permit themselves to be controlled by this idea.**

The idea of the continuity of nature, or of nature as uniformly subject to law, is not, indeed, an idea new to modern science, but is, since it belongs to existence as such, a quite primitive idea which is only worked out and radically thought through in science. This is clear from the fact that on the primitive level the idea of causality is applied to the idea of Wunder. The Wunder is attributed to a cause other than that of the ordinary event over which man has control and which he manipulates to his own purposes. The Wunder is grounded in a cause which he -- at least at first -- does not know. The idea of two competing causes is actually not conceivable nor is it indeed conceived. Rather, when the divine activity is thought of as occurring within a higher causality, God is simply thought of as a man who knows and can do more than other men: yet, even if others (e. g., magicians) rate as inferior, yet they too have power.

Further, the historical development of the Wunder-concept was such that events which first appeared as supernatural increasingly came to be understood as natural. The idea of events as subject to law, which was always implicitly present in the notion of the daily regularity of recurrence, becomes radically developed. Along with this, the idea of miracle as an event contra naturam was radically thought through. But at the same time the impossibility of conceiving as real an event described as contra naturam became ever clearer.

Thus the very idea of miracle has become ineffectual and must be abandoned. Yet this must take place because as such it is not an idea which has to do with faith; rather, it is purely a formal idea. As is well known, miracles may be helpful or harmful; they may be desired or feared. As there is black magic and white magic, so miracles (Wunder) may be performed by Satan or by God, by magicians or by prophets. The "higher" causality may be divine or demonic, and so far as the specific miracle is concerned, one cannot tell whether it is to be attributed to God or to the devil. One must already know God in order to be certain; one must have a criterion in order to know whether a miracle (Wunder) stems from God or not.

* W. Herrmann, Offenbarung und Wunder, 1908, p. 36f.

**Reluctantly, defenders of miracle offer proof when they want to show that a Wunder has happened. For they can do this only if they prove the Wunder to be necessary (even if a necessary "x") in a particular context. They connect the Wunder directly with secular events when they assert that this or that event is not intelligible apart from a Wunder, or that accurate observation of the event in question brings one directly to an "x" designated as Wunder. That is, they subordinate the Wunder to the idea of nature as subject to law and thereby really cancel out the idea of Wunder.

But this is to admit that if one understands by Wunder a miracle, he has already given up the idea of the act of God which belongs to the Wunder.

Thus the Christian faith appears not to be interested in miracle; rather it would seem to have reason to reject the very idea. In reply it is not to be urged that in the Bible events are narrated which obviously must be designated as miracles. For if such be the case, criticism must be made to show that although, in accord with the presuppositions of their ways of thinking, the Biblical writers did not discern the full import of the idea of miracle, nevertheless the authority of Scripture is not surrendered with the surrender of the miracle-idea. What this means can only be understood if the idea of Wunder as an act of God is made clear.

II. The Destruction of the vacuous Wunder-idea.

Now, another difficulty presents itself. Without doubt faith is interested in Wunder so far as Wunder means an act of God in contrast to a natural event, and the question arises whether this concept of Wunder does not imply that of miracle, and whether, if the concept of miracle is surrendered, the concept of Wunder as an act of God is not surrendered with it. The motive for holding fast to miracle is just to protect this. The concept of miracle serves only one function: it speaks of an event which is no natural event, and thereby it appears to fulfill the requirement of the Wunder-concept. Can the Wunder-concept still be maintained if the miracle-concept is surrendered?

With the abandonment of the miracle-concept very frequently the concept of Wunder as an act of God in contrast to a natural event is also abandoned, and by appeal to the doctrine of creation it is asserted that every natural event is a Wunder. "Wunder" then becomes "the religious term for occurrence" (Schleiermacher). "This religious concept of Wunder has nothing to do with contradiction of natural laws. These natural laws are for God the forms and means in which his activity manifests itself."* This idea quite resembles the Catholic, according to which God as prima causa can use the causae secundae at will. But this idea is no longer possible for anyone who has radically thought through the idea of nature and natural law. If the essential characteristic of the Wunder-idea is this, that it signifies an act of God as over against a natural event, and if for us a natural event is conceivable only as subject to law, then the idea of Wunder stands in absolute contradiction to the idea of nature, and I repudiate the very idea of nature if I speak of Wunder.

The doctrine of creation, then, does not help here at all; for it, too, plainly repudiates the idea that a nature is subject to law. According to this latter point of view nature is understood as infinite in space and time; the former knows it as having beginning and end. If, then, one wishes to apply the idea of Creation and Wunder to this infinite system of occurrence which we call nature, in reality one repudiates it. If every event is wonderful, then in reality none is, and God and Nature are identified. Then God, Creation and Wunder are only pious names for experiences which meet me quite otherwise in real life, namely, as the scientifically verifiable infinite context of all occurrence, as nature and natural

* Herm. Schuster, Lebenskunde², 1927, p. 8.

event.

Such a pantheistic solution of the Wunder-idea fails to recognize two things: (1) The doctrine of creation and of divine sovereignty is not a scientific axiom in the light of which every natural event may be regarded. It is not a rational universally valid proposition which can be known or even believed and then possessed. As a faith-concept it is to be distinguished from a scientific concept not in the sense that one approaches it in some strange non-rational way, that is, with reference to origin (so far as origin is understood as cause and thus as a fact of the past), but in the sense that it cannot be appropriated and used as a scientific concept. It can only be acquired ever and anew; it can never be separated from its origin in faith but it always has this origin present in itself; it is always true only as it springs forth. This means that in dealing with it I cannot leave my own existence out of account and understand or "explain" something outside of myself as creation or as an act of God, but by it I say something in the first instance about myself. But not about myself as far as I regard myself as a being who has entered the world from outside, but as far as I speak about my concrete existence here and now. I can speak of God's creative deed only if I now know that I am a creature of God, and that means, for example, that since God's creation is indeed good, I know myself as good, as without sin. But this clearly, I cannot know a priori, nor am I at all accustomed to act as if I did. Rather, I consistently behave as if I myself were creator. In the commonplaces of my work, in the economics of my time, etc., I see the world as standing at my disposal. The world and my activity in it is a priori godless. Perhaps I can say that I ought to see the whole world as the creation of God, that every event or act ought to be a Wunder. But actually I do not find myself in a situation which makes it possible for me to confirm this.

Thus it becomes clear (2) that in the view analysed above the idea of the world is incorrectly understood. For, if Wunder means an act of God in contrast to natural event including my own activity, then it implies a particular understanding of the world. By world it does not mean primarily nature as a system of events wholly subject to law, but the actuality in which I live, my world. The idea of God and his activity is primarily orientated to my life, to my existence, to the knowledge that this existence is godless and is one in which I do not find God nor can I see him. It says that I can only see God if He shows himself to me by his acts and that I do not have the right to speak of him as I please or to explain his activity as I choose.

III. Wunder as an act of God.

(a) Its hiddenness

Next, then, it is clear that faith is directed towards Wunder as an act of God in distinction from a natural event, that faith can only be grounded in Wunder, indeed, that faith in God and in Wunder mean exactly the same thing.

Just as thereby the possibility of a pantheistic concept of miracle is excluded, so of course is a dogmatic concept, including such considerations as: it follows from belief in God's sovereignty that He can perform Wunders. For belief in God's sovereignty is possible to me only as I have faith in Wunder. Therefore I cannot employ this faith apologetically to

validate faith in Wunder. The idea of God's sovereignty I may well entertain, that is, I can conceive of God as Almighty (so can the godless); but I do not thereby have God, the Almighty, whom I never and nowhere have except in Wunder.

What is here chiefly gained for the Wunder-concept is that Wunder in no sense means an event which in any way whatsoever can be verified in the world. Otherwise I would have separated it from God and understood it as world; for God cannot be verified. The Wunder is hidden in so far as it is Wunder, hidden for him who does not see God in it. It is then clear: (1) that the Wunder of which faith speaks is in fact not a miracle; for this is a verifiable event; (2) that Wunder does not confirm faith in the sense that as verifiable event it permits the conclusion that the invisible God exists. For then God's hiddenness would be thought of in terms of the invisibility of a natural force (such as electricity); that is, God would be thought of as world. Faith can only be referred to that in which it has faith, not to something else by means of which it believes.

If, however, the question whether I see a Wunder is the same as the question whether I believe -- which is the question whether I am willing to believe or to see a Wunder -- that is, if it is a question of immediate decision -- then it is also clear that to the extent that it becomes visible as a world-event, to the same extent the Wunder becomes hidden as Wunder. That is, the affirmation that an event is a Wunder stands in explicit contradiction to the fact of its confirmation as a world-event.* Since faith, precisely as faith, stands in contrast to sight, in explicit contradiction to all that I see, Wunder-faith must also mean contradiction to all that I see in the world. Since faith has this character for the reason that I am by nature godless, clearly the impossibility of my seeing world-events as Wunder must have its basis in my godlessness. Since finally my impotence to see world-events as Wunder has expressed itself in the form of the idea of nature as a law-abiding system, this idea must clearly be appraised as godless. This cannot mean, however, that I simply surrender it; for this I cannot do. Rather, it only becomes clearer to me that godlessness is not just something that one can strip off by a vigorous decision, but that godlessness is one manner of my being, that my being is determined by sin.

I well understand, then, what Wunder means: God's act. I understand also that in world-events God's Wunders should be visible to me. I know, however, that I do not see them; for the world appears to me as nature and I cannot free myself from this predicament by the decision that it should be otherwise. And I shall take care not to fall into a state of mind which might suggest that I can.

* Luther on Rom. 8:26: Ficker p. 204, 11ff.: Necessesse est enim opus Dei abscondi et non intelligi, tunc quando fit. Non autem absconditur aliter quam sub contraria specie nostri conceptus seu cogitationis (For it is necessary that the work of God be hidden and not comprehended, at the time it happens, Moreover, it is not hidden otherwise than beneath an appearance contrary to our thought or reflection).

1. Wunder is 7th
2. - Revelation

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To speak of God without speak-
ing of myself is not to speak
of God.

(b) The Reality of the Wunder.

God's hiddenness does not mean his invisibility in general; it does not mean primarily that he is inaccessible to the senses or to experiment, but that he is hidden from me. This language does not have to do with deity, of which I may speak without speaking of myself. This is why speaking of Wunder does not mean speaking of Wunders in general and discussing their possibility. To speak of Wunder means to speak of my own existential situation, that is, of the fact that in my life God has become visible. And this is not to speak of a general visibility of God, but of his revelation. If I see that God's hiddenness means: He is hidden from me, then I also see that his hiddenness means my godlessness, my being a sinner. For He ought not to be hidden from me.

There is, then, only one Wunder: that of revelation. This, however, means revelation of the grace of God for the godless, -- forgiveness. But it must be strictly understood as event, not as an idea of forgiveness, nor as a conception of the grace of God as properly belonging to the essential nature of God, but as God's act. But this interpretation must be yet more clearly developed in order to make it clear that, first, forgiveness is a Wunder in contrast to a secular event, and second, on what the possibility of confusing Wunder and miracle is based.

Wunder is
Revelation

Why is the question about the "sign" characteristic of the Jews (I Cor. 1:22)? Because in their attitude of mind the essential nature of their godlessness stands forth so clearly: the striving after their "own righteousness." They understand themselves out of what they do, and the other person out of what he does. As they render an account of themselves before God by their performance, so must God render an account of himself before them by his performance.

in terms

But on the whole this is at bottom the sin of the world: to understand itself and God out of effort and achievement. Therefore, for the world -- to the extent that it inquires after God -- miracle is an object of ardent desire; the Wunder, however, which does not have the character of a self-explanatory event, is an offense. We saw that the primitive concept of miracle corresponds to the understanding of our world as the work-a-day world in which we presuppose the regularity and law-abiding character of occurrence. Miracle is a violation of the law of such a world, but it is nevertheless conceived wholly in the sense of this world because it signifies an act of God proving himself within it. The Wunder-idea, however, radically rejects the character of the world as a manipulable work-a-day world. For a Wunder is precisely not an act of God proving himself; rather, every man is free to understand the event which claims to be a Wunder as an incident within the world and subject to its laws. But Wunder directs the crucial question to man as to how far he correctly understands the world when he understands it as a manipulable work-a-day world subject to his disposal; how far he understands himself correctly when he understands himself in terms of his achievements and will obtain his security by them. The Wunder-idea radically rejects the character of the world as a manipulable work-a-day world because it rejects man's understanding of himself as capable of obtaining security by his work.

Key

A priori, there are two possible ways of understanding our activity; -- namely, in terms of the creation of something, that is, in terms of our having done something; or in terms of doing. Herewith also are given two

possibilities for understanding ourselves in terms of what has been done or in terms of the doing itself.

Our activity, that is, takes place either as the fulfilment of the demand that is laid upon us, under which our Now stands. Then it is nothing but obedience. Or it takes place in order that something be effected or obtained in which the meaning of the act is exhausted. If it takes place in obedience and as obedience, then indeed also something is effected through our action. Yet not in the achievement does the meaning of the action lie but in the obedient performance of the deed -- just as the meaning of giving does not lie in the gift but in the act of giving.

If this is taken seriously it means that, given the significance of the act, man cannot stand on what he has done or be contained in his achievement and understand himself in terms of it. Rather man can only say that as "slave" he has done what he was obligated to do (Lk. 17:10). He must not look backwards to see what he has done but forwards to what he is further obligated to do; yet, he must not anticipate the future to the extent that, in haste and anxiety, he thinks he must get this or that behind him; rather he will act simply in obedience.

If our activity is an activity under God's demand it is never completed and it is then not possible for us to come to a halt or to set ourselves up as persons who in some sense have arrived. Rather we must remain in the restlessness to which God's demand consigns us. However, this unrest is the unrest of life. For there is no more need to constrict ourselves by contemplating a forward look than a backward look, that is by projecting a program of everything which must yet be done. For then we should be understanding ourselves again in terms of what is done -- of course, as not yet finished -- but, here, this means: we see ourselves from the point of view of having arrived, we understand ourselves in terms of what is done. The demand of God, however, does not consign us to the restlessness of anxiety and worry as to how that which lies before us is to be accomplished, but to the restlessness of life. For it tears us away from ourselves as we actually are, i. e., it tears us away from our past and points us towards the future.

But since, also, our doing always accomplishes something, it harbors in itself the temptation that we shall understand ourselves in terms of what we have done and cling fast to it. In fact, we always succumb to this temptation and thereby succumb to the past, for what is done is always past. Also our future doing -- so far as we commonly understand ourselves in terms of what we have done -- even if it is future, is always already a past, marked with the seal of the past and of death. It stands there before us as work, as a completed achieved situation.* That we are all held fast in such an understanding of ourselves becomes clear to us from the fact that we all fear death, for such fear issues from the desire to maintain ourselves just as we are and from our secret awareness that we cannot.

* Luther on Rom. 8:26 p. 205, 5f. Ficker: semper ita fit, ut opus nostrum intelligamus, antequam fiat, Dei autem opus non intelligimus donec factum fuerit (It always happens thus that we know our work before it is done, but we do not know God's work until it is done).

We are all held captive in such an understanding of ourselves nor can we free ourselves from this subjection to the past or to death, by our own efforts. For such hard-earned freedom would again be thought of as our work, which we would wrest as a last and highest accomplishment. Such a doing would already be past before it was done. We should be free only if we could forget our work, if we acted purely out of obedience. And the question is how we can come to such obedience, to such a pure hearing of God's demand in the Now. The question is whether we can so hear. Obviously we cannot simply decide of ourselves that we will hear, nor can we wait to see whether we shall hear, for we are always already involved in a doing by which we are determined to achieve something. Every Now into which we come is always already corrupted by our understanding of ourselves which we bring to it; our past out of which we have come clings to us.

There is only one possibility of becoming free from the past for a pure hearing of the demand which in the Now lays claim upon us: that freedom is bestowed upon us through forgiveness. For it is not possible for us as beings in time to obtain release from the past simply by erasing or ignoring it or by receiving some sort of a now nature in which we would not be continuous with ourselves. In our Now we always come out of our past and with our past. For since we are not plants, animals or machines, our Now is at every moment qualified by our past. But the question is whether our past is present in us as sinful or as forgiven. If our sin is forgiven, this means that we have freedom for the future, that we really hear God's demand and can put ourselves at his disposal (Rom. 6:12 ff).

Now moreover it becomes completely clear why forgiveness must be understood as a Wunder, i. e., as an act of God in contrast to a secular event. The world to which it comes by way of contrast is just our manipulable work-a-day world, in which a priori all doing is understood as bringing about what is done, as accomplishment; in which all occurrence, even future, is a priori thought of as past. If God's Wunder is forgiveness, i. e., if God in Wunder abolishes our understanding of ourselves as those who achieve and therefore are always subject to the past, he thereby also abolishes the character of the world as a work-a-day world manipulable by us.

Since in doing, something is always done, the possibility always remains of understanding all doing as something done and all occurrence as something that has occurred. For the eye of unfaith even God's acts are secular events. And since the believer also knows that they may be so regarded, and that he himself always stands within the possibility of seeing all events in this way, he must, if he speaks of God's acts, speak of them as Wunder, which happen contra naturam; he must say that when he speaks of a Wunder, he abolishes the idea of nature as subject to law. However, to apply the ideas of Wunder and Creation to the world understood as nature is nonsense for the world seen as past is precisely not the world seen as Creation. It retains its character as Creation only when we, as those who have been forgiven, stand open to the future, and see the world as meaning for us the field in which we must hear and realize God's demand.

Such an insight into the world is no Weltanschauung, i. e., no theory about the world in general, but is always obtained only in hearing the demand on the ground of forgiveness. Therefore it has continually to establish itself over against the temptation to understand ourselves and the world as past. This means that our ideas about work in which we reckon

with the manipulability, that is, with the law-abiding character of the world, must always be limited by our ideas of faith, and this means further that in our actual life, work- and faith-ideas alternate with one another in such a way that the former are determined by the latter. For his work-ideas man needs the conception of nature. How far he should use it cannot in general be said. He needs it as far as he is involved in concrete work, If he permits it to become lord, then it becomes sin.

Now, finally, the idea of miracle is intelligible, as is its being swallowed up by the idea of Wunder. Either it is a desperate expression for man's secret knowledge of his capitulation to the past: it has become impossible for him to understand the world as creation and to see God's activity in it; if he speaks of God's activity, he can conceive of it only after the analogy of secular activity as a special accomplishment, and thereby still remains completely caught in his old understanding of the world. Or, the idea of miracle is a primitive, obscure expression for the idea that God's activity is to be understood in contrast to all secular occurrence and worldly activity.

Intelligible also is the above-mentioned vacuous pantheistic concept of Wunder. For effectively present in it is the correct motive that faith has the capacity to see the world as creation, that it can speak of ever new Wunders because it sees God's activity in secular events. Yet the misunderstanding which assumes that the believer has, as it were, a bill of exchange which he can cash at will, that he has a Christian world-view in virtue of which he can now interpret all activity and occurrence as Wunder, must be cast aside. For as in any given situation faith must always be won anew in encounter with the idea of effort or achievement, so no Wunder is ever visible except on the basis of a Wunder of forgiveness. This, however, is not a fact of the past: I have forgiveness only as I continually apprehend it anew. Semper credendum; the Christian is always in gratia.

If this, then, is so, the Christian really has the possibility of always seeing new Wunder. A secular event which to the eye of unfaith must appear as a sequence of events subject to law, acquires for him the character of a world in which God acts. And as far as he himself hears God's demand and acts in obedience, even his own action is not a secular act any more but has the character of a Wunder.

All, then, is real only with reference to faith in the one Wunder of forgiveness in Christ. Thus it is false, apart from this faith, to set up a distinction between Christian and pagan ideas of Wunder. Both may be naive and both may be radically conceived; both may cling to miracle, and in both can the idea of the activity of God be clearly set forth. The difference between Christianity and paganism does not lie in different ideas of Wunder, any more than it does in different ideas of God generally, but only in the fact that Christianity speaks of the true God because it can speak of the real Wunder.

IV. The Wunders of the New Testament.

In the New Testament there are narrated Wunders which have the character of miracles, occasionally, indeed, some of the Wunders of Jesus. So far as they are deeds of Jesus (healings, etc.), they are deeds which were events for those who at the time were concerned with them. Even if they were all assuredly historical (or so far as they may perhaps be), nevertheless the fact

is that as deeds of a man of the past they have nothing immediately to do with us. Seen as such, they are not deeds of Christ, so far as we understand by the work of Christ the work of salvation.*

This is why in the discussion, the "Wunders of Jesus," so far as they are events of the past, are wholly abandoned to criticism. It is to be emphasized with ~~the~~ great intensity that the Christian faith has absolutely no interest in proving the possibility or historicity of the Wunders of Jesus as events of the past, and that on the contrary this would only be to confuse the issue.

If Christ becomes for us in the present the Christ who is preached, then the Wunders of Jesus can be relevant only in so far as they belong to the preaching of Christ, that is, as testimonies -- and indeed, in so far as they make clear the entire ambiguity of the Christian preaching. Indeed, they show that a Wunder as an event which can be substantiated is not capable of establishing faith; for they leave everyone free to attribute them to a cause intelligible to him. Nor can anything prevent them from being explained as acts of the devil (Mk. 3:22), or as deeds by which Jesus proves himself (Mk. 8:11f) and on the basis of which people desire to make him king (Jn. 6:14 ff), or as means which one may use for his own personal advantage (Jn. 6:26). Thus they are burdened with the same ambiguity as is the Wunder of Christ himself. For Jesus Christ is for unfaith a determinate fact of the past, historically integrated into a specific situation in the past and historically intelligible. The question is precisely whether we wish to see him in this way as a fact of the past, as a historic figure, as a personality and the like, or as God's Wunder, i. e., as the one who for us is there as the word of forgiveness spoken by God. The temptation always remains to make out of his Da-sein in the present, a Vorhandensein in the past. The scandal of the incarnation is always to be overcome. Whoever wishes to prove the revelation of God in the historical personality of Jesus falls under the ridicule of Kierkegaard, that he is more clever than God Himself who actually sent his Son in the obscurity of the flesh. To apply the idea of revelation to the historically determinate personality is as senseless as to apply the idea of creation or wunder to the world understood as nature.

Nevertheless, however, the Wunders of Jesus are testimonies in that they point to the fact that Christian faith in God is neither pantheism nor monism; that no one is in a position to speak arbitrarily of God's acts but only when he perceives God's action in specific concrete instances. Christian faith in God is no Weltanschauung; it is always won in a particular moment, and it says, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mk. 9:24). It is, then, the faith which does not consist in a psychological attitude of man but is ever and always faith in the God

* Luther on Gal. 4f. W. A. XL, I, p. 568, 9 ff: That Christ also gave commandments, this is not his proper office, but accidental; likewise as to his benefits: teaching, comforting and doing good deeds. These are not the "proper works of Christ." "For the prophets also taught, and performed miracles. But Christ is God and man, who, fighting with the law of Moses and its tyranny, suffered and conquered them both, and after being raised from the dead condemned and destroyed our enemy." His other benefits are "opera vulgaria."

who, unlike things, is not at man's disposal to think of as he likes, but who is seen only when he will show himself. This is why doubt about God which asks for a criterion by means of which man can prove God is to be rejected, and man must be brought into that doubt in which he doubts himself, i. e., in which he doubts that he really can dispose of himself and ~~the~~ world; he must doubt.

...the world is not a ...
...the world is not a ...
...the world is not a ...
...the world is not a ...
...the world is not a ...

Main text to make
his world - create
his priority.

I Duautherale

II. Autheuric < subviant kind
Division

III. Kora

IV. Freedom