

C. Special Revelation

1. Historical statements of the doctrine

a. The view of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*

Chapter I

I. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

b. The view of Emil Brunner, as expounded in his *Revelation and Reason*, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946), pp. 23-31.

Brunner sets forth six elements in the Biblical idea of revelation:

1. Revelation always means that something hidden is made known, that a mystery is unveiled. But the Biblical revelation is the absolute manifestation of something that has been absolutely concealed. Hence it is a way of acquiring knowledge that is absolutely and essentially -- and not only relatively -- opposite to the usual human method acquiring knowledge, by means of observation, research, and thought. Revelation means a supernatural kind of knowledge -- given in a marvelous way -- of something that man, of himself, could never know. Thus revelation issues from a region which, as such, is not accessible to man....

2. Revelation everywhere includes within itself a negative presupposition; without it man is always in some way or other in a kind of darkness or bondage. In the Bible this darkness or bondage is always absolute, and it is always personal in character. This means that apart from revelation man does not merely feel that he lacks some knowledge which it would be useful or pleasant for him to possess. It is an absolute, a desperately serious darkness. Hence it does not affect the outside of his life, but himself, in the very core of his being. He himself is dark and fettered; he "walks in darkness"; he is "lost". This bondage is a negative personal quality, a negative relation to God; it is sin. The Biblical revelation is always and everywhere related to sin. Through the idea of sin man is characterized as not only, so to say, empty of God, but as one who is separated from God, as one who has closed the door between himself and God....