

CALIFORNIA BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Dear Gordon:

I have not read it but many have considered Roger Mehl's La Condition due Philosophe Chrétien the finest summary of the situation made in recent years. It has been out of print and my copy has just arrived (Delachaux et Nestle, 4 rue de hopital, Neuchatel, Switzerland).

My numbers correspond to numbers written on your manuscript:

(1) Have you checked Berkouwer, General REvelation on Barth's view of natural revelation? He treats it in there in some detail.

(2) My II/1 is at home so I cannot check your reference. I just point out two things about Barth in this connection:

i--He believe/s there is only one covenant (i.e., no covenant of works) so any covenant to him would then also have to speak of redemption.

ii--Much of what Barth says about natural revelation, etc., is that in would grant somebody a point of criticism against special revelation. Thus special revelation usually loses its priority when a natural revelation is conceded. I think you have stated that it does not have this priority and with this I agree; but Barth thinks that it always lets in the camel's nose.

(3) Somewhere in one volume Barth goes on and on and one about conscience. I can run it down if you are interested. By the way a complete reversal in the concept of conscience is defended very astutely with copious references to classical literature in Pierce, Conscience in the N.T. (about \$1.50, paper bound from Regnery).

(4). I get the impression from your citation of Barth that when a hearer hears Isaiah (etc.) he is not to hear Isaiah's words as if he were only hearing Isaiah, but also God's words--but it is always God's words through Isaiah's words. I do not think he would mean to say that we hear what God says through Isaiah independently from Isaiah.

(5) If his argument means to say this then Barth is inconsistent, for in numerous places he expresses himself that Christian theology is completely shut up to the witness of Scripture. This is vividly clear in his discussion of angels (III/3) where he positively excludes all philosophical, metaphysical, or ontological speculation about angels.

(6) This is certainly Barth's big fat a priori.

(7) Here again I suggest you read Berkouwer's exposition of Barth's "side line" doctrine or "echo" doctrine of natural revelation.

(8) This "beck and call" reveals Barth's fear that natural revelation is going to judge special revelation. He is thus antipathetic to liberalism and modernism and Catholicism because each with its form of natural theology (the former some form of idealism, the latter, Aquinas) judges and pushes the Scriptural revelation around.

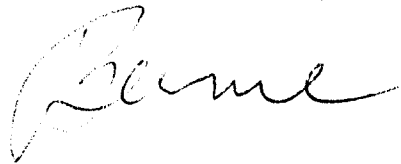
Perhaps you should track down the references where he attacks the older dogmatists' statements about general and special revelation. He of course rejects this interpretation. His work on Romans (the recent shorter commentary) of course reduces all the general revelation of Romans 1-3 to special revelation.

The functional equivalent of "natural revelation" is the Christological character of human nature with which we are all born. Thus we do not fall away from Adam but from Christ. We fall from ~~XXX~~ Christ into Adam. What 'the heathen have then is a Christological nature from which they fall; not a natural revelation from which they deviate. This is certainly one of the great turning points in Barth's theology and distinguishes him from the classical Reformed structure.

(9) Good at this point are Berkouwer's comments "the nature Psalms."

Once again, if you plan to spend a year with Barth you will be greatly 'enriched with Boullard's Karl Barth (3 volumes in French; order from Blackwells).

Christian regards,



Language



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Dear Dr. Clark:

I had planned to give your article much attention when I arrived back here at Waco. But, as you may have heard by now, I have a grant to go to Switzerland and study first-hand under Barth and the others. So in great haste we are all packing our things to make a boat at N.Y. on August 30th. So I am forced to give an "impressionistic" evaluation of your article. I was also just getting a nice start in Thales--Dewey and have had to drop that as much as I disliked to so do. And I am forced to just snatch a paragraph here and there from Carnell's latest work.

p. 3, re origin of language: one writer [was it Urban?] indicated that man, not God, gave animals their names. The power of speech was a gift of the Creator; the symbolic and syntactical development of it, and diversification of it, was the action of man.

p. 4. Re animals. You are very right about ~~xxx~~ animals and birds, as far as I know linguistics. An animal can give only an undifferentiated sign. The language of a chicken is 9 sounds! (Amazing what some people do for a Ph.D!). Hence the language of animals is simple corresponding to the simple sort of existence they have. However, the communication among insects, especially bees would call for more detailed analysis for at least on the surface they appear to convey some rather detailed information.

Re your refutation of the behavioral theory of language, again I agree. I attempted some refutation of it myself in PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES (2nd chapter).

Re language and spatial relationships: I feel in regard to this that spatial relationships may "trigger" the conceptual structure of language. That is the mind may arrange concepts analogously to spatial relationships. The relationship of the concepts is not spatial, but the linguistic structure is borrowed from spatial relationships. Hence I think there is a rather intimate relationship between spatial terms and relational terms; but I agree with you it is not the relationship the behaviourists make.

p. 10--re "literal". This is a tough one to define, especially in view of the pragmatics of language. I asked the linguistics experts at The Summer Institute of Linguistics what "literal" meant to them and got a very complicated answer. I have also wrestled with this term in ~~my~~ writing my book on hermeneutics. So I think you had better give a careful definition of what you mean by literal.

"Literal" to the positivists, of course means "having a sensory correlate to the term." "Literal" to the dispensationalists means almost "a material or physical counterpart to the concept." Literal to most students of hermeneutics means the normal or customary or usual meaning of a word. But, as the linguists told me, "normal" is frequently determined by word-count and a word may have a "literal" meaning ("gun"), and may pick up a metaphorical meaning ("giver her the gun"), and may be used so frequently that "giver the gun" has all the tell-tale marks of a "literal" expression. Urban (p. 10) seems to define "literal" as the exact duplication in language of the external world. But this is hardly a linguistically acceptable use of the word literal; and it seems to me that a metaphorical statement that is true would thus be literal.

p.11. My understanding of "intuitive" in Urban this this: Whenever I affix a word to an object, such as lion, I not only connect the word lion with the object lion, but I also pick up a picture of the lion with it. The "picture" is the intuitive element in the word which gives the word richness and a measure of meaning which spills beyond the sign ~~itself~~. Compare two people looking at a picture post-card of the Grand Canyon. A person who has never seen the canyon does not really know how to "see" the postcard; but the person who has seen the canyon uses the postcard as a cue to his memory of the canyon and he can "see" the canyon in its dimensions and grandeur on the card. The person who has seen the canyon brings an intuitive element to the postcard which the person who has not seen the canyon does not have. The postcard here is the word. The Brooklyn kid learns "cow" in school; but he lacks the intuitive element that the farmboy has when he recites "cow" in classroom.

If you mean by intuitive that the word somehow mimics its referent then of course pure conventionality in language would be destructive of "intuitive" so defined.

re symbolism in general: it is my general feeling that Urban has something more significant to say about symbolism that you give him credit. I am not sure that a set of "literal" sentences could completely reproduce all the meaning in a "symbolic" sentence. I am feeling my way in these matters, but this is how I presently feel. The plethora of symbolic, figurative, parabolic, and metaphoric language in Scripture makes me a bit cautious at this point.

I would also hesitate about too close an alliance of verbal inspiration and literal interpretation as if one concept were deducible from the other. The history of allegorical interpretation does not prove that allegories are errors, but that it is erratic to interpret a document which is not an allegory. Here again the plethora of non-literal literary materials in the Bible must be kept in mind.

With your main theses I concur, and I am glad that somebody is interacting strongly with the present linguistic-philosophical studies.

In His Grace,

