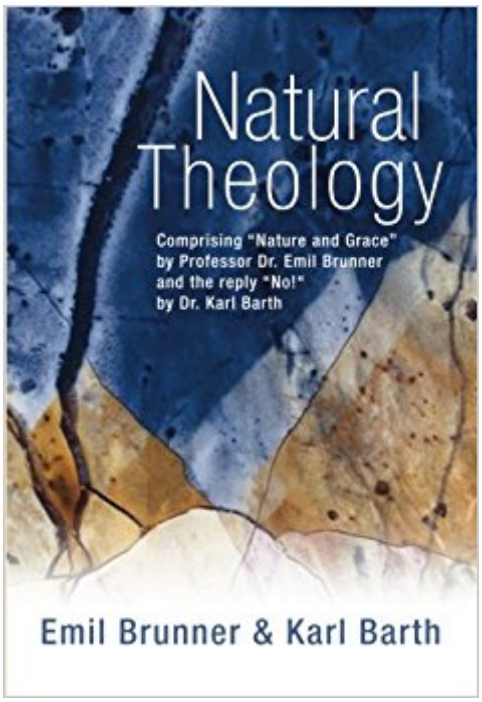
Natural Theology: Comprising Nature And Grace By Professor Dr. Emil Brunner And The Reply No! By Dr. Karl Barth



Synopsis

This reissue of Emil Brunner's 'Nature and Grace' with Karl Barth's response 'No!' places back into the hands of theological students one of the most important, and well publicized, theological arguments of the 20th century. Here we see the climax of Barth and Brunner's disagreement over the point of contact for the gospel in the consciousness of natural man. Also at stake is the nature of the theological task. Brunner claims that the task of that generation was to find a way back to a legitimate natural theology. Barth responds strongly, arguing that there is no way to knowledge of God by way of human reason. Barth's radical Christocentric redevelopment of Reformation theology left no room for any source of authority aside from the Word of God.

Book Information

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Wipf & Stock Pub; F First Edition Used edition (December 10, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1592441122

ISBN-13: 978-1592441129

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.3 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #407,242 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #384 inÃ Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Systematic #812 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Philosophy #1197 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Religious Studies > Christianity

Customer Reviews

The Introduction to this book explains, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The remarkable pair of brochuresÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ hereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ appeared in the original German in 1934 and quickly attracted the most widespread attention. They were accepted as giving expression to what was at that time ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ a burning issue in Protestant theology, and they at once became the subject of keen debate not only in continental Europe but also in great Britain and AmericaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ the difference between Dr. Barth and Dr. Brunner may seem take to some to be of small consequence in comparison with the extensive ground they occupy in commonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ The very fervid heat with which this controversy is carried on (especially in Dr. BarthÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s contribution to itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦) will therefore be surprising to many

English readers. It may even be shocking to themÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| In 1935 Dr. Brunner published a second and considerably enlarged edition of his brochure, and the question had accordingly to be faced which of the two editions should now be translatedÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| It was the first edition of Dr. BrunnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s pamphlet that Dr. Barth had before him when he wrote his replyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| It is therefore the first editionÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| here translated for us.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•Brunner explains, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“It has been frequently suggested to me during recent months that it was time for me to write a polemical treatise against Karl BarthÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| Certainly what my friend Karl Barth wrote concerning me did not please me, yet I was quite unable to be angry with him on that accountÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| because I was so pleased with everything else that Karl Barth did and wroteÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| But this is not all. I feel myself so much an ally of Barth even in what he believed that he had to say against me, that I was able to take the misunderstanding fairly lightlyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| As far as I was concerned he missed; but I cannot be angry at his desired attempt, as I am unable to find any ill-will in itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| it is my purpose to show in this pamphlet the following three things: that what Barth really desires and intendsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| is what I also desire and intendÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| but that from what he rightly desires and intends he draws false conclusions; and thirdly, that he is wrong in accusing of treason to the essentials those who are not willing to join him in drawing these conclusions.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 16)He outlines, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“In what follows I set out: (1) My counter-theses with a very brief scriptural proof. (2) A discussion of its relation in the history of dogma to the Reformation, to Thomism and to Neo-Protestantism. (3) A concluding discussion of the theological and practical significance of the controversyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â|ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 22)He explains, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Wherever God does anything, he leaves the imprint of his nature upon what he does, Therefore the creation of the world is at the same time a revelation, a self-communication of GodÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| nowhere does the Bible give any justification for the view that through the sin of man this perceptibility of God in his works is destroyed, although it is adversely affectedÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| sin makes man blind for what is visibly set before our eyes. The reason why men are without excuse is that they will not know the God who so clearly manifests himself to them. The same is true of what is usually called ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœconscience ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| Men have not only responsibility but also consciousness of itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| Only because men somehow know the will of God are they able to sin. A being who knew nothing of the law of God would be unable to sin---as we see in the case of animalsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| Scripture clearly testifies to the fact that knowledge of the law of God is somehow also knowledge of God.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 25)He continues,

ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The difficult question is therefore not whether there are two kinds of revelationÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ The question is rather how the two revelations, that in creation and that in Jesus Christ, are related. The first answerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ is that for us sinful men, the first, revelation in creation, is not sufficient in order to know God in such a way that this knowledge brings salvationÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ But in faithÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ we shall not be able to avoid speaking of a double revelation: of one in creation which only he can recognize in all its magnitude, whose eyes have been opened by Christ; and of a second in Jesus Christ in whose bright light he can clearly perceive the former. This latter revelation far surpasses that which the former was able to show himÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ This means that in the phrase ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœnatural revelationÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ the word ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœnatural ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ is to be understood in a double sense, one objective-divine and one subjective-human-sinful.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 26-27)He argues, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Calvin goes even further in the direction which Barth calls ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœThomismÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ or ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœ Neo-ProtestantismÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ than I should dare to doÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ If BrunnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœtheologia naturalisÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ [natural theology] is Thomist, then this applies even more to CalvinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ it would be easy to show that LutherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s views on this subject do not differ essentially from CalvinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 36)He observes, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The theological importance of the concept of nature is shown by the fact that God can be known from natureÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ God can be known from nature other than man, but also from man himself. Indeed, he is to be known especially from the latter. But above allÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ from the experience of his preserving and providential grace. This ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ knowledge of God is not made superfluous by faith in the Word of God, but on the contrary remains an important complement of the knowledge of God derived from Scripture. But the knowledge of God to be gained from nature is only partial. To put it metaphorically: from nature we know the hands and feet but not the heart of God.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 38)He concludes, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“I do not wish to blame Karl Barth for neglecting and discrediting [natural theology]ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ It may be BarthÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s special mission to serve at this point as a counter-weight to dangerous aberrationsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ And a false theology derived from nature is also at the present time threatening the Church to the point of deathÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ But the Church must not be thrown from one extreme to the other. In the long run the Church can bear the rejection of [natural theology] as little as its misuse. It is the task of our theological generation to find the way back to a true [natural theology]. And I am convinced that it is to be found far away from BarthÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s

negation and quite near CalvinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s doctrine. If we had enquired from the master earlier, this dispute amongst us disciples would not have arisen. It is high time to wake up for the opportunity that we have missed.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 59-60)Barth, in turn, wrote in his Preface, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Emil Brunner is a man who extraordinary abilities and whose determined will-power I have always sincerely respectedÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| but in the Church we are concerned with truthÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| And truth is not to be trifled with. If it divides the spirits, then they ARE dividedÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| For it seems to me that at the decisive point [Brunner] takes part in the false movement of thought by which the Church today is threatenedÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| My polemic against Brunner is more acute ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| because his position is more akin to mine, because I believe him to be in possession of more truth, i.e., to be closer to the ScripturesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| The heresies of our time which can be recognized as such at the first glance areÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| about to go as they have come.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 67-68)He continues, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“[BrunnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s] essay is an alarm signal. I wish it had not been written. I wish that this new and greater danger were not approaching or that it had not been Emil Brunner who had crossed my path as an exponent of that danger, in a way which made me feel that for better or worse I have been challengedÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| But I hope that since it has happened I shall not be misunderstood if I act according to the use of our times and treat his doctrine of ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœNature and GraceÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ without much ceremony as something which endangers the ultimate truth that must be guarded and defended in the Evangelical Church.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 69)He argues, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“For if man ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœcan do nothing of himself for his salvation,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ they alone can be the objects of his de facto knowledge of God through nature! But what Brunner says and means is different. What would be the significance of the assertion of SUCH a knowledge of ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœGodÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ for his thesis concerning manÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s capacity for revelation? It would mean that the God revealed in nature is NOT known to, but rather is hidden from, man. What would than become of the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœtheologia naturalisÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢? All that would be left would be a systematic exposition of the history or religion, philosophy and culture, without any theological claims or valueÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| Is it his opinion that idolatry is but a somewhat imperfect preparatory stage of the service of the true God? Is it the function of the revelation of God merely that of leading us from one step to the next within the all-embracing reality of divine revelation? Moreover, how can Brunner maintain that a real knowledge of the true God, however imperfect it may beÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| does not bring salvation?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 81-82)He asserts, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Is the change in the human situation through the revelation of God, of which 1 Cor 2 and Gal 2 speak, really a

ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| restoration in the sense in which Brunner employs itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœIt is not possible to repair what no longer exists. But it is possible to repair a thing in such a way that one has to say this has become quite new.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| I must confess that I am quite flabbergasted by this sentence. Had one not better at this point break off the discussion as hopeless? Or should one hope for an angel from heaven who would call to Brunner through a silver trumpet of enormous dimensions that 2 Cor 5:17 is not a mere phrase, which might just as well be applied to a motor-car that has come to grief and been successfully ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœrepairedÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 93)He acknowledges, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“BrunnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s theory was very much more interesting in its earlier form, in accordance with Kierkegaard and Heidegger. ForÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| it raised the problem of a peculiar aptitude of man for divine revelation in a much more acute, tempting and dangerous form. I confess that about 1920, and perhaps even later, I might still have succumbed to it. And who knows whether one could not find passages in the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœEpistle to the RomansÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ in which I have said something of the sort myself. According to BrunnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s former explanation, manÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s aptitude for the revelation of God consists only in the fact that in the rational existence of man there is a diacritical point where this existence can become discontinunousÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â|. where the knowledge of God, which is bound up with it from the start, can ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœbecome uncertain.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 114-115)He states, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœNo!ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ with which we have to oppose Brunner applies even if he should one day return to the form of his doctrine which follows Kierkegaard and Heidegger. There is no fundamental difference between that form and the one which he seems to wish to adopt now. They both maintain that man has a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœcapacity for revelationÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢---there is no reason why Brunner should not have used that term even then. It has to be opposed even in that more refined form, which seems to touch Evangelical truth with great precision and which, therefore, is all the more dangerous.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 116)He concludes, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“It will be best to conclude by explicitly moving away once more from this quite secondary and UNimportant question. We are not here at all in order to gather successes. We are commanded to do work that has a reason and foundation. THAT is why there is hope in that work. Natural theology is always the answer to a question which is false if it wishes to be ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœdecisive.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ That is the question concerning the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœHow?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ of theological and ecclesiastical activity. Hence it has to be rejected ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| right at the outset. Only the theology and the church of the antichrist

can profit from it. The Evangelical Church and Evangelical theology would only sicken and die of it.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 128)This written debate/dialogue between two of the theological ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœgiants ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• of the 20th century will be ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“must readingÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• for any students of contemporary theology.

It's important for anyone interested in the history of Protestant theology and in Karl Barth in particular. Brunner brings theology back to reality and Barth has a hard time disputing his points.

Great!

Brunner's "Nature and Grace" and especially Barth's response "No!" constitute the seminal piece for all discussions of natural theology since. Barth's categorical rejection of natural theology in any guise was, in 1934, the most radical stance ever taken on the subject. Yet with Barth's detailed explanations stemming from his hallmark Christocentrism, mixed with a good deal of polemic (much later, Barth showed remorse for how his response so deeply hurt Brunner), it has become such that no theologian since--Reformed or otherwise--can address natural theology without due consideration of this work. In this day and age, when views of natural theology and natural law still form a foundational part of politically explosive ethical debates surrounding human dignity, the definition of life, human sexuality, the nature of equality, etc., "Nature and Grace" and "No!" should be read by anyone interested in approaching such topics from a theological perspective. As an addendum, for those interested and comfortable in the realm of academic theology, I would recommend Stephen J. Grabill'sÃ Â Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics (Emory University Studies in Law and Religion)Ã Â as a good follow-up to the Brunner/Barth debate.

There were many good things said in this book and it was not run on like some can be but it is kind of difficult to read. Gotta love Karl Barth though.

Package Emil and Karl: A Novel Professor Murphy’s Juggling Balls (Professor Murphy’s Emporium of Entertainment) The Nature of Borders: Salmon, Boundaries, and Bandits on the Salish Sea (Emil and Kathleen Sick Book Series in Western History and Biography) Don’t Reply All: 18 Email Tactics That Help You Write Better Emails and Improve Communication with Your Team A Statement, Letters, and Documents, Respecting the Affairs of Trinidad: Including a Reply to Colonel Picton’s Address to the Council of That Island The history of Barbados: comprising a geographical and statistical description of the island; a sketch of the historical events since the settlement; and an account of its geology and natural product The Jet Set Travel Guide to St. Barths (Saint Barth), Caribbean 2013 Law and Tradition in Classical Islamic Thought: Studies in Honor of Professor Hossein Modarressi (Palgrave Series in Islamic Theology, Law) Trout Culture: How Fly Fishing Forever Changed the Rocky Mountain West (Emil and Kathleen Sick Book Series in Western History and Biography) Death of Celilo Falls (Emil and Kathleen Sick Lecture Book Series) Emil Nolde: The Grotesques Galois Theory: Lectures Delivered at the University of Notre Dame by Emil Artin (Notre Dame Mathematical Lectures, Number 2) Pocket Atlas of Radiographic Anatomy: . Zus.-Arb.: Torsten B. MÃƒÂ¶ller, Emil Reif Translated by John Grossman 243 Illustrations (Thieme Flexibooks) Pocket Atlas of Radiographic Positioning: . Zus.-Arb.: Torsten B. MÃƒÂ¶ller, Emil Reif in collaboration with... (Innentitel) Translated by Horst N. Bertram (Impressum) (Clinical Sciences (Thieme)) Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair’s Youth