

Title: Emil Brunner's Theological Contribution to the Concept of Divine Action

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ABSTRACT

Through a careful examination of Emil Brunner's theology, this dissertation shows that when the concept of divine action is examined in the context of the nature and work of God, the idea that God acts can be better understood.

After a brief introductory chapter, chapter 2 argues that contemporary discussions surprisingly fail to consider what God does and what God is like as possible resources for making sense of problems associated with the concept of God's activity. This chapter also suggests that a model of divine action should take into account the means, manner, effect, purpose, extent, and degree of God's activity. Investigating the nature and work of God could prove useful for constructing a clear concept of divine action.

Chapter 3 briefly introduces scholarship on Brunner and examines his theological writings regarding the nature of God. This chapter argues that Brunner's discussions on the nature and attributes of God—such as God's name, love, lordship and holiness—helps make sense of God's activity by illuminating the manner, effect, purpose, and intention of God's activity.

Chapter 4 shows that Brunner's theological thought on God's work in creation, providence, and redemption illuminates the relation between divine and human action. Typically, scholarship focuses on divine concurrence, but examining claims about God's work in creation and redemption and God's original intention to have communion with creation helps clarify our understanding of the extent and degree of God's activity in relation to human activity.

Chapter 5 shows that Brunner's thought on God's creative work and lordship helps make sense of the relation between divine action and natural processes. This relation does not preclude particular acts of God including special or extraordinary activities such as miracles and redemptive acts. Nor do natural processes preclude God from acting through the ordinary working of nature.

Finally, this dissertation shows that the concept of divine action forms part of the fabric of a wider theological framework that is essential for making sense of the notion that God acts in the world. Thus, scholarship needs to take this framework seriously when considering the notion that God acts.