




# The Doctrine of God in the Theology of Heinrich Emil Brunner: A Theological-Biblical Assessment

Desmond Tutu Osei-Acheampong <sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Adventist University of Africa, Ongata Rongai, Nairobi-Kenya.

## ABSTRACT

Heinrich Emil Brunner's doctrine of God has received a divergent view from biblical-theological scholars' perspective. The doctrine of God has played a great significant and influential role throughout the era of Christian history, thus promoting the development and exploration of major theological doctrines in Christianity. The article therefore surveyed the canonical assessment of God's doctrine in Brunner's theology. It also sought to unlock Brunner's hermeneutical method, contributors and opposers of his doctrine, and canonical approach in attaining salvific implications for contemporary Christians. The study employed a methodology of biblical-theological analysis to glean various literature materials. The findings revealed Brunner's viewpoint that mankind can understand God through self-revelation. He opines that God possesses both communicable and uncommunicable tenets. Again, God is sovereign and supreme above all creatures in this world. In the light of this, God makes Himself known by His name. Thus, God as a Supreme Being, exhibits characteristic features of unknowable, innate, supernatural and He can be identified in His self-communication. God refers to Yahweh which depicts "I am that I am." Thus, God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, immutable, honest, loving, and holy. Again, the doctrine of God unveils that God is infallible and hence He can assist human beings to live righteous life. The study concluded that the Lord is the creator, protector, and redeemer of humanity. The study unpacks that God's salvific value could be realized through Jesus Christ. This study will be beneficial to biblical-theological historical students as it provides literature that will help advance and improve their studies.

## Correspondence

Desmond Tutu Osei-

Acheampong

Email:

[osei-acheampong@aua.ac.ke](mailto:osei-acheampong@aua.ac.ke)

## Publication History

Received:

8<sup>th</sup> January, 2025

Accepted:

7<sup>th</sup> March, 2025

Published online:

4<sup>th</sup> April, 2025

**Keywords:** *Doctrine of God, Theology of Emil Brunner, Canonical, Evaluation.*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent times, Heinrich Emil Brunner's doctrine of God has raised scholarly attention among biblical-theological scholars. It is for this reason that a study should be conducted on it.<sup>1</sup> He has contributed positively to the discussion and development of the doctrine of God during the modern era which is worthy of research.

<sup>1</sup> Pa. Carlisle, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996). Brunner was born on December 23, 1889, in Caton northern Switzerland.<sup>1</sup> He pursued his doctorate in theology in 1913 at Zurich University. Brunner lived in England and lectured high school in Leeds in 1914. From 1916 to 1924, he worked as a pastor at the Swiss Reformed Church in Glarus. Brunner married Margaret Lautenberg in 1916 and had four sons. In 1919, he ceased to be a pastor.

Hence, the paper examines Brunner's doctrine of God, his work, hermeneutical method, contributors to Brunner's concept of God, critiques of Brunner's doctrine of God, the Orthodox Church's view on God, the Pente-Charismatic view on God, Seventh-day Adventist perspective of the doctrine of God, Biblical view on the doctrine of God, and its analysis and implications for contemporary Christians.

This paper further aims to undertake a biblical-theological investigation of God's doctrine to enrich the contemporary doctrine of God's discourse. The study also seeks to explore God's doctrine in alignment with His power of creating human beings and redeeming them. Concomitantly, the paper examines the doctrine of God by exploring that humankind can understand God through self-revelation and its benefits to modern Christianity. The study helps the readers to comprehend that God makes Himself known by His name. Thus, God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, immutable, honest, loving, and holy. The paper uses a comprehensive methodology of a biblical-theological analysis to glean various literature materials.

Most importantly, it solicited biblical-theological thinking and expositions about the doctrine of God. The study of the doctrine of God has played a significant and influential role throughout the era of Christian history, thus contributing to the development and formulation of key theological doctrines in Christendom. In effect, the study contributes to the scholarly doctrine of God theology that earmarks God's power to create, His eschatological hope, and salvific value.

### **Heinrich Emil Brunner's Work**

Brunner's Christian Doctrine of God is a monumental work seeking to make explicit basis, message, and meaning of the believers. Traditionally, Brunner represents new orthodoxy. Brunner's Doctrine of God is a scholarly work dealing with the central problems in dogmatics.<sup>2</sup> Brunner's first volume is divided into two parts. Prolegomena is the introductory section of the prologue. The first part is concerned with the foundation and purpose of dogma. In this part, Brunner elaborated on the need for dogmatics and concise statements of beliefs for contemporary issues.

The second part is the main major section and centers on the characteristics of God. Most importantly, the motive of this section will be to assemble a scholarly understanding of God into a systematic arrangement. The third part portrays God's free will. Emile defined God's free will to be redemptive in the area of the election. The second and third parts of Brunner's book are composed of the first major section of his dogmatics.<sup>3</sup>

### **Heinrich Emil Brunner's Hermeneutical Method**

Brunner adopted the hermeneutical method of interpreting God's doctrine. With the dialectical method of theology, Brunner tries to explain the truth that is seen in the light of two conflicting forces. Thus, the idea that truth is paradoxical is similar to Brunner's dialectical approach to theology. God is both wholly ordered and wholly concerned.<sup>4</sup> God is both immanent and transcendent. Essentially, God is beyond this world and yet He sustains this universe through His willpower. God possesses full love and mercy, but He objects to humankind in vengeful wrath.<sup>5</sup>

Most importantly, Brunner comprehends God's holiness to be a dialectical tension of two opposites.<sup>6</sup> Here, Brunner's dialectical method is a dialectic divine which signifies the withdrawal or the exclusive movement, and the expansive and inclusive movement. According to Brunner, God is exclusive because He is inaccessible, hidden, and unapproachable in human existence. In short, he affirms that holiness and love exist in inseparable dialectical tension.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Gorrige, *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen K. Moroney, *God of Love Judgment*. Canton (Ohio: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> John Wilson, *The Sermon of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader* (Chicago, IL: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Moroney, *God of Love Judgment*. Canton. 99.

<sup>6</sup> David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010). 166.

<sup>7</sup> Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testament*. 167.

## Heinrich Emil Brunner's Doctrine of God

This doctrine is concerned with the eternal foundation of self-communication in man's thought. Brunner significantly and extensively surveys God's attributes. God cannot be compared to anything on this earth. Essentially, human's understanding of God comes solely because God revealed Himself. Humankind only understands Him through inspiration and revelation. Therefore, God first makes Himself known by His name. God's name depicts both the revealed nature and His revealing action.

According to Brunner, Yahweh contains the meaning of the whole doctrine of God.<sup>8</sup> He adds, "God is known only where He makes His name known."<sup>9</sup> Besides this self-manifestation, God is unknowable, and He can only be known in His self-communication. Thus, God is great which He normally refers to as "I am that I am."<sup>10</sup> He concludes that the personal God can only be manifested by His name and self-revelation.<sup>11</sup> According to John Calvin, the self-manifestation of God is the system by which God steps out of the realm of His glory and self-sufficiency in which the one who exists for self alone becomes the one who exists for mankind.<sup>12</sup> God's name unpacks that God is a true revelation and not anthropomorphism. Here, God's revelation implies that He exists and is known everywhere.

The name of God posits that God revealed Himself to be conversant by man. Significantly, only through God's name, God can be intimately known. According to William Lane Craig, the Lord is referred to as Yahweh.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Yahweh denotes a great and powerful God who initiates the relationship with humankind. Brunner indicated that His sovereign revelation is seen.<sup>14</sup> Against this background, Brunner protested against natural theology. He emphatically affirmed that God in whom we believe cannot be proved. From Brunner, God can only be identified through His revelation. Thus, revelation signifies His name as Yahweh. God is pious and through Him, humankind can acquire piety and piousness. Biblically speaking, Yahweh is the Holy One of Israel.

According to Gregory Boyd, God's holiness signifies separation and the whole otherness of God as depicted in volume one of his dogmatics.<sup>15</sup> Thus, holiness is the very nature of God who is divine, and unique and He cannot be compared to creatures. The Bible posits that no man has come near God of His holiness.<sup>16</sup> James Beilby also posits that God is separated from the universe as wholly order and therefore separation is the basic meaning for the holy.<sup>17</sup> God's holiness is the set apart transcendence of God. He is an active self-distinction from created things. God alone is "I am that I am" which denotes in opposition of a vengeful wrath to people who do not accept His unique holiness.<sup>18</sup> Radically speaking, He is majesty, supremacy, sovereignty, absoluteness, and uniqueness of His holiness. According to Brunner, God is involved in a contradictory movement. Therefore, the holiness of God cannot be compared to any creature on this earth.

Most importantly, love is another doctrinal attribute of God. It is only through love that man will know God. Edwin Le Roy's point of view depicts holiness as the righteous perfection of God that man is separated from it, as a result of sin.<sup>19</sup> He is a relational God and through this, man can know Him with self-communication. They demonstrate that God's love is demonstrated in the New Testament whereas the Old unfolds His holiness. God exhibited His love to the nation Israel not because of her quality, but in God's own free will and independent action. The love of God is *agape*,

---

<sup>8</sup> Emil Heinrich Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (Minneapolis, MN: James Clarke & CO, 2002). 15.

<sup>9</sup> Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*.16.

<sup>10</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *Is the Bible Reliable? Basic Doctrines Series* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1978). 27.

<sup>11</sup> Emil Heinrich Brunner, *Dispute Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012).163.

<sup>12</sup> Brunner, *Dispute Advocacy*. 172.

<sup>13</sup> Lane William Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (New York, NY: Leiden, 1984).172.

<sup>14</sup> Emil Heinrich Brunner, *Mediator* (Minneapolis: MN: Clarke & Co., 1967). 71.

<sup>15</sup> G.A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (InterVarsity Press, 2014).169.

<sup>16</sup> James K. Beilby, *Justification: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011).126.

<sup>17</sup> Fernando Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundation of Christian Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000). 125.

<sup>18</sup> Brunner, *Dispute Advocacy*.56.

<sup>19</sup> From Edwin Le Roy, *The Coming of the Comforter* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1928).63.

which is incomprehensible, unreservedly, unmerited, and unconditional for God to grant to mankind. God's love creates communion and intimacy.<sup>20</sup> God reveals Himself to humankind through love.

Christian church shares God's holiness as the believers who are called out to be Saints. For Brunner, every human being belongs to God. Thus, God selects people who receive Him in His revelation. Humankind lost both the electing revelation and the revealing election as a result of disobedience and sin. Thomas Jay Oden postulates that the right understanding of election is only possible where the dialectical relation of holiness and love is found in Christ. In light of this, God sent Christ to die and redeem all humanity.<sup>21</sup>

Rigorously speaking, Brunner emphasizes the trinity. He unlocks that the Trinitarian doctrine of God is not a part of *the kerygma*.<sup>22</sup> From Brunner's biblical perspective, kerygma is a part of theology. He further stressed that the understanding of God cannot be comprehended without the concept structure of Trinitarian. Essentially, the Trinitarian doctrine of God expresses that He reveals Himself to humans.<sup>23</sup> Brunner explained that the Father refers to the origin and the content of the revelation.<sup>24</sup> Also, the name of Son denotes the historic mediator. The Holy Spirit unlocks reality through Christ's mediation. Interestingly, Christ's duty implies incarnation, and thus Christ reveals and reconciles Himself to mankind.

Again, Brunner disclosed certain characteristics of God that are common to each member of the Godhead. From Brunner's perspective, the attributes express the nature of God to relate to certain aspects of the created world.<sup>25</sup> God has the authority to create everything in this universe. He is also omniscient. God's omniscience denotes His plan of redemption and the kingdom. God is immutable. This implies that He forever remains unchangeable. He posited that the world can only have meaning in God's attributes and decree of redemption in Christ.

### **Contributors to the Heinrich Emil Brunner's Concept of God**

According to Brunner, great theologians like Otto Rudolf, Davidson, Baudissin, and Voldeke defended that holiness has a basic moral ethical content in its original etymology.<sup>26</sup> Here, the four contributors affirmed that the term holy can be attributed to the development of the secondary meaning of moral purity interpreted by the Hebrews. With this, they still accord and accept the primary meaning of holiness which implies separation. Again, Brunner's contemporary Karl Barth asserted the doctrine of God being transcendence as Brunner also believed. Thus, he postulated that God is far from humankind and He is also omnipotent. He is all-powerful. According to Barth, God is an unknowable being.<sup>27</sup> He finally denoted that God is above all creatures.

Barth discusses his doctrine of the Lord from a biblical perspective. He posits that God's word is demonstrated in three means; it propagates, codifies, and incarnates.<sup>28</sup> He reveals that the doctrine of God depicts two tenets, divine and human. He unraveled that the word is proclaimed which is essential to Christians. With this doctrine of God, God's incarnation refers to Christ who is fully human and divine. God made all things manifest in creation.

The Bible contains God and propagates Jesus Christ. The doctrine of God is problematized by Feuerbach Ludwig. Here, Schleiermacher uncovered that there is no corresponding reality in God. He extensively defined God in the concept of causality divine attributes which is distinctive in God and in the way, humans attach their genuine feelings of dependence to God at the various stages of their religious self-consciousness. More arguably, Schleiermacher doctrine of God in terms of God's definition perspective is quite different from Brunner's doctrine of God. According to Feuerbach

<sup>20</sup> Ander C. Nygren, *Agape and Eros Translated by Philip S. Watson* (London: S. P. C. K., 1953). 163.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Jay Oden, *The Living God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).77.

<sup>22</sup> Brunner, *Mediator*. 152.

<sup>23</sup> Brunner, *Mediator*. 261.

<sup>24</sup> Emil Heinrich Brunner, *Christian Anthropology* (Philadelphia: James Clarke & Co., 2002). 119.

<sup>25</sup> Brunner, *Dispute Advocacy*. 198.

<sup>26</sup> Brunner, *Dispute Advocacy*.174.

<sup>27</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Vol 4. Peabody* (MA: Hendrickson, 2010). 7.

<sup>28</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics Vol 4. Peabody*. 61.

Ludwig, Schleiermacher's theological method resulted in an anthropologist of theology in which he developed a doctrine called 'behind the back of Jesus Christ.'<sup>29</sup>

### Critiques of Heinrich Emil Brunner's Doctrine of God

It is quite obvious that Brunner accepted that holiness alluding to God has a connotation on moral and ethical position.<sup>30</sup> He suggests that the holiness of God does not refer to "separation, aloofness, and majesty."<sup>31</sup> Against this background, the three theologians namely Rob Lister, Otto Rudolf, and Millar Burrows emphatically posited that the Hebrew word *qodesh* is translated as holy.<sup>32</sup> Lister proposed that *qodesh* was derived from two meanings the first one implies "to bright or clear" and the second word signifies "to be separated."<sup>33</sup> According to Lister, the holy alludes to God which denotes "to cut or to separate."<sup>34</sup> Lister and Burrown concluded their argument that holiness originally signified "separated."<sup>35</sup> The holy here is applied to the separation of the object or person so reserved and dedicated to a sacred being or thing about the Old Testament monograph.<sup>36</sup> The opponents of Brunner finally postulate that holiness cannot attract any ethical moral connotation.

Wayne Grudem's postulate worthwhile implies that God is right in His endeavors and that what He exhibits is worthwhile.<sup>37</sup> Grudem unpacks other communicable doctrinal attributes of God which include compassion, love, mercy, grace, freedom, honesty, and caring truthfulness.<sup>38</sup> Another theologian Soelle opposed theism championed by Brunner and he strongly believed that there is no deity existed.<sup>39</sup>

Vincent Brummer posits that the Trinity denotes that there is only one God, but in the unity of the Godhead with three coeternal and coequal Persons in the same substance.<sup>40</sup> Brummer postulates that Trinity unveils three Persons without separate existences which are combined to form one God. The divine nature subsists in three divisions which indicate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, He is a triune God. He denotes three entities in one God. Johann Baptist Metz posits that Roman Catholicism refuses to affirm the three Gods.<sup>41</sup>

Theologically speaking, there are misconceptions about the Trinity by many contemporary Biblical scholars and Christians. Thus, this concerns the three Persons within the Godhead. Thus, one God with three manifestations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Sabellianism or Modalism), and the doctrine which rejects Christ's deity to indicate below God (Arianism).<sup>42</sup>

### The Orthodox Church's View on God

The significant teaching of Eastern Orthodox description of God focuses on the transcendent and immanent. This teaching denotes that though God is far from man, He is close to protecting and supplying human needs at any point in time. Thus, God is everywhere and knows everything in this world. According to Saint Gregory Palamas, Constantinople Council in AD 1341, the Orthodox church affirmed an obvious distinction in God.<sup>43</sup> From the Orthodox Church's perspective, God's name is one

---

<sup>29</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, "The Essence of Christianity," in *Literature and Philosophy in Nineteenth Century British Culture* (Routledge, 1957), 87–91.

<sup>30</sup> Brunner, *Christian Anthropology*.122.

<sup>31</sup> Brunner, *Christian Anthropology*. 316.

<sup>32</sup> Brunner, *Christian Anthropology*. 316.

<sup>33</sup> Rob Lister, *God Is Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Lister, *God Is Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion*.280.

<sup>35</sup> Millar Burrown, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980). 62.

<sup>36</sup> Jay Wesley Richards, *The Untamed God: A Philosophical Exploration of Divine Perfection, Immutability and Simplicity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003). 202.

<sup>37</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press, 2009). 88.

<sup>38</sup> Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*. 88.

<sup>39</sup> Dorothee Solle, *Christ the Representative: An Essay in Theology after the Death of Christ* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976). 150.

<sup>40</sup> Vincent Brummer, *The Model of Law: A Study of Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). 279.

<sup>41</sup> Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980).67.

<sup>42</sup> Dorothee Solle, *Remembering Christ: Christianity and Crisis* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976).137.

<sup>43</sup> Solle, *Remembering Christ: Christianity and Crisis*. 139.

of the paramount doctrines of God, “Yahweh” which implies I am who I am. Essentially, God is called Adonai which refers to the Lord or Lord God of Host.

Essentially, David Ray Griffin unpacks that the Orthodox Church’s perspective portrays that Yahweh is the Holy name mentioned by the saints in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>44</sup> Hence, it denotes that God is completely different from anything or anyone else that exists in terms of greatness and piousness.

Many conservative evangelicals maintain that God sent His son to discharge His duties. This is a univocal nature. Thus, “God loves me” means the same as “my parents love me.” If God is univocal, it means that God is just like humans. To say “God loves me” signifies something altogether different from saying “my parents do.” If the language used by God is equivocal, man could not indicate anything factual about God. It is analogical, to say “God loves me” and postulate something true about God, but it covers part of the reality.<sup>45</sup> In analogical terms, it denotes, that man can comprehend God in human thought.<sup>46</sup> It uncovers the content based on Biblical perspective, but not on human thought.

From Millard Erickson’s perspective, evangelicals unlock that heaven is a divine, and orderly Trinity.<sup>47</sup> The Athanasian Creed posits a coequal Trinity where none of them is above the other. According to Solle, humans worship one God in the Trinity which neither confounds in the persons nor divides the substance.<sup>48</sup> This assertion postulates the three persons in Godhead as the same being.

Orthodox Christians believe that God is the author of truth in Christianity. Orthodox churches affirm that God reveals Himself to mankind through the revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>49</sup> The Orthodoxy accepts the experience of the Trinity through the Church, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, the Sacraments, and non-sacramental services. From the orthodox church’s perspective, the eternal begetting of the Son and the Spirit and the Father send the Son into the world. It shows the prophetic eschatological sequence of events that bring about the end time.

Alvin Plantinga stresses that the Son rules God’s kingdom on earth.<sup>50</sup> This view indicates that the father and the son chronologically exhibit historical and redemptive administration. Grant Osborne gives different means of describing the doctrine of God.<sup>51</sup> Osborne’s doctrine of the Trinity posits divine unity and equality. It shows God’s love and holiness. According to Jerry Walls, the Orthodox churches hold the view that divine self-revelation exists.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Orthodox Christians believe that God inspired some people to write the Bible.

### **The Pente-Charismatic View on God**

Pente-Charismatic church stresses more spiritual teachings of God including Spirit-baptism, exorcism, and healing. Walls postulates that Pente-Charismatic doctrinal theology originates from *Pentecost* and *charisma* includes grace, knowledge, wisdom, prophecy, miracles, healings, and speaking in tongues.<sup>53</sup> Pente-Charismatic doctrinal theology is associated with several waves of Spirit-emphasizing and gifts on grace movements that spread throughout the world. Roger Stronstad unpacks that Pente-Charismatic theology is spawned from Pentecostalism, a third-wave evangelicalism, and with unique spiritual and miraculous doctrinal teachings of God. Pente-Charismatic church has a great

---

<sup>44</sup> Ray David Griffin, John B. Cobb, and Clark H. Pinnock, *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000). 171.

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth J. Perszyk, *Molinism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). 149.

<sup>46</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Who Is Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2009).171.

<sup>47</sup> Erickson, *Who Is Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate*.68.

<sup>48</sup> Solle, *Remembering Christ: Christianity and Crisis*.183.

<sup>49</sup> Solle, *Remembering Christ: Christianity and Crisis*. 185.

<sup>50</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1977). 133.

<sup>51</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006).88.

<sup>52</sup> Jerry L Walls, “Why No Classical Theist, Let Alone Orthodox Christian, Should Ever Be a Compatibilist,” *Philosophia Christi* 13, no. 1 (2011): 104.

<sup>53</sup> Walls, “Why No Classical Theist, Let Alone Orthodox Christian, Should Ever Be a Compatibilist.”104.

number of commonalities with Brunner's doctrine of God.<sup>54</sup> Against this background, Pente-Charismatic churches have some theological doctrines of God which are distinguished from Brunner's concept of God. According to Herbert Muhlen, the key distinctive of Pente-Charismatic doctrinal teaching of baptism by the Holy Spirit portrays miracles, healing, and speaking in tongues.<sup>55</sup> This is not so with the doctrinal nature of the God of Brunner.

Again, Pente-Charismatic churches uphold the emphasis on missional and spirituality. The first distinctive is an urgent missional which implies that the believers baptize with the Holy Spirit. Pente-Charismatic churches take the Great Commission seriously and, thus the believers prepare and empower for missionary work and church planting. Besides the gospel propagation and church planting, Pente-Charismatic adheres regularly to engagement in spiritualism which emphasizes the healing of people. This is a distinctive flow that unpacks that affliction, temptation, and illness emanate from Satan. It follows God's direction that humankind propagate God's message to rule over all demons and to heal the sick (Mark 16: 15-16; Luke 9: 1-12).<sup>56</sup> In a nutshell, Ronald Nash uncovers that there are three distinctive tenets of Pente-Characteristic teachings which include doctrinal theology, experience, and mission in God.<sup>57</sup> Pente-Charismatic church applies theological, experiential, and missional distinctive which combines with Spiritualism and Spiritism.

Another doctrine of Pente-Charismatic is the prosperity gospel teaching. Thus, prosperity gospel teaching emphasizes that God expects His followers to be wellbeing and affluent in life. Immanuel Kant argued that Brunner did not include the prosperity gospel in his doctrine of God.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Pente-Charismatic churches accept a good standard living of for their members. Kant confirms that believers accept faith in God which brings about good work and conducive living. Pente-Charismatic churches hold that believers still experience a direct revelation from God. According to Vincent Brummer, Pente-Charismatic and its theology offer many doctrinal theologies with spiritually emphasized connotations, quite different from Brunner's doctrine of God.<sup>59</sup>

### Seventh-day Adventist Perspective of the Doctrine of God

Adventists believe in the teachings and principles in the Bible. According to Alberto Trimm, the Adventist Church recognizes the Scripture as revealing several attributes of Yahweh. Thus, Adventists accept the foundational teaching of love and holiness.<sup>60</sup> God possesses love (1 John 4:8, 16) and in Him, humankind takes the source of life. The love of God is inexplicable and unchangeable (Jer 31:3). God's whole being is love and whoever follows Him demonstrates His love.<sup>61</sup>

Elle G. White asserts that the basic tenet of God is His eternity.<sup>62</sup> Scripture refersto Him as the everlasting God (Isa. 40:28) and the immortal one (1 Tim 6:16).<sup>63</sup> In the same vein, White acknowledges God as the eternal, self-existent One. Essentially enough, He is immutable and provides everlasting life (Heb. 13:8). God possesses Eternal being. The eternal God dwells among His people, as evident in many biblical theophany (Exod 3:1-6), in the earthly sanctuary (Exod. 25:8), and in the incarnated Son of God (Matt 1:23).

Thus, the omnipresence of God is accepted and emphasized by Seventh-day Adventists. King David affirmed the omnipresence of God in (Ps 139: 7-10). White postulates that God is infinite and omnipresent. White posits that nothing can happen in any part of the universe without the knowledge of God who is omnipresent. Robert Letham explains God knew about the events of the

---

<sup>54</sup> Solle, *Remembering Christ: Christianity and Crisis*.187.

<sup>55</sup> Herbert A. Muhlen, *Charismatic Theology* (London: Burns & Oates, 1978). 24.

<sup>56</sup> John Thomas, *The Charismatic Structure of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2004). 30.

<sup>57</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Process Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Academic, 1987). 162.

<sup>58</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Reason and Religion* ( Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). 38.

<sup>59</sup> Brummer, *The Model of Law: A Study of Philosophical Theology*.281.

<sup>60</sup> Alberto R. Trimm, *The Biblical Concept of God in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2020).8.

<sup>61</sup> Trimm, *The Biblical Concept of God in the Writings of Ellen G. White*.45

<sup>62</sup> Trimm, *The Biblical Concept of God in the Writings of Ellen G. White*. 45.

<sup>63</sup> Muhlen, *Charismatic Theology*.25.

future, even before the creation of this world.<sup>64</sup>

Adventists believe in Trinitarian mystery and functional subordination in the economy of salvation. However, Brunner did not accept the Trinitarian mystery and functional subordination. The word “Trinity” is coined from the Greek word *Τριάδος*. Surprisingly, *Τριάδος* does not appear in the Bible. It was first demonstrated in the three persons of the Godhead by Theophilus of Antioch in AD 170. Since its usage, the term has been endorsed in many Catholic and Protestant creeds, as well as by reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the early Adventist leader William Miller. Against this background, in White’s writings, she never used the term in referring to the Godhead. The early Sabbath-keeping Adventists used the word to portray the heretical notion of three distinctive Gods.

Arguably, the self-revelation of God through the inspired writings confirms the existence of three persons in the Trinity who are one God. This doctrine of the Trinity among Adventists is quite different from Brunner’s doctrine of the Trinity. This difference has created conflicting opinions, yet the Bible provides the answers.

### **Biblical View on the Doctrine of God**

The Bible unfolds the teaching of the doctrine of God. The following biblical texts reveal the doctrine of God (John 1:1; Phil 2:5; Jer 29:11).<sup>65</sup> God’s revelation refers to how God portrays Himself to humankind. In the doctrine of God, He portrays Himself in two modes, which are general and special revelation.<sup>66</sup>

General revelation primarily focuses on salvation since man cannot secure salvation by his might. General revelation denotes God’s attitude and existence, and His attributes. General revelation is postulated in natural objects (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:20). It unlocks in God’s provision (Matt. 5:45). It demonstrates what is right or wrong in one’s conduct. The unique revelation unpacks in twofold; postulating God through Scripture and Christ. Revelation is accurate and authoritative since the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in the writing of the Scripture. The Word of God is inspired by God’s Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). The Bible is inerrant which is free from mistakes. Jesus is a complete revelation of God and Bible teaches both His words and works.

This attribute unpacks that God is present everywhere (Ps. 139:7-12). Radically speaking, God is omniscient, hence He is in essence, without expansion, or division who superintends the whole world. God is also omnipotent and thus, He is all-powerful and does whatever He wills (Gen 17:1, Rev 4:8; John 1:12). God transcends in space (infinity), but He also transcends in duration. Thus, God is unlimited by space and duration. Unlike humankind, God is above temporal limitations (Ps 90:2). Again, God possessed doctrinally self-existence, simplicity, immensity, and spirituality.

One significant doctrinal nature of God is that He is just and fair with every creature (Deut. 32:4). Therefore, perfection and honesty are obtained from the nature of God. Morally speaking, God is excellent, and thus He deals with His creatures uprightly (Luke 18:19, Ps. 100:5, 106:1, 107:1).

### **Analysis and Implications of Brunner’s Doctrine for Contemporary Christians**

The implication of Brunner’s doctrine of God posits that humankind can know God through revelation and self-communication. God can also be known through His name. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Immutable, Infinite, Holy, Love, and Eternal. God is also regarded as immanent and transcendent.

Against this background, some contemporary theologians strongly oppose the doctrine of God championed by Brunner. Modern theologians like Solle opposed theism of Brunner and he postulated that God is far from humankind. She strongly argued that there is no deity existing in the Godhead. Barth also believed that God is a transcendent and unknowable being. He asserted that the doctrine of God cannot be demonstrated in two natures, divine and human. Again, Schleiermacher propounded

<sup>64</sup> Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 160.

<sup>65</sup> New King James Bible Version, (United States of America: Remnant Publication, 2008), 1334.

<sup>66</sup> New King James Bible Version, 37.

dogmatic nominalism where God is in the idea of causality divine and the way humankind intimately exhibits their feelings to Him in different stages of Christian self-consciousness. Brunner strongly believes that the love and holiness doctrine of God are inseparable tenets. Thus, love and holiness form the basic features of the Christian life foundation and practice. God has called every mankind to love and to be holy so that God can grant humanity eternity.

Therefore, it can be implied that Brunner shares similar doctrines of God with Orthodox churches. These similarities of the doctrines of God include omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and immutability. Brunner also accepts the Lord's name in Hebrew Yahweh which implies the Adonai, the powerful and the greatest Almighty God. Thus, Orthodox Christians also accept Yahweh as the Lord's name. Again, Pente-Charismatic Christians embrace the doctrine of God like speaking in tongues, Holy Spirit baptism, healing, and performing miracles and wonders. Essentially, Brunner's doctrine of God has much influence on the theology of Christology.

Thus, through God Almighty, human beings can understand that they gain salvation through the work of the Godhead. The teaching of the doctrine of God has enlightened biblical-theological historical students to comprehend contemporary theological doctrines. Consequently, the doctrine of God explores the theology of anthropology that brings about the ecclesiology, and then to eschatology and soteriology. The research paper is of the view that the salvific value is derived from Jesus Christ.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that Heinrich Emil Brunner's doctrine of God is important because it portrayed the revelation and the significance of God's name Yahweh. Thus, God is sovereign and supreme above all creatures. Brunner strongly opposed natural theology and disclosed that God is entailed in a contradictory movement. On the strength of this, Brunner employed a dialectical method of theology. He explained his doctrine of God on two opposing elements God being immanent and transcendent. He posited that God even though at times far from humankind, yet is near and approachable to humanity. Hence, God's holiness and love exist in inseparable dialectical tension. According to Brunner, the knowledge of God is subjective and finds service and fellowship within His creatures. Essentially, God is perfectly right in His endeavors and thus humankind can realize His redemption and salvation through the foundation of Christ. Therefore, God gave His son Jesus to humanity to discharge salvific work and save humanity.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baker, David L. *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics Vol 4. Peabody*. MA: Hendrickson, 2010.
- Beilby, James K. *Justification: Five Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011.
- Boyd, G.A. *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*. InterVarsity Press, 2014.
- Brummer, Vincent. *The Model of Law: A Study of Philosophical Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Brunner, Emil Heinrich. *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*. Minneapolis, MN: James Clarke & CO, 2002.
- . *Dispute Advocacy*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012.
- . *Christian Anthropology*. Philadelphia: James Clarke & Co., 2002.
- . *Mediator*. Minneapolis: MN: Clarke & Co., 1967.
- Burrown, Millar. *Does God Have a Nature?*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980.
- Canale, Fernando. *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundation of Christian Theology*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000.
- Carlisle, Pa. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996.
- Craig, Lane William. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. New York, NY: Leiden, 1984.

- Erickson, Millard J. *Who Is Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2009.
- Feuerbach, Ludwig. "The Essence of Christianity." In *Literature and Philosophy in Nineteenth Century British Culture*, 87–91. Routledge, 1957.
- Gorringer, Timothy. *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Griffin, Ray David, John B. Cobb, and Clark H. Pinnock. *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Bible Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Reason and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology and Worship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004.
- Lister, Rob. *God Is Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- Metz, Baptist Johann. *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Theology*. New York: Seabury Press, 1980.
- Moroney, Stephen K. *God of Love Judgment*. Canton, Ohio: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009.
- Muhlen, Herbert A. *Charismatic Theology*. London: Burns & Oates, 1978.
- Nash, Ronald H. *Process Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1987.
- New King James Bible Version, United States of America: Remnant Publication, 2008, 1334.
- Nygren, Ander C. *Agape and Eros Translated by Philip S. Watson*. London: S. P. C. K., 1953.
- Oden, Thomas Jay. *The Living God*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006.
- Perszyk, Kenneth J. *Molinism: The Contemporary Debate*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Plantinga, Alvin. *God, Freedom and Evil*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1977.
- Richards, Jay Wesley. *The Untamed God: A Philosophical Exploration of Divine Perfection, Immutability and Simplicity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
- Roy, Froom Edwin Le. *The Coming of the Comforter*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1928.
- Saucy, Robert L. *Is the Bible Reliable? Basic Doctrines Series*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1978.
- Solle, Dorothee. *Christ the Representative: An Essay in Theology after the Death of Christ*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976.
- . *Remembering Christ: Christianity and Crisis*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976.
- Thomas, John. *The Charismatic Structure of Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2004.
- Trimm, Alberto R. *The Biblical Concept of God in the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2020.
- Walls, Jerry L. "Why No Classical Theist, Let Alone Orthodox Christian, Should Ever Be a Compatibilist." *Philosophia Christi* 13, no. 1 (2011): 75–104.
- Wilson, John. *The Sermon of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader*. Chicago, IL: Yale University Press, 2008.

## ABOUT AUTHOR

Pastor Desmond Tutu Osei-Acheampong is a Seventh-day Adventist Minister in Ghana. In an academic spectrum, Pastor Osei-Acheampong is a part-time lecturer who teaches religious courses at Valley View University, Kumasi campus. Currently, he is pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in the area of Biblical and Theological Studies at the Adventist University of Africa, Kenya-Nairobi. Pastor Osei-Acheampong's main field of expertise is Systematic Theology, the New Testament Cognate, with a keen academic concentration on the investigation of hamartiology, anthropology, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and soteriology. More importantly, he has a solid unwavering commitment to the Christian faith and holistic education, enhancing his spiritual

endeavors. Therefore, the positive moral values have finally influenced positively biblical-theological, historical engagement with Seventh-day Adventists and the global academic landscape.