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The Doctrine of Scripture in Fundamentalist Theology A Lutheran Appraisal

Terry Forke

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THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE IN FUNDAMENTALIST THEOLOGY

A LUTHERAN APPRAISAL

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

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by

Terry Forke

May 1989

Approved by: __John Johnson_____
                              Advisor _ _

                    August Suelflow_____
                              Reader

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INTRODUCTION

One of the saddest facts of the history of theology is that its
development has been punctuated by severe struggles within the Church.
Of the many doctrines that have found themselves at the center of
controversy the doctrine of Scripture has been a frequent visitor.
From the dawn of the 18th century Enlightenment a storm has raged about
the authority which Scripture wields within the Church, over the
individual members of it, and over its doctrine. The rise of the
Historical-Critical Method strictly limited that authority. Following
the lead of its father, Johann Semler, the adherents of this technique
sought to distinguish between Scripture and the Word of God. For many
Christians this created doubts as to the authority of Scripture.
Eugene Klug has stated it this way. "Acting all the while like the
dutiful handmaiden of theology, it left the church dangling with the
unanswered question of where to find the Word of God if its (higher
criticism's) assumptions were accepted as true."[1]

The trend of "modern" theology to limit scriptural authority
found stiff opposition on the American scene around the turn of the
twentieth century. While other doctrines were involved, the chief
element in what came to be a quite volatile controversy was that of the
doctrine of Scripture. The conflict developed along the lines of those

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[1]Eugene Klug, foreword to The End of the Historical-Critical
Method by Gerhard Maier, trans. Edwin Leverenz and Rudolph Norden (St.
Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p. 10.

who sought to retain the traditional doctrine of Scripture, known as fundamentalists, as opposed to those who sought to restructure the doctrine in the light of the findings of modern techniques of investigation, usually known as modernists. The fundamentalists did develop a distinguishable doctrine of Scripture during this period. A description and analysis of their particular view of Scripture is a chief objective of this presentation.

There is a need for a description of the fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture. This need is a result of the common misuse of the term "fundamentalist." It is often applied to those whose doctrine of Scripture is similar to that of the fundamentalists, with particular reference to whether or not the Scriptures are held to be inerrant. This use of inerrancy as the primary criterion by which to apply the title of fundamentalist has a tendency to muddy the waters. The misrepresentation of a denomination's doctrine of Scripture as fundamentalist frustrates discussions which might otherwise prove fruitful.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, of which the writer is a member, has often been labeled as fundamentalist. Though countless references might be cited, two have been chosen to represent how widespread the charges are. The following item appeared in a recent issue of the Fundamentalist Journal. It is reproduced in toto not to disparage any individual but to illustrate the depth of the problem.

> Advocates of biblical inerrancy were sharply denounced here by the new bishop of the Lutheran Church in America's (LCA) North Carolina Synod in his first address to its Eastern North Carolina District. Bishop Michael McDaniel said he had little patience with the doctrine of biblical inerrancy advocated by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, but added, "Let's pray that we keep our

tempers, because I am very impatient with Fundamentalists." The bishop then proceeded to lose his temper, denouncing inerrancy as a "hysterical point of view adopted by cowardly people who didn't have the guts to lean on Jesus Christ."[2]

The Missouri Synod is also being watched from overseas. The British author James Barr also claims that the Missouri Synod is fundamentalist with respect to its doctrine of Scripture. "We can see this, for instance, in the Missouri Synod of American Lutheranism, which has recently shown so extreme an outburst of fundamentalist ideology in the case of Concordia Seminary . . ."[3]

Barr believes that no one desires to be known by the name of fundamentalist.[4] Doubtless, he would cast this study as one which seeks to deter the use of the term with reference to the Missouri Synod. While such a result would not be rejected, perhaps a nobler cause might be admitted. That cause would be the facilitation of theological discussion by clarifying the distinction between a fundamentalist and a traditional Lutheran doctrine of Scripture. The thesis of this paper is that there is sufficient difference in the structure and content of the doctrine of Scripture to deny the charge that the traditional Lutheran doctrine, as held by the Missouri Synod, is fundamentalist.

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[2]Religious News Service, "Inerrantists Provoke Bishop Who Tried to Keep His Temper," Fundamentalist Journal 2 (February 1983):54.

[3]James Barr, The Scope and Authority of the Bible (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980), p. 66.

[4]James Barr, Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), p. 2. Apparently he is not well informed on the American scene on this matter.

Two things remain to be accomplished in this introduction. The
first is to more clearly define Fundamentalism, in general. The second
is to determine how best to represent and analyze the fundamentalist
doctrine of Scripture. Various attempts have been made to define
Fundamentalism. The earliest sources had a tendency to depend on the
social and economic factors incident to the Fundamentalist-Modernist
controversy which took place during the first part of this century.
Barr limits the phenomena too strictly to theological factors, and
writes from a decidedly British point of view.

George Marsden, in his recent work Fundamentalism and American
Culture, presents the movement from a much broader perspective. He
views Fundamentalism as a distinguishable historical movement.

> Fundamentalism was a 'movement' in the sense of a tendency or
> development in Christian thought that gradually took on its own
> identity as a patchwork coalition of representatives of other
> movements. . . . Fundamentalism was a loose, diverse, and changing
> federation of co-belligerents united by their fierce opposition to
> modernist attempts to bring Christianity into line with modern
> thought.[5]

This understanding of Fundamentalism as an historical movement must be
at the basis of any work dealing with its theology. There are varying
opinions as to how to date the Fundamentalist movement. In general it
can be seen to begin to take shape in the last decade of the nineteenth
century in the form of Bible conferences which sought to cross denomi-
national lines. By the end of the 1920s when J. Gresham Machen
withdrew from Princeton Theological Seminary the movement was mostly
spent.

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[5]George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, (New York:
Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 4.

With this brief background it is now possible to seek a way in which to represent the doctrine of Scripture as proposed by the Fundamentalist movement. Ernest Sandeen's thesis is that Fundamentalism was comprised of the marriage of the two movements of dispensational-millenarianism and Princeton Theology.[6] This is a narrower view than earlier accepted, but most scholars agree that these two movements were major elements within Fundamentalism. Most also agree that Princeton Theology was a dominant source of doctrinal formulations, especially in the area of Scripture.

The major force in the development of the Princeton doctrine of Scripture and its application to the interests of Fundamentalism was Benjamin B. Warfield. The next generation produced a theologian, J. Gresham Machen who was to carry on the work of Warfield, and who sought only to solidify that position for the advancement of Fundamentalism. These two men have been chosen to represent the fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture. Their works span the time and capture the tone of the controversy. More will be said of their appropriateness as representatives of Fundamentalism later.

The attempt to analyze their doctrine in the hope of supporting the thesis of this paper will also be made through the use of two Lutheran sources. These sources will be used to present the traditional Lutheran doctrine of Scripture. The concept of a traditional Lutheran position is based on an understanding of confessional Lutheranism. Within the tradition of the Missouri Synod Confessional

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[6]Ernest Sandeen, <u>Origins of Fundamentalism</u> (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 3.

Lutheranism refers to an acceptance of the historical confessions of the Church as true expositions of the Scripture. "For Lutherans today the Lutheran Confessions themselves serve as a genuine Biblical testimony of the fathers in much the same way. For contemporary Lutherans claim to accept the confessions as the confessions themselves wish to be understood, namely as correct Biblical expositions."[7] This confessionalism, it will be later noted, has lent itself to the ability of the Missouri Synod to maintain a traditional Lutheran doctrine of Scripture.

It is within the context of traditional Lutheranism that these two sources are found. The first of these is particularly appropriate for two reasons. Francis Pieper not only lived and wrote during the same time period of the controversy at hand but he also authored the dogmatics textbooks which are still used as the basis of systematic courses in the Missouri Synod seminaries. The second source will be the official statements which have been published by the Missouri Synod.

The analysis of these four sources will form the body of this paper. The comparison will support the thesis that there is an appropriate distinction to be made between the fundamentalist and the traditional Lutheran doctrine of Scripture. This distinction is made in the hope that further discussion may be facilitated by the avoidance of unnecessary conflict due to the misuse of the term "fundamentalism" as applied to the Missouri Synod.

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[7] Ralph Bohlmann, _Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions_, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1983), p. 121.

PART I

FUNDAMENTALIST DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER ONE

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD ON SCRIPTURE

Warfield and Fundamentalism

Benjamin Warfield was born in 1851 of Kentucky Presbyterian

parentage. He graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1873

and spent nine years as professor of New Testament Language and

Literature at Western Theological Seminary. Following the death of

Archibald A. Hodge he accepted the Chair of Theology at Princeton

Theological Seminary. There he spent the remaining thirty years of his

life. He died in 1921.[1]

His was an admirable and profitable career. For Princeton

Seminary he was a mainstay, one who sought to stem the tide of the

growing trend in the Presbyterian Church to invoke the techniques of

the modernists. For the Fundamentalist movement he was the framer of

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[1]Ethelbert Warfield, "Biographical Sketch" in Revelation and
Inspiration by Benjamin Warfield (New York: Oxford University Press,
1927), pp. v-ix. This source is a collection of Warfield's major works
on Scripture. In 1948 the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company
reprinted this book with the exception of two articles, under the title
The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, ed. Sam Craig (Phil: The
Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1948). The demand for the
republication of Warfield's works continues to be great. The referen-
ces in this paper will be to the original publication.

their doctrine of Scripture, and a well-known conservative authority on
most any issue.

It might be well to comment on the choice of Warfield as a
representative of the fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture. The charge
could conceivably be made that this study will better represent the
Presbyterian doctrine of Scripture than that of Fundamentalism. But
this charge is ill-founded. Ernest Sandeen suggests that the Princeton
theologians were the major forces in bringing the fundamentalist
doctrine into shape.

> The frequency with which these aspects of the doctrine of inspira-
> tion occur in the Fundamentalist controversy seems largely due to
> the influence of the Princeton Theology. That the Bible was (1)
> verbally inspired and (2) inerrant in its every reference,
> statistic, and quotation (3) when first written down in the
> original autographs- these phrases have become the shibboleths of
> the Fundamentalist doctrine of the Scriptures.[2]

Any number of other experts on the Fundamentalist movement note
that the intellectual leadership for the framing of a doctrine of
Scripture came from Warfield. James Barr, Richard Quebedeaux, and
Jerry Falwell all contend that Warfield's formulations were adopted by
the Fundamentalist movement.[3]

One of the notable aspects of Fundamentalism was a fierce
opposition to Modernism. None could fill that criterion more aptly
than Warfield. He asks, Is the school of criticism credible enough to

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[2]Ernest Sandeen, Origins of Fundamentalism (Philadelphia:
Fortress Press, 1968), p. 13.

[3]James Barr, The Scope and Authority of the Bible (Philadelphia:
The Westminster Press, 1980), p. 67; Richard Quebedeaux, The Worldly
Evangelicals (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978), p. 22;
Jerry Falwell, ed., with Ed Dobson and Ed Hindson, The Fundamentalist
Phenomenon (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1981), p. 8.

cause the Christian to give up the doctrine of inspiration and not only that but also the whole Christian belief system because he will have to find a new basis for his doctrine? No, he says, this modern trend of theology must be resisted.[4]

In an article written in 1908 on apologetics Warfield suggests that one of the titles or divisions of apologetics is "fundamental theology."[5] This indicates that the term "fundamental" was already in use, and in Warfield's mind it had particular reference to the field of apologetics. In fact, the movement in opposition to Modernism did not come by its name of Fundamentalism until after 1909 when the first of a twelve volume series of conservative theological pamphlets appeared. The series was titled The Fundamentals. Its object was to call the Church back to the fundamental beliefs upon which it was founded. Warfield contributed one article, printed in the first volume, on the deity of Christ. His relationship to this important publication will be discussed in more depth in a later section.

Finally, one must also assess Warfield's contribution to the Fundamentalist movement in terms of manpower. As a professor at Princeton for over thirty years he was in a position to influence many young men about to enter the ministry. His effectiveness can be observed in the number of Presbyterian ministers which took part in the movement, notably one of his students, J. Gresham Machen, whom we will have recourse to study in this document.

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[4]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 225.

[5]Benjamin Warfield, Studies in Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 10.

Scripture as Authority

Why Authority is Necessary

Warfield does not give a systematic presentation of the doctrine of Scripture. Rather, his thoughts on the subject are contained largely in journal articles. The majority of these articles are concerned with the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. He deals with these areas because they were considered to be the most vulnerable to the modernist attack.

It is the contention of this study that the primary motivation for the work that Warfield did on Scripture was the need he felt to uphold its authority in the face of such attacks. The presentation of Warfield's formulations shall be dealt with under the theme of authority. It would appear that besides the threat of Modernism another element in the scheme which Warfield uses is the influence of his mentor, Charles Hodge. Hodge, in his three volume <u>Systematic Theology</u> treats the doctrine of Scripture as a matter of introduction, under the general heading "The Protestant Rule of Faith." The other headings in the introduction, "Rationalism," "Mysticism," and "Roman Catholic Doctrine concerning the Rule of Faith" indicate that what Hodge is trying to do is contrast the various types of authority which were in vogue during his day.[6] The point here is that when dealing with Scripture the emphasis was not so much the message that Scripture carried as the authority which was indigenous to it.

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[6]Charles Hodge, <u>Systematic Theology</u>, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1873), 1:vii-ix.

Warfield continued and expanded this tradition. He believed
that he was following Augustine when he concluded that men can only
believe, indeed can only function in this life on the basis of some
authority.[7] He summarizes Augustine's doctrine of revelation in this
way.

> In every sphere of life we remain dependant on the authority of
> those who are in this or that or the other department of knowledge
> better instructed than we; . . . Revelation plays precisely the
> same role for the mind darkened by sin. The heavenly Father
> intervenes to meet the needs of sin-blinded souls by offering to
> their faith on the authority of God the truth . . .[8]

In every aspect of life some authority is necessary. As far as
spiritual life is concerned, God offers man the Scripture as the
authority upon which to base his beliefs.

But an authority for Warfield is always something which produces
evidence of its authority. It is always something which produces
evidence for the belief system which it supports. Man needs authority
and believes on the basis of authority. On the other hand, "It would
seem to be fairly clear that 'belief' is always the product of evidence
and that it cannot be created by volitions . . ."[9] Two points can be
drawn from this discussion which describe the frame of reference in
which Warfield molded his doctrine of Scripture. The first is that
Scripture is for him the ultimate authority for every aspect of life.

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[7]Warfield, Studies, p. 325.

[8]Benjamin Warfield, Calvin and Augustine, ed. Sam Craig
(Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1956),
p. 413.

[9]Warfield, Studies, p. 317.

The second is that as such an authority the Scripture should produce evidence to which man can cling to bolster his faith.

Supernatural vs. Natural Authority

In opposition to Modernism, Warfield and the fundamentalists stressed the necessity of a supernatural authority. The natural authority of the mind, or of some vague divine indwelling was not enough for Warfield. The mind was darkened by sin. What was necessary was some supernatural intervention.

God accomplished this intervention through the means of revelation. There are two species or stages of revelation. The first is general revelation. General revelation is the way that God addresses all men through the means of his creation. Creation speaks of the existence and the goodness of God.

The second type of revelation is called special revelation. This is the means God uses to call a people to himself, and to reveal his will for them. Actually, both types of revelation are necessary. Without special revelation general revelation would be incomplete. And without general revelation special revelation would lack the necessary basis of the fundamental knowledge of God.[10]

The topic of special revelation was where Warfield and the modernists clashed. The modernists felt that God could not break into this world in the form of revelation. In this respect they were at variance with the fundamentalists. To Warfield this was the basic difference between a religion of natural authority and one of super-

[10]Warfield, _Revelation and Inspiration_, p. 7.

natural authority. For Warfield the Christian religion of the Bible,
because it has supernatural authority is able to impress itself on man.
It is distinct from the religion of natural authority in which man must
seek out God.

> The religion of the Bible thus announces itself, not as the
> product of men's search after God . . . but as the creation in men
> of the gracious God, forming a people for himself. . . . Or
> rather, to speak more exactly, it announces itself as the revealed
> religion, as the only revealed religion . . .[11]

Scripture has Divine Authority

The stance which Warfield assumed on the possibility of a
supernatural authority made it incumbent upon him to describe the
manner in which that authority could be communicated to man. Warfield
answered with the voice of the Church of the past that the Scriptures
are that communication. They are the divine authority for men.
"Before all else, Protestantism is, in its very essence, an appeal from
all other authority to the divine authority of Holy Scripture."[12]

Scripture has divine authority because it is the Word of God.
And Scripture is the Word of God because it is God's inspired revela-
tion. "The writers of this article are sincerely convinced of the
perfect soundness of the great catholic doctrine of biblical inspira-
tion--i.e. that the Scriptures not only contain, but ARE, THE WORD OF
GOD . . ."[13]

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[11]Ibid., p. 4.

[12]Ibid., p. 57.

[13]Benjamin Warfield and Archibald Hodge, _Inspiration_, introduc-
tion and appendices by Roger Nicole (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book
House, 1979), p. 26.

The fact that the Scriptures are considered to be the Word of God raises the question of the relationship between Scripture and revelation. For the fundamentalist they were not identical, as some of the modernists who tried to describe the fundamentalist position believed. In fact, Warfield distinguished three modes of revelation. He called them external manifestations, or theophanies, internal suggestion, or prophetic revelation, and concursive operation, or apostolic revelation.[14]

All three of these modes are used by God to communicate his messages to men. It is in this way that supernatural authority is available to men. But Warfield has been criticized, and justly so, for some confusion in this area. By using the same term for apostolic revelation, that is concursive operation, as he does for the mode of inspiration he implies that all of Scripture is revelation. However, that is clearly not what he means. Not everything that has been revealed by God is contained in Scripture. And not everything in Scripture is revelation in the sense that it was brought to the attention of the writer through supernatural means.[15]

If revelation were not possible then there could be no supernatural authority. And the same effect would be reached if revelation could not be communicated to man. This was another way that the modernists sought to diminish the authority of the Scriptures. They concluded that Scripture could not contain actual revelation but only a record of that revelation, or even less authoritatively, a record of

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[14]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 15.

[15]Ibid., p. 47.

the redeeming acts of God which were used to carry revelation. Warfield vehemently opposed this mediating position. "Revelation thus appears, however, not as the mere reflection of the redeeming acts of God in the minds of men, but as a factor in the redeeming work of God, a component part of the series of his redeeming acts . . ."[16]

The inspiration of Scripture is of utmost importance to the maintenance of its authority. "We do not erect inspiration into an end, but hold it to be simply a means to an end--viz. the accurate conveyance of truth."[17] Inspiration upholds authority because it assures absolute truth. Mike Parsons calls this absolute assurance of truth in relation to the authority of Scripture the primary presupposition of the Princeton position. He says that Warfield could not conceive of God conveying spiritual truth or even truth in general through an errant document.[18]

Warfield delineated two trends of thought which had a tendency to denigrate the authority of Scripture. They were the rationalistic view and the mystical view. The rationalists tried to uphold a Bible which was authoritative only in part, that is only in matters of faith and practice. The mysticists on the other hand, set Scripture before the tribunal of the "Christian consciousness" or some inner experience to determine which parts of it were to be considered authoritative.[19]

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[16]Ibid., p. 12.

[17]Warfield, Inspiration, p. 42.

[18]Mike Parsons, "Warfield and Scripture," The Churchman 91 (July 1977):216.

[19]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, pp. 58-59.

Much of Warfield's writing is in reaction to something that someone

from one of these two movements has said.

The Role of Reason

There is one more significant element in Warfield's view of

Biblical authority. That element is the role of reason. One might

have surmised from Warfield's comments about the sin-darkened minds of

mankind that reason and authority would have little to do with each

other in spiritual matters. But it should be recalled that for

Warfield authority is always reasonable, always evidential. An

extended quotation from Warfield's introduction to Francis Beattie's

work on apologetics will illustrate Warfield's confidence in reason.

> It is the distinction of Christianity that it has come into the
> world clothed with the mission to reason its way to its dominion.
> Other religions may appeal to the sword or seek some other way to
> propagate themselves. Christianity makes its appeal to right
> reason, and stands out among all religions, therefore, as distinc-
> tively 'the apologetic religion.' It is solely by reasoning that
> it has come thus far on its way to its kingship. And it is solely
> by reasoning that it will put all its enemies under its feet.[20]

There are three distinct factors which led Warfield to the

somewhat ironical position of placing such a high estimate upon the

faculty of reason. They are his understanding of the nature of man,

the teaching of Common Sense Philosophy, and his understanding of the

nature of faith.

"Sin has not destroyed or altered in its essential nature any

one of man's faculties although . . . it has affected the operation of

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[20]Benjamin Warfield, Introduction to _Apologetics_, 3 vols., by
Francis Beattie (Richmond, VA: The Presbyterian Committee of Publica-
tion, 1903), 1:26.

them all."[21] This affectedness was not thought to be to such an extent

that reason had no capabilities in the spiritual realm. "Warfield

believed that unregenerate men could study and even understand the Word

of God, for it was open and available to rational human nature."[22]

A second aspect of Warfield's picture of human nature is that of

an inclination to know God. He agrees with Abraham Kuyper that there

is a "sensus divinitatis" or a "semen religionis" which impels man to

seek God.[23] The desire to seek God combined with the capability of

reason to understand the Word of God is a powerful argument for the

authority of Scripture which carries its own evidence of truthfulness.

The second factor is that of Common Sense Philosophy. This

school of philosophy, which was taught at Princeton, supplemented

Warfield's view of the nature of man. It taught that truth was of a

single nature and that all persons of common sense were capable of

knowing the truth.[24] The emphasis that George Marsden makes upon the

importance of Common Sense Philosophy to the Fundamentalist movement is

well supported by Warfield. He pictures man as capable of realizing

the general trustworthiness of Scripture. This does not appear to be a

spiritual matter to him in which man would be blinded by sin. Rather

on the basis of common sense man is able to see the trustworthiness of

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[21]Ibid., 1:30.

[22]John Gerstner, "Warfield's Case for Biblical Inerrancy," in
God's Inerrant Word, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany
Fellowship, 1974), p. 138.

[23]Warfield, Introduction to Apologetics, p. 23.

[24]George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 14.

Scripture and from there to quite naturally be led to its ultimate authority.

The third factor involved in Warfield's estimate of the role of reason is that of his understanding of the nature of faith. Faith cannot be opposed to reason. In fact, it is clear to Charles Hodge that reason must confirm the basis of faith. This is supported, "1. From the nature of faith, which is not a blind, irrational assent, but an intelligent reception of the truth on adequate grounds. 2. The Scriptures never demand faith except on the ground of evidence."[25]

Warfield does not waver from Hodge's description.

> It seems to be forgotten that though faith be a moral act and the gift of God, it is yet formally conviction passing into confidence; and that all forms of conviction must rest on evidence as their ground; and it is not faith but reason which investigates the nature and validity of this ground.[26]

This understanding of faith clearly corresponds to the overall description of Scripture as authority because Scripture gives reasonable evidence of its authority.

The goal of this first section has been to illustrate how Warfield views Scripture as the ultimate authority in all aspects of human life. This theme is essential to the structure of his doctrine of Scripture. For if it can be called a doctrine of Scripture it must be recognized that it is cast as a defense of its authority.

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[25]Hodge, Systematic Theology, 1:53.

[26]Warfield, Studies, p. 15.

Defense of the Authority of Scripture

Warfield marshals his evidence to support the Scriptures as the ultimate authority in a variety of ways. Four categories have been developed to present it in this study. This is, of course, not something Warfield produced. He did not take the time to put all of his thoughts about Scripture into one place. It is an attempt on the part of the writer to analyze Warfield's work and thereby to demonstrate that he presented his formulations on Scripture in order to uphold its rightful authority.

External Verification

By external verification it is meant that Warfield seeks to substantiate scriptural authority through the use of evidence found outside of Scripture itself. This approach takes the form of an appeal to historically verifiable facts assembled in a reasonable argument. It is his primary argument.

The first point that must be made is how the Scriptures came into being. The question of canonicity is important to Warfield's argument because it offers an opportunity to ground the doctrine of Scripture in verifiable facts.

> If, then, the apostles were appointed by Christ to act for him and in his name and authority in founding the Church--and this no one can doubt; and if the apostles gave the Scriptures to the Church in prosecution of this commission--and this admits of as little doubt; the whole question of the authority of the Scriptures is determined.[27]

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[27] Benjamin Warfield, Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield, 2 vols., ed. John Meeter (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973), p. 537.

Apostolicity is an appropriate factor to base the authority of the Scriptures on because it can be corroborated by history. "The proper evidence of apostolicity of the canonical Scriptures is, of course, historical. Apostolicity is a historical conception and its actuality can be established only on historical evidence."[28] This appeal to history is essentially also an appeal to reason whose role in the creation of faith we have previously discussed.

If apostolicity is the criterion for canonicity the question of the authorship of the individual books of the Bible is bound to be the next problem. But Warfield avoids this issue by saying that apostolic authorship was not the sole criterion for canonicity. "The principle of canonicity was not apostolic authorship but imposition by the apostles as 'law.'"[29]

The apostles imposed the individual books of the Bible upon the Church as they became available. In this way the canon of the Church grew. It did not, in Warfield's view, evolve as the Church became convinced of the authenticity of the books.[30] In a review of Marcus Dods' book The Bible, Its Origin and Nature Warfield appears to ground the authority of the Scriptures in Christ, by calling the apostles a "proximate" authority acting as "authoritative agents" of Christ for the founding of his Church.[31] But Warfield's dedication to the

[28]Warfield, Calvin and Augustine, p. 443.

[29]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 456.

[30]Benjamin Warfield, Critical Reviews (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 233.

[31]Ibid., p. 120.

authority of Christ may not be as solid as it first appears. In the

first place, as far as the production of Scripture is concerned

Christ's authority is one of being the source of ultimate truth. In

other words, the authority of Christ as the foundation of the Scrip-

tures will again produce an appeal to reason to confirm the truth of

Scripture. Secondly, if Christ's authority was all that was necessary

the question must be asked why the "general trustworthiness" of the

apostles attains such grand magnitude in Warfield's discussion of the

authority of Scripture.

The trustworthiness of the apostles is important because it is

an appeal to reason to trust them on the basis of their credibility as

teachers. Reason must be convinced of the truthfulness of Scripture.

This is why he says, ". . . the question of inspiration does not come

into discussion until the general trustworthiness of the Scriptures as

sources for Christian doctrine has already been established; and the

establishment of this belongs to the general 'evidences of Chris-

tianity' . . ."[32]

Despite the appeal to Christ's authority the issue is brought to

a climax in the trustworthiness of the apostles. The line of argument

runs something like this: If the apostles are found to be trustworthy

then the works which they imposed upon the Church can be assumed to be

trustworthy. If those works are found to be generally trustworthy it

is but a small step, to understanding them as the inerrant guide for

faith and life.

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[32]Warfield, <u>Shorter Writings</u>, p. 632.

Consequently, Warfield leaves the authority of Scripture
precariously perched on the general trustworthiness of the apostles as
teachers of doctrine. If they are not found to be trustworthy then
Christianity will not survive as it is known today. In an article
entitled "The Real Problem of Inspiration" he states that the real
issue is just this, "Are the New Testament writers trustworthy guides
in doctrine?" If not he doubts that any doctrine of Christianity can
stand. He continues on the same page.

> If the New Testament writers are not trustworthy as teachers of
> doctrine and we have to go elsewhere for the source and norm of
> truth as to God and duty and immortality, it will not be strange
> if a very different system of doctrine from that delivered by the
> Scriptures and docilely received from them by the Church,
> results.[33]

The importance of the proof of the general trustworthiness of
the apostles and their writings cannot be over-estimated. "We must
indeed prove the authenticity, credibility and general trustworthiness
of the New Testament writings before we prove their inspiration; and
even were they not inspired this proof would remain valid and we should
give them accordant trust."[34] The last clause is notable. Even if the
Scriptures were not inspired, which seemingly can mean nothing other
than even if they were not God's Word, they would still be authorita-
tive due to the trustworthiness of the apostles.

Warfield's reliance on the trustworthiness of the apostles led
to some confusion in his own thought. At this point he is able to say
that the inspiration of Scripture is not a necessary doctrine. In

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[33]Warfield, _Revelation and Inspiration_, p. 180.

[34]Ibid., p. 212.

other places one would have to conclude that it is a necessary doctrine for Warfield. He writes as if he felt himself vulnerable if he placed too much emphasis on the inspiration of Scripture as a basis for its authority. "Let it not be said that thus we found the whole Christian system upon the doctrine of plenary inspiration."[35] As a result he always returns to a historically verifiable foundation for his authority. "The fact that Christianity is a supernatural religion and the nature of Christianity as a supernatural religion, are matters of history; and are independent of any, and of every, theory of inspiration."[36]

Internal Verification

By internal verification it is meant that Warfield, in addition to external verification also seeks to substantiate the authority of Scripture through the use of evidence found within the Scriptures. It can undoubtedly be concluded from the foregoing section that this verification of the authority of Scripture is only supplemental to external verification. Nevertheless, it is the contention of this study that Warfield sought to support the authority of Scripture also through the means of the internal characteristics of inspiration and inerrancy.

Whether inspiration and inerrancy can be used to support scriptural authority may be questioned by some. But Warfield feels it can be done because both internal characteristics are externally

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[35]Ibid., p. 209.

[36]Ibid., p. 67.

verifiable. Such a formulation is not intended to create a vicious circle or to be unduly confusing. Sandeen notes that for the Princeton theologians, ". . . if the Bible was to be proven to be God's inspired word, the demonstration must be made on the basis of reason through the use of external marks of authenticity--not inner convictions."[37]

It is the intimate connection between inspiration and authority in Warfield's work which leads to the conviction that these internal characteristics are used as support for such authority. "In point of fact, no one doubts that the doctrine of the detailed authority of the Scriptures--their 'inspiration' in the old sense belongs to the 'high doctrines' of Christianity. . . . But it is another question whether Christianity, as a system of truth, can dispense with this 'high doctrine,' . . ."[38] This quotation is significant for two reasons. In the first line inspiration and authority are almost equated. In the last line Warfield voices some doubt as to whether Christianity can exist without inspiration as a support for the authority of Scripture. The point is that, for Warfield, if the Scriptures are inspired then they are irrefutably authoritative. Furthermore, inspiration can be proved to the satisfaction of the intellect.

To be fair to Warfield this section on the inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture must be the most extensive. These were the prime targets of the modernists. Thus these are the areas on which Warfield spent the most time. It is profitable to go into some detail in order to observe the technique Warfield used in defending Scripture.

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[37]Sandeen, Origins of Fundamentalism, p. 13.

[38]Warfield, Critical Reviews, p. 240.

Warfield went to great lengths to defend inspiration. We will not be able to investigate all of the approaches he used. But in the midst of the details we do examine, the over-riding theme of proof of the authority of Scripture must not be forgotten.

Inspiration defined

As Warfield set about the task of defining inspiration he was aware that there were a number of different definitions being used at the time. These were usually divided into the two general categories of plenary or verbal inspiration and limited inspiration. Warfield contended that only plenary inspiration was true inspiration. In the article "The Real Problem of Inspiration" he clearly defines his case. Despite its length we would be remiss not to quote it in its entirety. It is a source we can turn to throughout this section.

> The Church, then, has held from the beginning that the Bible is the Word of God in such a sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will. It has always recognized that this conception of co-authorship implies that the Spirit's superintendence extends to the choice of the words by the human authors (verbal inspiration), and preserves its product from everything inconsistent with a divine authorship--thus securing, among other things that entire truthfulness which is everywhere presupposed in and asserted for Scripture by the Biblical writers (inerrancy).[39]

Elsewhere he expands this definition in terms of what inspiration means and what it does not mean. The Greek term, theopneustos, actually says nothing of inspiration. It merely speaks of spiration,

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[39]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 173.

that is it means the breathing out of God.[40] The fact that this term

is used only once in the New Testament does not bother Warfield because

the Scriptures everywhere testify to the fact that they are the product

of God's influence.

Still, no term could better represent the fact that the Scrip-

tures are God's work. That is the significance of the term inspira-

tion. It is intended to refer not so much to the nature or the effects

of Scripture as it is to its origin. "What it [inspiration] affirms is

that the Scriptures owe their origin to an activity of God the Holy

Ghost and are in the highest and truest sense his creation."[41]

Recalling the theme of authority we note that divine origin means

divine authority.

Inspiration does not mean that the Holy Spirit so moved men that

they wrote words in a way that would have been meaningless to their

hearers. He did not, for example, cause them to understand the

physical structure of the universe as God alone knows it to be. "And

the Holy Ghost in using human speech, used it as he found it. It

cannot be argued then that the Holy Spirit could not speak of the sun

setting, or call the Roman world 'the whole world.'"[42]

Secondly, inspiration does not mean that the writer can be held

accountable for something that he has not professed to be doing in his

writing.[43] For example, if the writer does not say that he is giving a

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[40]Ibid., p. 79.

[41]Ibid., p. 280.

[42]Ibid., p. 419.

[43]Ibid., p. 420.

verbatim quotation from the Old Testament he should not be held
accountable if he varies slightly. Or if he does not say that he is
giving a word for word account of a particular incident in Jesus' life
it should not result in great consternation if he varies slightly from
the account given by another writer.

Inspiration proved

In a popular work entitled Inspiration, written in conjunction
with Archibald Hodge, Warfield lists five proofs of inspiration. The
first and foremost of these is that the apostles claimed to be speaking
with divine authority. Secondly, the miraculous unity of the message
and purpose of the Bible testifies to its inspiration. The third proof
is that of the miraculous way in which such an ancient book is not in
opposition with modern scientific knowledge. Fourthly, the fact that
the Bible has been accepted for so many years, by so many people all
over the world proves its inspiration. Finally, inspiration has always
been the doctrine of the Church.[44]

For the purposes of this study those proofs can be consolidated
into three. The first is the proof of the apostles' claims. The
second, encompassing two, three and four above, is the proof of the
Scripture's own claims. The third is that of the Church's claims.
Under this scheme the second two are distinctly dependent on the first.
This is where the internal proofs must be externally verified, as noted
earlier.

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[44]Warfield, Inspiration, pp. 29-33.

The second two proofs depend on the apostolic claims because the apostolic claims can most easily be verified. The first proof is therefore, made in two steps. First Warfield must prove that the apostles claim that they spoke from divine inspiration. "We believe this doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures primarily because it is the doctrine which Christ and his apostles believed, and which they have taught us."[45] Secondly, he must prove that the apostles are trustworthy. ". . . the evidence for the truth of the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture is just the whole body of evidence which goes to show that the apostles are trustworthy teachers of doctrine."[46] If the apostles are trustworthy and we can believe them in any other doctrinal teachings we must also believe them when they say that the Scriptures are inspired. It should also be noted here that Christ is mentioned in this context not so much as the savior of the world and the author of the Gospel as he is as a trustworthy teacher of doctrine.

Once Warfield has proved that the apostles are trustworthy teachers, (which he does by appealing to the facts that they would have no reason to lie and that their teachings have been accepted by the Church for centuries), he feels he has freed himself from the charge of arguing in a circle if he uses Scripture to authenticate its own inspiration. This he accomplishes in a two step argument.

First he seeks to prove that Scripture gives itself divine authority. In addition to 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 which make

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[45]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 74.

[46]Ibid., p. 207.

clear claims, he turns to Romans 9:17 and Galatians 3:8 as proof texts.
Both verses ascribe an action to Scripture which was actually accom-
plished by God. In the Romans passage it is recorded that, ". . .
Scripture says to Pharaoh" when actually it was God who pronounced the
words quoted. In the Galatians passage we read, "And the Scripture,
foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith . . ." It was
not Scripture which foresaw such a thing, but God. These texts make
Scripture of divine authority. "But 'Scripture' and 'God' lay so close
together in the minds of the writers of the New Testament that they
could naturally speak of 'Scripture' doing what Scripture records God
as doing."[47]

In a correlated argument Warfield surveys pagan and Christian
literature to conclude that whenever the Scriptures use the term "It
says" there is most assuredly an important source being referred to as
opposed to referring to some wise saying. He writes, "We may well be
content in the New Testament as in Philo to translate the phrase
wherever it occurs, 'It says'- with the implication that this 'It says'
is the same as 'Scripture says,' and that this 'Scripture says' is the
same as 'God says.'"[48]

Once he has proved that Scripture gives itself divine authority
he has yet one obstacle to the completion of his proof that Scripture
claims itself to be inspired. The problem is that when the New
Testament authors refer to Scripture it is probable that they are
referring exclusively to the Old Testament. Warfield's favorite verse

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[47]Ibid., p. 92.

[48]Ibid., p. 332.

for proving that the New Testament is understood by the writers to be included in the term "Scripture" is 1 Timothy 5:18. The verse reads, ". . . for the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" He believes that the second part of the quotation is from Luke 10:7. Thus he has proved that Scripture quotes the New Testament as Scripture, thereby completing his proof that Scripture claims itself to be inspired.[49]

Of course, the primary texts are 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21, and John 10:35. He generally uses the Timothy passage to prove that the Scriptures are of divine origin. The passage from Peter is where he finds the clearest indication of what the mode of inspiration might be. And John's record of Jesus' words give Scripture an irrefutable claim to divine authority because he says that they cannot be broken.

Warfield defends his proof against the charge that it is simply a presupposition of what inspiration should be by stating that the Church has always held this doctrine. The lengthy quotation that we used to define inspiration at the beginning of this section opened by saying that the Church has held to inspiration from the beginning. Warfield also supports his case by referring to the Church fathers

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[49]Warfield, Shorter Writings, p. 539. There are, of course, many other references, a few of which are listed here, from page 635 of this source. Rom. 9:17; 10:19; Gal. 3:18 to show that "God says" is the same as "Scripture says." Heb. 4:4 to show that narrative portions of Scripture are quoted as God. Matt. 22:43; Acts 2:34 to show that the Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture. 2 Cor. 10:7; Gal. 1:7 to show that Scripture is used of both Old and New Testament. 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Cor. 2:16 to show that the New Testament was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Origen, Iranaeus, Polycarp, and Augustine, all of whom had under-
standings of inspiration similar to his own.[50]

Mode of inspiration

Warfield was a sharp critic of all conceptions of inspiration
other than his own. In a work against Henry Preserved Smith titled
Limited Inspiration he contends that Smith's development of the doc-
trine leaves it devoid of any meaning. Smith wrote that inspiration
happens in such a way that only those matters concerned with faith and
morals were inspired. It is clear that this type of inspiration
leaves the Scripture without authority because arguments will always
arise over which parts of the Scripture pertain to faith and morals.[51]

Another criticism involves those who misunderstand inspiration
to be virtually the same as revelation. This misunderstanding belongs
to those men, Seeberg for example, who brand the fundamentalist
doctrine of inspiration as a dictation theory.[52] Warfield repudiates
such a charge. All such terms as assistance, superintendence, direc-
tion, control, and even dictation do not express the nature of the
Spirit's action in revealing the Scriptures in a manner that upholds
the authority of Scripture.[53]

Each of these objections pertains in one way or another to the
mode of inspiration. On the one hand Warfield says that the Reformed

[50]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 54.

[51]Benjamin Warfield, Limited Inspiration (Philadelphia:
Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1962), p. 33.

[52]Warfield, Critical Reviews, p. 235.

[53]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 27

Church holds the mode of inspiration to be inscrutable.[54] On the other hand he does his best to describe that mode. "Justice is not done to the two factors in inspiration or to the two elements in the Scriptures by any other theory than that of concursus."[55] The two elements which he speaks of are the human and the divine. Both elements play a part because in his understanding of inspiration the action of God upon the writers does no violence to their nature as men. He even goes so far as to say that when God uses men as instruments of revelation that their minds, their hearts, their religious feelings, as well as the logical processes of their reasoning and the tenacity of their memories are involved in the process.[56]

The term inspiration suggests that the mode would be one of the inbreathing of the Spirit. But in fact theopneustos carries the meaning of breathing out, and does not refer to God's action on the writers but to the origin of the Scriptures. "The Scriptural conception of the relation of the Divine Spirit to the human authors in the production of the Scriptures is better expressed by the figure of 'bearing' than by the figure of 'inbreathing'. . . ."[57]

The figure of bearing is arrived at from the passage 2 Peter 1:21. In the Revised Standard Version the term is translated with the word "moved." Warfield describes this process of bearing as a lifelong

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[54]Ibid., p. 397.

[55]Warfield, Shorter Writings, p. 631.

[56]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, pp. 17-18.

[57]Ibid., p. 100.

work of God. God carried, throughout their lives, the men whom he knew

would write his word, in such a way that they were uniquely qualified.

> Each sacred writer was by God specially formed, endowed, educated,
> providentially conditioned, and then supplied with knowledge
> naturally, supernaturally or spiritually conveyed, so that he and
> he alone could, and freely would, produce his allotted part. Thus
> God predetermined all the matter and form of the several books
> largely by the formation and training of the several
> authors . . .[58]

This is as far as Warfield feels he can go in describing the mode of

inspiration.

As far as Warfield is concerned all the descriptions and the

proofs of inspiration are designed to support the indigenous authority

of Scripture. If he can prove that Scripture is inspired then there is

no doubt of its authority. But there is another element internal to

the Scriptures which can be verified by external means and therefore

provide further support to Scriptural authority. That element is

inerrancy.

Inerrancy defined

"God's ideal of a written revelation is an errorless one. He

has said so himself in the doctrine of Holy Scripture given us in the

teachings of his son and his apostles. . . ."[59] Warfield believed that

the Scriptures were without error. This was a result of the process of

verbal inspiration. As quoted earlier verbal inspiration, ". . . pre-

serves its product from everything inconsistent with a divine author-

ship--thus securing, among other things, that entire truthfulness which

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[58]Warfield, Inspiration, p. 14.

[59]Warfield, Shorter Writings, p. 556.

is everywhere presupposed in and asserted for Scripture by the Biblical writers."[60] The real argument said that if inspiration was a guarantee that Scripture was God's Word it must be errorless because God cannot lie.

Warfield was not unaware of the problems inherent in the transmission of the text. This is why he says that only the autographs are completely inerrant. "It is the Bible that we declare to be 'of infallible truth' the Bible that God gave us, not the corruptions and slips which scribes and printers have given us . . . ."[61] Sandeen suggests that this reliance on the autographs was a retreat on the part of Warfield, a convenient way to end discussion.[62] For how could anyone prove error in the autographs which no one has seen. But this charge is not fair to either the spirit or the letter of Warfield's work. He did not use the inerrancy of the autographs to close discussion. If anything he was particularly interested in vindicating inerrancy by rationally explaining alleged discrepancies.

Warfield was convinced that inerrancy could be demonstrated. He did not hide behind the original autographs. He was confident that for all practical purposes the original autographs were contained in the Scripture as he had them. The apparent discrepancies might suggest that there were some areas where the original had yet to have been found. But this did not mean that the originals would eradicate every

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[60]Warfield, _Revelation and Inspiration_, p. 173.

[61]Warfield, _Shorter Writings_, p. 582.

[62]Ernest Sandeen, _The Roots of Fundamentalism_ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 128-129.

problem. Some of the discrepancies were due to historical or other
ignorance on the part of the modern reader.[63]

Inerrancy proved

Warfield attempts to verify inerrancy by the use of external
means in a way similar to his proofs for inspiration. The most common
argument simply reiterates what was said in a different context
earlier. The apostles teach that Scripture is inerrant. If we can
trust the apostles in other areas of doctrine we ought also to trust
them in the claim of inerrancy. And the trustworthiness of the
apostles as teachers of doctrine is strictly bound to the trustworthi-
ness of Christ because he called them to establish his Church.[64]

But Warfield has recourse to another form of proof for the
inerrancy of Scripture. He calls on observable phenomena to support
his claim. "The matter has come to such a pass, indeed, in the
progress of discovery, that there is a sense in which it may be said
that the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible can now be based, with
considerable confidence, on its observed phenomena."[65] This means that
he believes that he can prove to the satisfaction of any reasonable
man, at least with considerable confidence that Scripture is inerrant.

To expand on this proof we need to turn to the work he did with
Archibald Hodge. There they write that in order for the Scripture to
be proven in error three criteria must be met. First, the error must

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[63]Warfield, Shorter Writings, p. 584.

[64]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 188.

[65]Ibid., p. 221.

be shown to belong to the original autograph. Secondly, the error must
be shown to pertain to information which the author intended to
communicate. Thirdly, it must be shown that the error contradicts
known fact of which there can be absolutely no doubt.[66] It is quite
doubtful whether anyone would be able to meet all of these criteria to
the satisfaction of Warfield. It is easy then to see how this argument
fits into the scheme of support for scriptural authority. If the
inerrancy of Scripture can be proven to the satisfaction of reason then
another unshakable pillar of support has been created.

This is why it was noted earlier that there seemed to be some
confusion even in Warfield's mind as to whether the doctrines of
inspiration and inerrancy were necessary to the Christian faith.
Though it is doubtful that error could ever be proved to Warfield, if
it were the entire Christian faith would be at stake. David Kelsey
writes, "Thus, while it is logically dispensable, the doctrine of
inspiration is methodologically basic to Warfield's entire biblical-
theological method."[67]

This theory of the methodological necessity of inspiration helps
to explain how Warfield can try to do without inspiration and still
make statements such as, ". . . it is the foundation of our Christian
thought and life, without which we could not, or could only with
difficulty, maintain the confidence of our faith."[68] When stated in

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[66]Warfield, Inspiration, p. 36.

[67]David Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology
(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 22.

[68]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 73.

this way one would be tempted to ask Warfield whether a person can be a Christian without believing in the inspiration and inerrancy. Perhaps the question is unfair. And speculating from the background of Warfield's general theological demeanor one would expect him to try to qualify his statements in order to make the question meaningless. But the question is posited here because the Fundamentalist movement was asked that question. And the fact that Warfield is also open to the question, at least in theory, makes the case that he represents Fundamentalism even stronger. However he might answer that question he would not deny that the proofs of inspiration and inerrancy are externally verifiable and therefore quite adequate proofs of the authority of Scripture.

The Testimony of the Spirit

There is actually some disagreement as to whether Warfield gives room to the testimony of the Spirit as a means to verify the authority of the Scriptures. Sandeen spends a fair amount of time to prove that Warfield's formulation of the doctrine of Scripture is substantially different than that proffered by the Westminster Confession. He contends that the Westminster Confession is clearly in favor of spiritual internal witness to the authority of Scripture and that Hodge and Warfield progressively modified it to the position that the credibility of the apostles gives Scripture its authority.[69]

Hodge took the first step by substituting the doctrine of inspiration for the witness of the Spirit. He was able to rely on this

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[69]Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, p. 119.

doctrine because at the time he was writing there was a reverential awe in which most people held the Scriptures. But by the time Warfield began writing the tone had shifted and people were looking for more "scientific" proof of the authority of Scripture. "For Charles Hodge's dependence upon previously acquired biblical reverence, B. B. Warfield substituted the externally verified credibility of the apostles as teachers of doctrine."[70]

John Gerstner disagrees. He says that Sandeen is wrong in trying to drive a wedge between Hodge, Warfield, and the Westminster Confession. The Westminster Confession gives a recital of proof texts whereby the Bible proves itself to be the Word of God, he counters.[71] In this way it does not rely wholly on the testimony of the Spirit. But this does not support his argument because Sandeen had set the distinction between external verification and the Spirit's testimony and not between external verification and the Scripture's own witness. In addition Parsons reveals that the biblical references were added after the Confession was written.[72]

A casual reading of Warfield would lead one to agree with Sandeen, at least on the count that Warfield largely ignores the testimony of the Spirit, (actually Gerstner does not argue against this point). But perhaps Warfield did not emphasize this point because it did not serve the purpose of irrefutable proof. Whether he believed it may be another case. At least in an article on the Westminster

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[70]Ibid., p. 120.

[71]Gerstner, "Warfield's Case for Inerrancy," p. 117.

[72]Parsons, "Warfield and Scripture," p. 205.

treatment of the doctrine he gives more place to the testimony of the Spirit than he had elsewhere. "According to the Confession, then, as according to the whole Reformed theology, man needs something else than evidence fully to persuade him to believe and obey God's Word--he needs the work of the Holy Spirit accompanying the Word . . ."[73] Whether Warfield believed in the necessity of the Spirit's testimony, and it would appear he does, matters little. The point is that it was not "provable," and therefore did not merit much emphasis in his doctrine of Scripture.

Miscellaneous Characteristics of Scripture

In this section the study deals with the perspicuity, the sufficiency, and the christocentricity of Scripture. Seeing those topics treated as miscellaneous characteristics means that they did not receive much attention in the body of Warfield's doctrine of Scripture.

In fact, most of what he says about these subjects can be found in one article on the Westminster doctrine of Scripture. Of perspicuity in the Westminster treatment he writes, "What is affirmed is, that though all parts of Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, or alike clear to all, yet all that is necessary to salvation is somewhere plainly revealed, and is accessible to all in the use of the ordinary means."[74] He also adds that there is one sense in which Scripture is to be taken and that Scripture is to be used to interpret Scripture.

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[73] Warfield, _Shorter Writings_, p. 567.

[74] Ibid., p. 568.

He has little to say about sufficiency except that he agrees
with the Confession which says that there is an, ". . . objective
completeness of Scripture for the purpose for which it is
given . . ."[75] Of christocentricity he has a little more to say. But
we must note that generally he does not leave much room for Christ in
his doctrine of Scripture. The prevalent tone of his thoughts on this
subject are brought out in the following rather weak admission that,
". . . amid all the diversity of this subject matter, it may yet be
said that almost the whole book is taken up with the portraiture of one
person."[76]

His strongest statement on the subject is found in a a critique
of Marcus Dods' book, The Bible, Its Origin and Nature. "Now, of
course, this is the main thing. The Scriptures exist to give us
Christ; and when they have brought us to Christ they have performed
their fundamental function."[77] But the force of this statement is
diminished by its context. Actually, he is conceding, almost reluc-
tantly, to Dods that the Scriptures are about Christ. Dods is trying
to set Christ and the Scriptures at odds. That Warfield's strongest
statement on christocentricity is a concession to a modernist is an
indication of the hesitancy of fundamentalists to speak of the role of
Christ in the establishment of the authority of Scripture. If Christ
is given too large a role the possibility of a chasm between Christ and
an errant Scripture develops. And the dominating fear appears as

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[75]Ibid.

[76]Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 438.

[77]Warfield, Critical Reviews, p. 125.

Warfield writes in the same paragraph two sentences later, "But what Christ is this that we shall get from our fallible Scriptures?"

Warfield's Position Compared to that
Presented in The Fundamentals

The publication of The Fundamentals is a pivotal point in the development of Fundamentalism. Published in the years 1909-1914 at the expense of two wealthy laymen, these twelve volumes were an attempt to form a united stand against Modernism. Each pamphlet consisted of articles on a variety of subjects written by various conservative scholars. The first ten volumes were sent free to most full time church workers in the English speaking world. These pamphlets, more than any other publication, established the theological basis of the movement before it was stretched into extremes in its later years.[78] The common conception of a fundamentalist is probably shaped more around these later extremes, usually centering on the preaching and sensational antics of men like Billy Sunday or J. Frank Norris. But The Fundamentals are less sensational and more theological. Milton Rudnick describes them as, ". . . sober, confident statements of conservative Protestant teachings and attempts to establish the validity of these teachings in the fact of liberal criticism."[79]

Roughly a third of the articles in The Fundamentals deal with Scripture. These articles are designed to defend Scripture against the attacks of criticism. Most of them make appeals to some type of what

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[78]Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 119.

[79]Milton Rudnick, Fundamentalism and the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 39.

we have termed in this study, external verification. One title from

volume two typifies the use of science, "The Recent Testimony of

Archaeology to the Scriptures." Warfield's foundation of the authority

of Scripture in verifiable fact is typical of these articles.

Of the articles on Scripture six of them are primarily concerned

with inspiration. Of these, three can be seen to be directly in-

fluenced by Princeton Theology, meaning they quote Hodge and Warfield

or are reiterations of what they said. The other three were written by

Presbyterians and present arguments similar to those of Warfield.[80] A

brief moment with each of these articles is in order to show the

similarity to Warfield's position.

James Gray's article is titled "The Inspiration of the Bible--

Definition Extent and Proof." Essentially this is the same argument as

Warfield presented. He assumes that the Bible was written by the

apostles and that they were honest men. These assumptions are quite

important to him because, "They have to do with the historicity of the

Bible, which for us just now is the basis of its authority."[81]

William Moorehead tries to support other arguments for inspira-

tion in a unique way. His thesis is, "That the moral glory of Jesus

Christ as set forth in the four Gospels cannot be the product of the

unaided human intellect, that only the Spirit of God is competent to

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[80]Ernest Sandeen, "Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism," Church History 31 (September 1962):319 n. 6.

[81]James Gray, "The Inspiration of the Bible--Definition Extent and Proof," The Fundamentals, 12 vols. (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Co., 1909-1913), 3:7.

execute this matchless portrait of the Son of Man."[82] This unusual

tack does rely on external fact.

William Caven defends the Old Testament on the basis of Christ's

testimony to it. He pictures Christ as the ultimate of trustworthy

teachers of doctrine. Therefore, the "scientific student of the Bible"

should highly value his testimony and accept it.[83]

L. W. Munhall's article, "Inspiration" is clearly cut from the

same mold as all of Warfield's work. He quotes Hodge and Warfield.

The opening lines of his article read, "The Bible is inspired. It is

therefore God's Word. This is fundamental to the Christian faith."[84]

George Bishop also shows direct influence of Princeton. He

wrote of the internal verification of inspiration and inerrancy. While

he supports Warfield's thesis he may have gone further than Warfield

would have. "Verbal and direct inspiration is, therefore, the 'Ther-

mopylae' of Biblical and Scriptural faith. No breath, no syllable; no

syllable, no word; no word, no Book; no Book, no religion."[85] He

clearly founds the Christian on the inspiration of Scripture. He also

is more open to the charge of holding to a dictation of inspiration.

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[82]William Moorehead, "The Moral Glory of Jesus Christ as Proof
of Inspiration," The Fundamentals, 12 vols. (Chicago: Testimony
Publishing Co., 1909-1913), 3:42.

[83]William Caven, "The Testimony of Christ to the Old Testament,"
The Fundamentals, 12 vols. (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Co., 1909-
1913), 4:64.

[84]L. W. Munhall, "Inspiration," The Fundamentals, 12 vols.
(Chicago: Testimony Publishing Co., 1909-1913), 7:21.

[85]George Bishop, "The Testimony of the Scriptures to Them-
selves," The Fundamentals, 12 vols. (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Co.,
1909-1913), 7:39.

Aurthur Pierson writes an article using the unity of the Bible to support its inspiration. This is very similar to arguments offered by Warfield in an article titled "The Divine Origin of the Bible."[86]

Finally, there is also an interesting article which expands a theme which is a latent result of Warfield's attitude toward inerrancy. In "What the Bible Contains for the Believer," George Pentecost pictures a Bible that is the ultimate answer book. By placing so much emphasis on scientific verification of the principle the fundamentalists create a tendency to make the Bible have an opinion on everything so that it cannot be proven wrong. Pentecost not only has the Bible instruct as to the way of salvation but also as to the structure of culture and the future of our lives.[87] This is not to say that the Bible does not speak about such things, but part of the charge of literalism against fundamentalists is a result of trying to make the Bible speak dogmatically on nearly everything.

In summary of Warfield's ability to speak for Fundamentalism we see clearly that he represents a unique development in the doctrine of Scripture by which claims to be fundamentalist must measured.

If there was one man in the succeeding generation who clearly measured up to this standard it was J. Gresham Machen. It is to his development of the doctrine of Scripture that we now turn.

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[86]Aurthur Pierson, "The Testimony of the Organic Unity of the Bible to Its Inspiration," The Fundamentals, 12 vols. (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Co., 1909-1913), 7:55-69. cf. "The Divine Origin of the Bible," Revelation and Inspiration, pp. 429-447.

[87]George Pentecost, "What the Bible Contains for the Believer," The Fundamentals, 12 vols. (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Co., 1909-1913), 10:97-110.

CHAPTER TWO

J. GRESHAM MACHEN ON SCRIPTURE

Machen and Fundamentalism

From the shape of his early life it would have appeared that John Gresham Machen would be an unlikely candidate for the role that he eventually fulfilled as a defender of the Christian faith. Born in 1881, into a moderately wealthy family, his early religious training took place at home. Later, after graduating from John Hopkins University he had to struggle to convince himself to study for the ministry. Upon graduating from Princeton Seminary in 1905, he continued in Germany. There, under the influence of, among others, Wilhelm Herrmann he again found himself struggling. But this time his struggle was with the very nature of what he believed Christianity to be. Finally, even after accepting a teaching position at Princeton Seminary in 1906, he was reluctant to be ordained, for he felt himself to be personally unworthy of the calling. Eventually he was ordained in 1914.

This description does not sound like what one would expect for a man who is generally considered to be one of the strongest fundamentalist forces in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. But by the time he was forty years old Machen had matured into a powerful supporter of "Princeton Theology" as expressed in the Hodge-Warfield tradition. By virtue of adhering to that brand of theology he found himself within the ranks of the fundamentalists. In fact, his direct

connections with Fundamentalism support the case that Warfield's
doctrine of Scripture was fundamentalist. He clearly followed in
Warfield's steps until he found himself in the Fundamentalist movement.
His inclusion in this presentation is appropriate, first because his
intimate contacts with Fundamentalism indicate that the doctrine of
Scripture, while it suffered a few extremists, was for the most part
consistent throughout the years of the movement. Secondly, he is
important because he highlights some implications Warfield left,
especially concerning the nature of truth.

There is no doubt that Machen had a good education. He was a
well-trained scholar. Although he felt that Fundamentalism did not
have all the answers to the problem of the day, he was willing to unite
himself with them against the common foe of Modernism. And the
fundamentalist forces, which were not known for their theological
acumen, were pleased to call this erudite scholar one of their own.

The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy did not deal exclusive-
ly with the doctrine of Scripture. In fact, there were few doctrines
left untouched. Likewise, Machen did not solely concern himself with
the doctrine of Scripture. But he did see the doctrine of Scripture as
a foundation of the Christian faith, and his expressions of that
doctrine have had wide and prolonged influence. Furthermore, there
were many at the time who felt that if they would defend the Bible,
Christianity would be saved. W. D. Livingstone, in his discussion of
Princetonian apologetics, chooses the doctrines of Scripture and the
atonement to exemplify how they were defended because they were "the
two areas of greatest interest and friction." He continues, "If the

scholastic theologians could hold the line at these two points they would not have to fear much about the rest."[1]

This chapter will attempt to describe J. Gresham Machen's thoughts about Scripture in two sections. The first section will describe Machen's doctrine of Scripture. This is perhaps the more difficult section because Machen was by training an exegete and by vocation an apologist. The second section will outline where his defense of Scripture led him. Machen's work is not as limited to the doctrine of Scripture as that of Warfield. Due to this broader perspective as to the extent of the controversy his doctrine of Scripture is not as detailed as that of Warfield.

Scripture as Truth

Machen did not allow his scholarly achievements to subordinate his spiritual life. He continued throughout his life to be concerned about his own relationship with God and about the personal salvation of others. Perhaps this was part of the reason that he held the Scriptures in such high esteem. "This love for God's Word permeates all of his work and was to our mind the motivating principle which determined his life."[2] Such a love served well in the controversy that called the veracity of the Scriptures into question.

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[1] W. D. Livingstone, The Princeton Apologetic as Exemplified by the Work of Benjamin B. Warfield and J. Gresham Machen (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1972; Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1948), p. 209.

[2] William Masselink, J. Gresham Machen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n. d.), p. 122.

The Hodge-Warfield Tradition

When the reliability of the Bible was called into question during the last half of the nineteenth century the Christian community did not have the luxury of a complete systematic theology of biblical authority to rely on. In general it was in response to the doubt that rising criticism had cast over biblical authority that the doctrine of Scripture was finally developed in full. For the fundamentalist cause this development was an absolute necessity. "Structured largely by Presbyterian theologians in Princeton Seminary, its development occurred within the context of the American theological panic of the last quarter of the nineteenth century."[3]

The theologians who did the most to develop the theology of biblical authority were, of course, Charles Hodge and Benjamin War-field. The work of these men is extremely important to Machen who views himself as standing in ". . . the great tradition represented by Charles Hodge and Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield and other representatives of the 'Princeton School.'"[4]

This is the tradition we have thoroughly discussed in chapter one. What Machen inherited from these men was a Bible whose authority was based on the externally verifiable fact that the apostles were trustworthy teachers of doctrine. The apostles imposed the canon as a body of writings upon the Church. They had the right to do this

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[3]Ernest Sandeen, "The Problem of Authority in American Fundamentalism," *Review and Expositor* 75 (Spring 1978):211.

[4]J. Gresham Machen, letter to F. E. Robinson June 25, 1927, quoted in Allyn Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 144.

because they were the chosen successors of Christ. "The Scriptures in turn are the depository of the apostolic revelation and thus the proximate seat of authority. The line of descent of authority is God, Christ, the Apostles, the Scriptures."[5]

Machen, building on this foundation, supplied primarily by Warfield, expanded the source of the knowledge of God. The intent of this expansion was to highlight the Bible as the supreme source of knowledge of God. What man can know of God is only equal to that which God had revealed of himself. This revelation comes to man in two ways. Either it comes through nature or in a supernatural way, that is from above or beyond nature. At times Machen divides natural revelation into two means.[6] We can learn of God's glory through contemplation of his works in nature. And we learn of his law as it speaks to our consciences.

The supernatural revelation of God comes to man through the Bible. For Machen the Bible was conceived of as the supreme source of knowledge about God, the supreme depository of revelation. This manner of understanding Scripture harmonizes well with another element of the "Princeton Theology." The sufficiency of enlightened reason was not only significant for Hodge and Warfield but also for Machen who emphasizes its ability to recognize truth. Livingstone presents their case for reason. "By means of his reason man is able to receive the revelation of God which is conceived of as a communication of truth.

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[5]Livingstone, Princeton Apologetic, p. 259.

[6]Compare J. Gresham Machen, The Christian Faith in the Modern World (New York: McMillan Publishing Co., 1936), 32 with What is Faith? (New York: McMillan Publishing Co., 1925), pp. 75-77.

This special revelation is found only in the written word."[7] Understanding Scripture as the depository of truth is very helpful to Machen's apologetic for Scripture.

Scripture is Word of God

Machen would contend that the Bible is a depository of truth because it is the Word of God. It is not partly Word of God or partly words of men but it is the very Word of God.[8] As the Word of God the Bible is fully true. This will be dealt with more extensively in a later section. Another result of the Bible being the Word of God is that it is understandable. "The Bible is perfectly plain in the things that are necessary for your souls."[9]

Machen obviously understood that the relationship between the Word of God and Scripture was one of the prime targets for both the modernists and the Neo-Orthodox theologians. He allowed his discussion of the topic to go no further than to state that the Bible is the Word of God. "What a dreadfully erroneous thing it is to say merely that the Bible contains the Word of God. No, it is the Word of God."[10]

Scripture is Inspired

The Bible came to be the Word of God because it was inspired. The "blessed doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible" is considered by

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[7]Livingstone, _Princeton Apologetic_, p. 24.

[8]J. Gresham Machen, _Christianity and Liberalism_ (reprint, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), p. 75.

[9]Machen, _Faith in Modern World_, p. 44.

[10]Ibid., p. 58.

Machen to be of the foundation of the Christian Church. It belongs to the foundation because it supports the truthfulness of Scripture.

Verbal inspiration meant not only that the words of the Bible were inspired but that God dealt with the souls of the Bible writers. "The writers of the Bible books . . . received a blessed and wonderful and supernatural guidance and impulsion by the Spirit of God . . ." so that "every word that they wrote was absolutely determined by the Spirit of God."[11] Machen shows no sign of Warfield's idea that God worked with each writer throughout his life in order to prepare him for the special task of writing.

Naturally, as far as the modernists were concerned, this presented an enormity of problems. Were the men who wrote mere tools or machines at the hands of God? What about the admitted use of sources? Machen had no objections to the thought of the writers using sources. They were not limited to those sources, however, because sometimes the Spirit would give them "fresh" revelation. But the fact that they received revelation or that their words were determined by the Holy Spirit did not preclude their own intelligence and style. The writers knew what they were doing, although they may not have had full realization of what all that they wrote meant.[12]

It is important to understand that only the autographs of the Biblical books, that is those manuscripts actually produced by the hands of the apostles, were written under the inspiration of the Spirit. Through the hand of the copyists some mistakes may have been

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[11]Ibid., p. 45 and 553 respectively.

[12]Ibid., p. 48.

incurred. These inaccuracies are not of a magnitude to distort the truthfulness of the Bible and are in general inconsequential. Furthermore, we can rest assured that God has watched over the process of transmission. "He has also, according to our view, given us a marvelously accurate, though not supernaturally accurate transmission, from generation to generation of what those inspired writers wrote."[13]

Scripture is Infallible

Perhaps for Machen the separation between the inspiration and the infallibility of Scripture is somewhat artificial. For him the latter is an undeniable result of the former. The distinction was made here in order to emphasize this point. Machen says that the writers received guidance from the Holy Spirit so that, ". . . they were preserved from errors that appear in other books and thus the resulting book, the Bible, is in all its parts the very Word of God, completely true in what it says in matters of fact and completely authoritative in its commands."[14]

Since the Bible, according to Machen, is the "supreme textbook on the subject of faith" it had better not contain errors. In fact, any admission of error could correspondingly endanger the whole Christian faith because it would be an admission that the text book is not reliable. With this in mind Machen rejected the modernist approach to limiting the realm of scriptural infallibility. "It is often said that the Bible is infallible in the inner, religious sphere, but

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[13]Ibid., p. 41.

[14]Ibid., p. 45.

fallible, like other books when it comes to external history. We reject any such distinction."[15] This is an area where Machen, who wrote at a time when the controversy was becoming somewhat frantic, differs slightly from Warfield. Warfield was more cautious about placing Christianity at the mercy of proved errors. His more precise, "external" support for inerrancy is an indication of less pressure from modernists. Perhaps by this time Machen as well as other fundamentalists were willing to rely on formulations that had been established in the past. Thus, Machen might not feel it necessary to so diligently distinguish the relationship between inerrancy and inspiration.

Machen also believed that the infallibility of Scripture not only extended to the historical data contained therein but also to the interpretation of that data. By this we infer that Machen would also reject the idea that there are conflicting theologies to be found in Scripture.

What apparent contradictions Scripture does contain, for Machen are not to be ignored. Machen was an exegete. He did the best he could to harmonize all accounts. Sometimes the contradictions were ascribed to errors in transmission. At other times the real meaning was left to the mysteries of God. It might be noted here that Machen was more willing to ascribe discrepancies to the mysteries of God than Warfield had been.

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[15]J. Gresham Machen, The Attack Upon Princeton Seminary (Philadelphia: n. p., 1927), p. 6.

Scripture is History

A revealing insight into any doctrine of Scripture can always be gained by examining the relationship between Scripture and history. Machen repudiated the popular attempt to reconstruct the historical Jesus, not because there was no historicity involved but because he saw that the methods being used were not really scientific. He realized that such methods committed themselves to finding that very little could be known about the historical Jesus.

On the contrary, Machen believed that, "The centre and core of all the Bible is history. Everything else that the Bible contains is fitted into an historical framework and leads up to an historical climax." In fact, the Gospel itself is dependent on the actual occurrence of the events portrayed in Scripture.

> Give up history and you can retain some things. . . . But be perfectly clear about one point--you can never retain a gospel. For the gospel means "good news," tidings, information about something that has happened. In other words it means history. A gospel independent of history is simply a contradiction in terms.[16]

What Reverend Machen understood as history was that which pertained to actual facts or actual occurrences. His problem, there-fore was both with the modernist's understanding of history and with the methods they used to interpret it. There was a method according to Machen which accomplished scientifically the correct exposition of the historical Scriptures. "Scientific historical method in the inter-pretation of the Bible requires that the Biblical writers should be allowed to speak for themselves. . . . It was called the 'grammatica-

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[16]J. Gresham Machen, What is Christianity?, ed. Ned Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1951), p. 170 and 171 respectively.

historical exegesis . . .' This principle, in America at least, is rapidly being abandoned."[17]

<center>Scripture is Doctrine</center>

The concept of Scripture as a depository of truth was complemented in Machen's works by his understanding of Scripture as being doctrine. By this he meant to fortify the view that first Scripture established facts and then the Christian's life was molded around them. He appealed to the history of the early Church. "Christianity at the beginning, we have discovered was not a life distinguished from doctrine . . . but just the other way around, it was a life founded upon a doctrine."[18]

The fact the Bible is the absolute truth in written form and therefore the actual doctrine of the Christian Church was precisely the point that Machen was making in his review of Harry Emerson Fosdick's book, The Modern Use of the Bible.

> Thus, according to our author, the New Testament as well as the Old Testament is valuable primarily as setting forth a way of life and not as a recording of facts. But the Christian view is the exact opposite: the Bible according to the Christian first sets forth truth, both external truth regarding God and also redemptive facts of history.[19]

Finally, with respect to Scripture as doctrine and as the depository of truth Machen contended that it would not be possible to divide such a Bible into various degrees of truth. One portion of Scripture could not be more authoritative than another. For example it

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[17]Machen, What is Faith?, p. 24.

[18]Machen, What is Christianity?, p. 22.

[19]Ibid., p. 196.

was common to suggest that the actual teachings of Jesus were the seat
of authority in Scripture. Machen discounted this theory both on the
grounds that the truth could not be made into a relative concept and on
the grounds that Jesus himself testified to the authority of Scrip-
ture.[20]

J. Gresham Machen was not a systematician. He did not attempt
to write a comprehensive doctrine of Scripture. What he did write as
far as the doctrine of Scripture was only the beginning of what he had
to say on the subject. And a very appropriate beginning it was for
him. The primary theme that is apparent in his thoughts is that
Scripture is absolute truth given by God to man in written form. This
manner of understanding Scripture is put to use in his apologetic for
Scripture.

Apologetic for Truth

Further development of Machen's thoughts on Scripture should
correctly come under the heading of his apologetics. He builds upon
what we have already discussed in order to defend it from the ravages
of Modernism. It is important to view Machen's work in this way for it
is generally considered that, "His chief contribution to Christianity
is in the field of apologetics."[21]

Indeed this perspective strikes at the very heart of his
understanding not only of Scripture but of theology in general.
"Theirs was an essentially rationalistic interpretation, for they

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[20]Machen, _Faith in Modern World_, p. 79.

[21]Masselink, _Machen_, p. 1.

looked upon theology as being a science in the same sense as any natural science."[22]

Apologetics

Machen was convinced that apologetics was built into the Christian religion. "I hold, 1. that the Christian religion as it is set forth on the basis of Holy Scripture in the Standards of the Reformed Faith, is true, and, 2. that the Christian religion as so set forth requires and is capable of scholarly defense."[23]

So convinced was he of this position that he argued that philosophical apologetics ought to be at the base of every course taught at a seminary. And as this chapter seeks to establish, apologetics were of particular importance in his thoughts about Scripture. "I believe with all my soul, in other words, in the necessity of Christian apologetics . . . and in particular in a reasoned defense of the Christian conviction that the Bible is the Word of God."[24]

His understanding of Scripture rested upon the sufficiency of enlightened reason, and his penchant for apology led him to believe that most anyone could be convinced of the fact that the Bible is the Word of God. He did not suggest that the modernists should be left to their own devices. "Instead we ought to try to understand their present position and then lead them logically from one thing to another

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[22]Livingstone, _Princeton Apologetic_, p. 355.

[23]J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity in Conflict," in _Contemporary American Theology_, ed. Ferm Vergilius (New York: Round Table Press, 1932), p. 270.

[24]Machen, _Faith in Modern World_, p. 62.

until finally we can show them that the Bible is, as we believe it is, the Word of God."[25] Elsewhere he clearly delineates his line of defense. "First the general truth of the Bible in its great outlines as an historical book, and the supernatural origin of the revelation that it contains then the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God--that is the order of our apologetic."[26] It is clear here that his understanding of Scripture is one of absolute truth that can be readily grasped by the intellect. Yet the controversy at hand led even truth itself to be questioned.

The Nature of Truth

Truth, in Machen's view, is by its very nature, scientific. That is, it is factual. It can be tested and understood scientifically. This was where the liberal theologians had departed from the realm of truth. Marsden expresses Machen's view well: "Hoping to preserve Christianity by adjusting it to the dictates of modern scientific culture, the liberals had separated it from the realm of fact and the scientific."[27]

This was the primary reason that Machen in his magnum opus Christianity and Liberalism, concluded that the liberal beliefs constituted a religion other than Christianity. "It is no wonder then, that liberalism is totally different from Christianity, for the foundation is different. Christianity is founded upon the Bible.

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[25]Ibid., p. 59.

[26]Machen, Attack Upon Princeton, p. 7.

[27]George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 174.

. . . Liberalism, on the other hand, is founded upon the shifting emotions of sinful men."[28] The problem was that the liberals were working with a different concept of truth.

When Shailer Matthew answered Machen's work with his The Faith of Modernism he elucidated that view of truth. George Marsden comments that the ". . . basic premise underlying all of Matthew's thought, as well as much of the scientific thought of the day was that ideas and beliefs are not mirrors of external reality but products of the mind shaped by natural evolutionary and cultural developments."[29]

If truth, as Modernism saw it, shifted with culture, if it changed from generation to generation then a single truth was no longer possible, or at least no longer useful. If the Bible contained that kind of truth then the variety of interpretations were limitless and the Bible would prove to be of no use as a supreme authority. "That means, of course, not merely that this or that truth is being attacked but that truth itself is being attacked. The very possibility of our attaining to truth as distinguished from mere usefulness is denied."[30]

Machen's defense of Scripture led to a particularly rigid understanding of truth. This is not written in a pejorative sense. Any absolute is rigid, and it was this type of truth that Scripture offered. ". . . historic Christianity maintains that the Christian religion is based upon a body of truth, a body of doctrine, which will

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[28]Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p. 79.

[29]Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 176.

[30]Machen, What is Christianity?, p. 282.

remain true beyond the end of time . . ."[31] That body of truth, of

doctrine, irrespective of time or culture is the Bible. What Marsden

has said of the Hodge-Warfield concept of truth seems to be even more

appropriate of Machen who spoke more often in terms of truth. "This

view of truth as an externally stable entity placed tremendous weight

on the written word. If truth were the same for all ages, and if truth

was apparent primarily in objective facts, then the written word was

the surest means permanently and precisely to display this truth."[32]

For this reason Machen was able to dedicate himself unfailingly

to the defense of Scripture as fact or truth. This is the predominant

characteristic of Machen's contribution, that he was able to maintain

this concept of truth for the Fundamentalist movement. Ernest Sandeen

calls those who hold such a concept the "parties of fact." "But what I

want to emphasize is that the Hodge-Warfield doctrine of biblical

authority provided American Protestantism with one way to perpetuate

the ideology of the parties of fact . . ."[33]

The Bible is Facts

From Machen's point of view both the liberals and the fundamen-

talists were guilty of setting up a "disastrous opposition between

knowledge and faith." This opposition was to be avoided because it

impinged upon the conception of the Bible as a body of truth. The

intellect must grasp the truth in order for faith to exist, in the

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[31]Ibid., p. 254.

[32]Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 113.

[33]Sandeen, "Problem of Authority," p. 217.

Reformed understanding of faith. Because the intellect works in a scientific manner it must work with facts. For the Christian these facts are found in the Bible.

The point of this section is that in order to defend the reasonableness of the Christian religion and the factualness of the Scriptures he began to rely on science as a means of proof. By science he not only meant the industry, for example archaeology, but also the process of logical thought. He writes, ". . . the Christian religion is emphatically dependent on facts, facts in the external world, facts with which 'science' in the true sense of the word certainly has right to deal with."[34]

Infallibility a Logical Conclusion

The best way for the apologist to convince someone of the infallibility of Scripture is not to doggedly maintain the assertion in the face of all arguments, with no recourse to discussion. Rather, by patiently working with the unbeliever he can be brought to the logical conclusion that the Scriptures are indeed infallible. If one begins with the point that the writers were honest men who had the opportunity to know the facts he can soon establish the substantial truth of the Scriptures. Once this has been accomplished the unbeliever, ". . . will go on to see that the books are not only substantially true in the way in which other good books are true but that they are altogether true because of the supernatural work of the Spirit of God."[35]

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[34]Machen, <u>Faith in Modern World</u>, p. 55.

[35]Ibid., p. 51.

The apologist therefore, does not begin with the infallibility of Scripture. It is not correct, according to Machen, to say that Fundamentalism, at least as he understands it, makes the whole Christian religion dependent on the infallibility of Scripture. Here is an important distinction between Machen's doctrine of Scripture and his apology for it. We saw earlier that the infallibility of Scripture was of the foundation of the Christian religion. Here he seems to imply that it is not imperative. But actually all that he is conceding is that an apology must not begin with the doctrine of infallibility. He explains further, "Nevertheless, although we do not begin with the doctrine of infallibility of Scripture, we do come to it in the end; and when we have come to it we build upon it our orderly exposition of the Christian faith. As apologists, in other words, we end with the infallibility of Scripture, but as systematic theologians we begin with it."[36]

The Church's Mission

Finally, Machen's formulation of the doctrine and his apology for it played an important role in the politics of the Presbyterian Church. He believed that to promote his understanding of Scripture was part of the responsibility of the Church in every age.[37] For this reason much of what was happening in his own Church greatly disturbed him. He contended that if the liberals really wanted to believe what they were preaching they ought to be honest enough to admit they were

[36]Machen, Attack Upon Princeton, p. 8.

[37]Machen, What is Christianity?, p. 287.

preaching another religion and to leave the Church to start their own.

Retaining an authoritative Scripture was imperative to the mission of

the Church. Those who disagreed with it were seen as saboteurs.

Stonehouse presents Machen's concern.

> Church officers who took solemn vows affirming their belief in the
> Scriptures as the Word of God, the infallible rule of faith and
> practice, and their reception and adoption of the Confession of
> Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy
> Scriptures and then proceeded to demand liberty to propagate views
> at variance with these positions were judged to have forfeited
> their right to positions of responsibility.[38]

Unfortunately, the Church did not see it as Machen did. So deep were

his convictions that he finally left his teaching post at Princeton and

organized Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929. But the party of

liberals in the Church body would not rest. Machen was finally forced

from his Church in 1935 only to begin a new one in 1936.

A closing word should be said to note Machen's feelings toward

the Fundamentalist movement and his dedication to the defense of

Scripture. One of James Barr's observations about the movement is that

it insufficiently interrelated its fundamental doctrines.[39] Machen had

precisely the same complaint in his day. He did not like the term

Fundamentalism because, as Paul Wooley states, "It stood for a limited

number of fundamental doctrines while Machen stood for the importance

of the whole, rich system of doctrine which was found in the Scrip-

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[38]Ned Stonehouse, _J. Gresham Machen_ (Grand Rapids: William B.
Eerdmans, 1955), p. 338.

[39]James Barr, _Fundamentalism_ (Philadelphia: The Westminster
Press, 1977), p. 161.

tures."[40] Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that it was the

concern for the Word of God which caused Machen to overlook these

faults. "Do you suppose that I do not regret my being called by a term

that I greatly dislike, a 'Fundamentalist?' . . . But in the presence

of a great common foe I have little time to be attacking my brethren

who stand with me in defense of the Word of God."[41] This, too, is a

significant characteristic of Fundamentalism. Most of those involved

were able to develop the ability to overlook other doctrinal differen-

ces in the interest of the defense of Scripture.

Machen's apologetic for Scripture led him to explicate the

nature of truth and the role of the intellect. Truth is once for all,

factual, scientific, irrespective of time or culture. This truth is

able to be grasped by the intellect. The truth contained in Scripture,

once grasped by the intellect becomes faith. For this reason an

inspired, infallible Scripture must be maintained.

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[40]Paul Wooley, The Significance of J. Gresham Machen Today
(Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972), p. 42.

[41]J. Gresham Machen, quoted by Stonehouse in Machen, p. 337.

CHAPTER THREE

THEMES OF FUNDAMENTALIST DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

The task of painting an accurate picture of the fundamentalist

doctrine of Scripture is a difficult one. In the first place it would

be inaccurate to imply that there was a particular doctrine of Scrip-

ture. This would indicate that the movement was more self-conscious

than it actually was. That "loose, diverse and changing federation of

co-belligerents" that was the Fundamentalist movement was not able to

create a comprehensive statement of the doctrine of Scripture. What we

have done is chosen two theologians of the era, who are as representa-

tive of Fundamentalism as any, and presented their thoughts about

Scripture. From these we hope to paint, in bold strokes, some themes

which can be used to analyze the doctrine of Scripture in the Fundamen-

talist movement. We can deal with these themes under four general

headings.

An Incomplete Doctrine of Scripture

In general it is dangerous to criticize any statement for

something that it does not contain. But in this picture of fundamen-

talist doctrine it must be made clear that everything that could have

been expressed concerning Scripture was not always deemed important

enough to be expressed. "The gravest charge that can be leveled at the

Princeton Theology is that it was not so much a theology as an apolo-

getic, not so much an approach to be discussed as a position to be

defended."[1] Fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture is incomplete in the
sense that it found only certain portions of a complete doctrine of
Scripture germane to its defense of scriptural authority. Those who
read Benjamin Warfield or J. Gresham Machen may become thoroughly
indoctrinated in aspects of inspiration and inerrancy but be wholly
ignorant of other characteristics of Scripture such as sufficiency, its
efficacy or any principles of interpretation.

In a correlated argument James Barr criticizes Fundamentalism
for not interrelating the "fundamental" elements of its theology very
well.[2] Granted, Barr has a much different concept of Fundamentalism
than we are working with in this paper. But on this point he may be
cited. We have seen very little practical application of the doctrine
in the first two chapters. One may easily develop the impression that
Scripture is to be defended for its own sake, rather than for the sake
of the message that it conveys.

By not including material on the other attributes of Scripture
Fundamentalism presents a skewed picture of the importance of inerran-
cy. This is in clear distinction to the balanced picture in Lutheran
presentations, as will be seen.

Of course, the primary aspects of fundamentalist doctrine of
Scripture are inspiration and inerrancy. Warfield claimed that
inspiration was the divine statement on the origin of Scripture and
inerrance was such on its authority. The inspiration of Scripture

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[1]Ernest Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 130.

[2]James Barr, Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: The Westminster
Press, 1977), p. 161.

meant that it was from God, or that God was the author while men were the agents of reception. He was cautious not to suggest a theory of dictation. The intellect of the authors of Scripture was very much involved in the reception of God's message but not in the production of that message.[3]

The doctrine of inerrancy, as expressed in Warfield and Machen becomes the focus of most attention on fundamentalist theology. Perhaps this is so because it is related to so many other aspects of the doctrine of Scripture, and forms the groundwork for the themes yet to be discussed here. The inerrancy of Scripture is a direct result of the fact that it is God's word. But as the doctrine was presented it began to take on a different tone. In fact, even the word, "inerrancy," as used by Warfield and Machen, carries with it an impression that it is an internal characteristic. In other words it may connote that Scripture has an indigenous authority as opposed to a derived authority. Such a connotation is implied by Warfield's resortion to "observed phenomena" as a basis for proving inerrancy.[4]

An incomplete doctrine of Scripture is one of the most obvious themes of fundamentalist theology. It should appear as a characteristic of any doctrine of Scripture which claims to be fundamentalist, precipitated, of course, by the predominant emphasis on inspiration and inerrancy.

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[3]Benjamin Warfield, _Revelation and Inspiration_ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 23.

[4]Ibid., p. 221.

An Indigenous Authority for Scripture

By indigenous authority we mean that the authority of Scripture ceases to be conceived of as an authority derived from God and begins to take on the characteristics of an authority in its own right. While this is probably the truly unique theme of fundamentalist theology it is also the most elusive. In a more crass way of speaking this charge is usually termed as bibliolatry. This term has connotations we do not wish to employ here. Although Warfield did not vehemently reject the term bibliolatry it is doubtful that he ever really intended that the Bible itself be worshiped. After favorably quoting Richard Sibbes to the effect that Scripture is the supreme judge, he writes, "Shall we not say Amen to this, though it may condemn much modern practice and mayhap entail on us the charge of 'bibliolatry?' Such a reverence for God's Word is no doubt an act of worship; but who shall we worship if not the God of the Bible?"[5] He seems here to avoid the issue by making Scripture and God equivalents.

The impression that Warfield and Machen would reject this crass conception of bibliolatry is what makes this theme so elusive. But there can be no doubt that a nuance toward indigenous authority exists in their work. That this is so can be seen in as simple a matter as the manner in which they refer to Scripture. For example we have noted that Machen liked to describe Scripture as a body of truth. Of course there is a sense in which this could not be objected to. But truth is truth no matter who speaks it. If any doctrine of Scripture begins to

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[5]Benjamin Warfield, Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield, 2 vols., ed. John Meeter (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973), p. 570.

emphasize the absolute truth of Scripture resulting in the omission of the fact that it is truth only as a result of its being authored by God it plants the seeds for an indigenous authority for Scripture. This we have observed in the first two chapters.

Two other examples may be in order. Warfield impressed his reader by referring to the Bible as the "corpus juris," a body of law which was imposed on Christians by the apostles.[6] Machen also spoke of Scripture as "the supreme textbook on the subject of faith."[7] Both of these terms are rather legalistic. And as they are used by Warfield and Machen they indicate that Scripture may have authority in and of itself. There is a fine line between when truth is a result of the authority of him who utters it and when truth assumes such authority irrespective of context, between when law represents the lawmaker and when it emphasizes its own right to judge, between when a textbook stands on the authority of its author and when it proves itself with "observed phenomena." The Scriptures, a unique category of literature, are clearly on the side of the line where authority is derived from the Divine author. Warfield and Machen walk so closely along this line that it appears that they disagree with what Scripture says about itself.

There are a number of corollaries to the theme of indigenous authority. One has been mentioned as the logical conclusion of attitudes toward inerrancy such as Warfield held. This is the tendency

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[6]Benjamin Warfield, Critical Reviews (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 120.

[7]J. Gresham Machen, What is Faith? (New York: McMillan Publishing Co., 1925), p. 45.

to make the Bible have a definitive opinion on nearly every issue, theological and non-theological, personal and impersonal. This means that Fundamentalism was incapable of conceiving of a problem whose answer was not found in Scripture. For example, Scripture might equally determine which job an individual should take as well as it proclaims the Gospel. Henry Hamann summarizes the attitude in this way. "It is part of this way of thinking when fundamentalists make a doctrine of every statement or every fact, however inconsequential, that appears in the Scriptures . . . The Bible becomes a law book with a whole host of definitive and authoritative sentences and paragraphs . . ."[8] This tendency is also supported by the concept of an indigenous authority for Scripture. The argument is that a Bible with such authority must contain truth statements on every problem known to man.

A second corollary is the establishment of the Bible as an object of faith. Warfield writes, "Nor do we need to do more than remind ourselves that this attitude of entire trust in every word of the Scriptures has been characteristic of the people of God from the very foundation of the church."[9] Again, the elusive nature of this theme appears in that "trust in every word of the Scriptures" may be understood as belief in its message of the Gospel. But there is another factor involved here. There is a point when the Bible as an object of faith can supplant Christ as an object of faith. What

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[8] Henry Hamann, The Bible Between Fundamentalism and Philosophy (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), pp. 11-12.

[9] Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 53.

results is a strain of _fides_ _implicita_, where the Bible is held to be true although its contents may not necessarily be expressed. This is characteristic of a fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture. Ernest Sandeen has noted that inspiration and inerrancy became the shibboleths of the movement.[10] This is also supported by the willingness of the movement to overlook other doctrinal differences for the sake of belief in an inerrant Scripture.

Closely related to this issue is that of the role of Christ in the establishment of the authority of Scripture. Warfield writes, "Let it suffice to say that to a plenarily inspired Bible, humbly trusted as such, we actually, and as a matter of fact, owe all that has blessed our lives with hopes of an immortality of bliss."[11] To bring out the force of this statement one might ask why Christ, to whom the Scriptures witness, is not credited with this accomplishment.

The lack of emphasis on Christ is a popular criticism of fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture. J. F. Peter claims that one of Warfield's four basic weaknesses was a failure to give Christ proper recognition in his doctrine of Scripture.[12] T. F. Torrance states that, "The basic error that lurks in the scholastic idea of verbal inspiration is that it amounts to an incarnation of the Holy Spirit. It is only strictly christological theology which can obviate that heresy, but Dr. Warfield's theory of inspiration neglects the chris-

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[10]Ernest Sandeen, _Origins of Fundamentalism_ (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 13.

[11]Warfield, _Revelation and Inspiration_, p. 72.

[12]J. F. Peter, "Warfield on the Scriptures," _The Reformed Theological Review_ 16 (October, 1957):76.

tological basis of the doctrine of Scripture . . ."[13] While both of
these men may have a tendency to overstate the case they do point out
that Christ is not emphasized in the fundamentalist doctrine of
Scripture. They bring out another distinction which represents this
doctrine. In opposition to holding the Bible in high esteem because it
testifies to Christ, fundamentalist doctrine regards the Bible highly
in order that it may testify to Christ. If Christ is not the
foundation of biblical authority then something else must be. This
leads to the third theme.

An Emphasis on the Role of Reason

The fact that Warfield relied heavily on external proofs, and
Machen relied heavily on Warfield to establish the authority of
Scripture has been thoroughly discussed. The general trustworthiness
of the apostles as teachers of doctrine could be proved. The fact that
the Scriptures, imposed on the Church by these men, held themselves to
be inspired could be proved. Even the inerrancy of Scripture could be
proved on the basis of observed phenomena. This use of external
verification not only supports the concept of an indigenous authority
for Scripture, but also emphasizes the role of reason.

If Scripture is consistently pictured as absolute truth, as a
body of law or as a supreme textbook an atmosphere conducive to a high
estimate of powers of reason is created. And if reason is held to be
capable of apprehending truth, even spiritual truth, then reason and
the overwhelming amount of external verification combine to prove

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[13]T. F. Torrance, "Review of B. B. Warfield's The Inspiration
and Authority of the Bible," Scottish Journal of Theology 7 (1954):107.

Scripture's right to rule. In other words, there is a sense in fundamentalist theology in which the authority of Scripture is dependent on the contents of Scripture meeting the demands of human reason. And as an illustration of how these themes are interrelated, when the Bible meets the demands of human reason, or as Warfield prefers to state it, provides evidence of its authority, it is easy to see how it can in itself become an object of faith.

A Basis for Relations with Other Christians

A fourth theme that is characteristic of Fundamentalism is the use of the doctrine of Scripture as the basis of relations with other Christians. In the early stages of the formation of the fundamentalist coalition there were a large number of theological concerns to be dealt with. These concerns were dealt with in conjunction with the matter of biblical authority. As can be seen from the number of articles about the Bible contained in The Fundamentals the matter of Scripture was beginning to take precedence over other concerns by the time of their printing. And we have observed that for Machen the authority of Scripture was the primary issue. It was the source of unity for those who held to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. And it was the cause of separation from those who held Scripture to be anything less than the inspired, inerrant, Word of God.

In relation to this, the role of scholarship became important to fundamentalists with respect to their attitude toward other Christians. J. I. Packer claims that the movement, ". . . developed a pronounced

anti-intellectual bias . . ."[14] The "anti-intellectualism" of the movement is a matter of debate. George Marsden more accurately describes this characteristic as a tension between the trust and the distrust of the intellect. In fact, this tension was so pronounced that he chose it as one of three main themes to be dealt with in his work. What he meant was that whereas parts of the movement, particularly those which arrived from a revivalist heritage, may have expressed anti-intellectual sentiments for the most part Fundamentalism had a "scientific" foundation. What the movement objected to was the recent scientific conclusions denigrating biblical authority. "Nevertheless they stood in an intellectual tradition that had the highest regard for one understanding of true scientific method and proper rationality."[15]

In other words, Christians who were able to use the intellect to support the authority of the Bible were applauded. Those who fell prey to the contemporary trend of science were considered to have sold out to the powers of reason. This seems to be the extent of the anti-intellectualism in the movement. But in a strange twist of circumstance the rejection of the contemporary conclusions of science led to more pressure being placed upon the Bible to perform as an answer book in the scientific arena. This attempt to compensate for the lack of adequate scientific scholarship within the movement only added to its anti-intellectual appearance.

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[14]J. I. Packer, Fundamentalism and the Word of God (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1958), p. 31.

[15]George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 7.

PART II

TRADITIONAL LUTHERAN DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

This chapter has been a sincere attempt to draw out themes representative of a fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture. Perhaps Warfield or Machen would object that some of the implications drawn from these themes do not actually exist in their work. Nevertheless, from a historical perspective these implications are almost inevitable, and they are highly valuable in distinguishing which doctrines of Scripture are to be considered fundamentalist.

CHAPTER FOUR

FRANCIS PIEPER ON SCRIPTURE

The establishment of a standard of comparison for this study takes the form of the traditional Lutheran doctrine of Scripture. Against this standard the characteristics of the fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture will be highlighted. The adjective "traditional" has been chosen with care. It serves primarily to describe the position here presented as distinctly Lutheran without claiming exclusive right to the title "Lutheran."

An exhaustive discussion of the traditional Lutheran doctrine of Scripture would not be feasible, nor is it necessary. Part two is to act as a point of comparison to accentuate various characteristics of the fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture and to support the thesis that there is a difference between the fundamentalist doctrine and that of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. To this end, official Missouri Synod materials will be discussed in chapter five, and the work of Francis Pieper will be presented in this chapter. Brief summaries of these works will be sufficient to bring out the qualities which distinguish them from a fundamentalist position.

Pieper and Lutheranism

Francis Pieper was born in Pomerania in 1852. He and his mother

followed two older brothers to America in 1870. He was known as a

scholar both at Northwestern College and at Concordia Seminary, St.

Louis where he graduated in 1875. To this day it has always been

somewhat of an enigma how after only three years as a pastor he was

called as professor of systematics to Concordia Seminary. Nine years

later he became president of that institution and held that position

until his death in 1931. He also held the office of president of the

Missouri Synod from 1899 to 1911.[1]

With reference to the relationship between Fundamentalism and

the Missouri Synod, Francis Pieper stands in a pivotal position. He

was active throughout the time period that the controversy existed. He

consciously defended his doctrinal positions against the same foes with

which the fundamentalists were in conflict. In fact, there is a

striking similarity in both Fundamentalism's and in Pieper's attitude

when compared to what Leigh Jordahl describes as a "fundamentalistic

posture." This is ". . . a posture which self-consciously seeks to

preserve the pre-modern forms of the faith in an atmosphere which

dismisses and explicitly repudiates modernity in so far as that would

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[1]Richard Klann, "In Memoriam: Franz August Otto Pieper,"
Concordia Journal 7 (May 1981):91-93.

demand religious readjustment."[2] In this sense Pieper represents a substantial point of contact with Fundamentalism.

Furthermore, Francis Pieper has had an enduring influence upon the theology of the Missouri Synod. His Christian Dogmatics has become a standard. It was undoubtedly the most important theological work produced in the Missouri Synod during the fundamentalist era.[3] And in the estimation of some, "Franz Pieper has certainly been the most influential conservative systematic theologian on American soil."[4] By any accounting, the work of Francis Pieper should be a key witness in the consideration of whether the Missouri Synod's doctrine of Scripture is the same as that found in the Fundamentalist movement. What follows is a summary of Pieper's view of Scripture.

Scripture is Word of God

The Identification of Scripture with Word of God

Pieper recognizes that from the beginning God made his will known to men in various ways. "But after God had chosen to transmit his Word in writing the Church of every age was strictly bound to the

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[2]Leigh Jordahl, "The Theology of Franz Pieper: A Resource for Fundamentalistic Thought Modes Among American Lutherans," The Lutheran Quarterly 23 (May 1971):122.

[3]Milton Rudnick, Fundamentalism and the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 67.

[4]Jordahl, "Theology of Franz Pieper," p. 123.

written Word of God."[5] Thus, the Bible is, in his mind a unique book.
"It is, in distinction from the millions of other books in the world,
God's Word. . . . Scripture is neither a human nor a 'divine-human'
report on God's Word and the 'facts of revelation,' but it is itself
the Word of God."[6]

Pieper does not apologize for beginning his doctrine of Scrip-
ture in this way. In fact, he calls it an a priori position. By this
he does not mean that all men hold the Scripture to be the Word of God
but rather that those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ will
"previously" recognize the Scripture as the Word of God.[7] This will
become a matter for further discussion. At any rate the emphasis upon
the divine side of the Scriptures is important to Pieper. He writes,
"Everyone sees the human side, because the Scriptures are written in
the human language. But the 'divine side' was and is in danger of
being overlooked."[8]

This position is developed on the basis of Scripture's own
testimony. It testifies to the fact that it is the Word of God in two

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[5]Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 4 vols., trans. Theodore
Engelder and John Theodore Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing
House, 1950-1953), 1:193.

[6]Ibid., 1:216.

[7]Francis Pieper, "Die Kirche und Gottes Wort," Synodical Reports
of the Missouri Synod Regular Conventions 22-24, (Synodal Bericht),
1899 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), p. 35. Any quotations
from titles appearing in German are translations by the writer.

[8]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:235.

ways. In the first place, passages from the Old Testament are quoted

in the New Testament as the Word of God. In the second place, the New

Testament is clearly held by the apostles and Christ to be of the same

nature as the Old Testament.[9] And this identification of Scripture and

the Word of God is maintained in the face of sharp criticism that it

will lead to intellectualism and stifle religion of the heart.[10]

Still, Pieper concludes that Scripture is the book in which God speaks

to men and that such speech can create sincere faith.

A direct result of the fact that the Scripture is Word of God is

its possession of certain properties.[11] The first of these discussed

by Pieper is that of the authority of Scripture. Because Scripture is

God's Word it has divine authority. "Holy Scripture possesses divine

authority, that is, in all that it says it is entitled to the same

faith and obedience that is due God."[12] Two points of distinction can

be made here in reference to a fundamentalist position. Pieper more

consistently grounds the divine authority of Scripture explicitly in

the fact that it is God's written word. Secondly, this authority is

not subject to the confirmation of the witness of men. "And this

divine authority of Scripture is an absolute in the sense that it comes

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[9]Francis Pieper, What is Christianity?, trans. John T. Mueller
(St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1933), pp. 222-224.

[10]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:ix.

[11]Ibid., 1:307.

[12]Ibid.

to Scripture for its own sake because it is God's Word through inspira-
tion. The authority is not grounded in the witness which individual
men, or even the whole church lay down for the Scripture."[13]

The sufficiency of Scripture is also a result of its being the
Word of God. By sufficiency Pieper means that Scripture consists of
everything that men need to know about salvation. He is careful to
note that sufficiency does not mean that Scripture is to be thought of
as a textbook in such matters as geography, for example. While what it
says about such things is true it is not intended to be used to mediate
in scientific disputes. Secondly, he clarifies the matter of suf-
ficiency by making it clear that Scripture does not relate everything
that could be known concerning divine matters. The sufficiency of
Scripture is pictured as a comforting property which assures the
Christian that God has made known in Scripture all that is needful for
salvation.[14]

Perhaps the property which is most significant in Pieper's
understanding of the doctrine of Scripture is that of its efficacy.
This is distinct from the fundamentalist doctrine. For if Warfield's
major emphasis is upon the authority of Scripture Pieper's is upon its
power. Scripture has the power to bring men to salvation. "The word
of men can straighten out much, but it cannot change human nature, it

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[13]Francis Pieper, "Warum Glauben Wir der Heiligen Schrift? oder:
Wie wird uns die Heilige Schrift eine Gottliche Authoritat?," Lehre und
Wehre 68 (June 1922):161.

[14]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:317.

can create no new life. But the divine word has almighty, creating power."[15]

Pieper himself points to a basic two-fold difference between his doctrine and that of the Reformed theologians, which would include most fundamentalists on this issue. First, the purpose of the written word for the Reformed doctrine does not seem to be to lead all men to faith, but to harden many hearts.[16] Secondly, the Reformed theologians declare that God works his power apart from the Word.[17] In contradistinction to this he writes, "The divine power does not operate outside or alongside the Word, but through the Word and therefore inheres in the Word; that is the plain statement of Scripture . . ."[18]

The point that Pieper makes is that the Word has power in itself to bring men to faith. This does not conflict, in his mind, with the fact that men also have what he calls the "sorrowful might" to resist this power. But it does more than any other single point to clarify both the nature and function of Scripture and the Church. "We make no unnecessary difficulties for ourselves with the announcement of the Words. All that we have to do is to bring God's Word to people and among people. The Word is powerful in itself . . ."[19]

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[15]Pieper, "Die Kirche und Gottes Wort," p. 25.

[16]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:275.

[17]Ibid., 1:208.

[18]Ibid., 1:317.

[19]Pieper, "Die Kirche und Gottes Wort," p. 27.

A necessary corollary to the preceding properties of Scripture is that of its perspicuity. This is not to say that Pieper bases the establishment of this property on its logical necessity. It is taught in Scripture. "According to Scripture, the perspicuity of Scripture consists in this, that it presents, in language that can be understood by all, whatever men must know to be saved."[20] But if Scripture is not clear its power will be limited. Neither does he mean to imply that every passage of Scripture is clear. There certainly are some difficult verses. But the clear passages far outweigh the difficult ones. And these dark passages do not inveigh upon the message of the Gospel.

A second direct result of the fact that Scripture is Word of God is that it is to be the source and norm of Christian doctrine. "The Holy Scripture is therefore the single source, from which all doctrine which resounds in the christian Church, is to be drawn, and therefore also the single standard and rule, according to which all teachings and teachers are to be judged and set right."[21] This fact is also not merely a logical conclusion but is clearly taught in Scripture.[22] That Scripture is the sole source and norm of Christian doctrine is what he calls the Scripture principle. This is clearly a reflection of the Reformation principle of sola scriptura.

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[20] Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:320.

[21] Francis Pieper, Was die Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten wahrend ihres funfundsiebzigjahrigen Bestehens gelehrt hat und noch lehrt (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), p. 1.

[22] Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:350.

In Christian Dogmatics he offers six circumstances by which this Scripture principle is denied.[23] Each of these circumstances represents a limiting of the power of Scripture to work new life in the hearts of men. For example, after suggesting circumstances such as when the Church is placed over the Scripture or when private revelation is used in distinction to Scripture he says that all of these can be reduced to the fact that reason is given authority over Scripture. When this happens the power of Scripture to save is limited because man definitely has the "sorrowful might" to resist the Word. The point is, that if Scripture is not allowed to be the sole source of doctrine its power may also be limited. And this appears to be the factor, in conjunction with Scripture's own testimony, which brings Pieper to the point that he demands the identification of Scripture with the Word of God.

Anything less than identification of the two overthrows the foundation of faith. Speaking of the concept of Scripture as part word of God and part word of man he writes, "This doctrine we repudiate as an appalling and blasphemous one because it contradicts Christ and his holy apostles, it sets up man as judge over the Word of God and thereby overthrows the foundation of faith of the Christian Church."[24] The foundation of faith of the Christian Church is overthrown when human reason is allowed to rule over Scripture with the result that the

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[23]Ibid., 1:196-213.

[24]Pieper, Was die Synode gelehrt hat, p. 1.

Gospel cannot be heard. If we follow Pieper to the logical end of his

thought we find that the Christian religion, with reason dominating

Scripture becomes like every other religion of man, a religion of

works.

Here it may sound like Pieper and Warfield agree, but there is a

subtle difference. By way of illustration one could say that Warfield

thinks of inspiration and inerrancy as a foundation, which if removed

will cause all of Christianity to crumble. Pieper, on the other hand,

places Jesus as the foundation upon whom all other doctrines are built.

But because of his insistence on consistency Pieper will say that if

one begins to remove doctrines such as inspiration and inerrancy he

will eventually get down to removing the foundation of saving grace in

Jesus Christ.

Scripture is Word of God by Inspiration

There are two areas of concern which should be considered with

respect to the difference between Pieper's and a fundamentalist

doctrine within this sub-heading. The attitude toward inspiration is

different. Pieper does not use the doctrine of inspiration to prove

that Scripture has what we have called, "indigenous authority." His

emphasis is on the authority of God. He consistently pictures Scrip-

ture as having an authority which is derived from the authority of God.

This brings out the second area to be noted. It has been shown how

much emphasis the fundamentalists put upon the human element involved

in inspiration. But Pieper's primary concern is to highlight the divine side of inspiration.

Scripture has Derived Authority

The question answered in this section is, How did the Scripture become the Word of God? In other words why does it have such authority? Clearly, for Pieper the authority of Scripture has nothing to do with the general trustworthiness of the apostles, nor with the indigenous authority suggested by the conception of Scripture as a collection of absolute truths.

The authority of Scripture is a result of the fact that it is the Word of God. When Pieper mentions the apostles it is always in reference to the fact that they wrote the Word of God. "Correctly, it has been pointed out that we take an either-or stand with respect to the writings of the apostles. Either they wrote God's own word or they were senseless fanatics and blasphemers who set their own authority and their own word on the sovereign throne in the Church of Christ."[25]

Pieper's portrait of Scripture never loses sight of the fact that it is the Word of God. How is it that the Church is able to bring men to faith in Christ in the face of so many obstacles? Is it the nature of the Church to have this power? No, he writes but the Church does have such a power available to it. That power is the Word of God

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[25]Francis Pieper, "Ist die Heilige Schrift direktes oder nur abgeleitetes Wort Gottes?," Lehre und Wehre 72 (July 1926):196.

as communicated in the Scripture.[26] Perhaps Pieper's understanding of

the precise status of the authority of Scripture in relation to Christ,

the apostles, and to God the Father is brought out in the following

quotation.

> With the Word of the New Testament Apostles, God's revelation of
> the doctrine to His Church is entirely completed, for when Christ
> in His high-priestly prayer (John 17:20) says: "Neither pray I for
> these alone," the Apostles, "but for them also which shall believe
> on Me through their Word," through the Word of the Apostles, He is
> thereby making the Word of the Apostles the basis of faith for the
> entire New Testament era.[27]

The source of the power and the authority of the Scriptures is expli-

citly God.

The nature of Scripture is secured through the process of

inspiration. At the outset it should be noted that Pieper's doctrine

of inspiration is not derived from fundamentalist sources, even though

the content is similar. Pieper's doctrine of inspiration was his

rendition of what the orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians had said in the

seventeenth century.[28] In summary, Pieper adopted the three principles

which these theologians claimed were a part of the process of inspira-

tion. These principles were that inspiration pertained to (1) the

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[26]Pieper, "Die Kirche und Gottes Wort," p. 22.

[27]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:194-195.

[28]Jordahl, "Theology of Franz Pieper," p. 127. See also Robert
Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture (Mankato, MN: Lutheran Synod Book
Co., 1955), p. vi.

suggestion of the matter, (2) the suggestion of the words, (3) the
impulse to write.[29]

The testimony that the Scriptures are inspired and thereby the
Word of God comes from Scripture itself. "The Scriptures not only tell
us that they are the Word of God, but they also teach very clearly why
they are the Word of God, namely, because they were inspired, or
breathed into the writers, by God."[30] The verses that he uses to
support this statement are 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. There are
a couple of minor differences here between Benjamin Warfield and
Pieper. For example, Warfield's stress on the fact that God carefully
guided the lives of the apostles so that they alone could have written
what they did is not found in Pieper.

In general, Pieper spends less energy describing the human
aspects of inspiration and more on the divine aspects than did Warfield
and J. Gresham Machen. He writes, "The scripture testifies everywhere
very clearly that it did not directly fall from heaven but was written
by men. But the result of this origin of the Scripture through men is
not an 'indirect' Word of God or an 'echo' of God's Word, but the Word
of God himself, that is directly God's Word."[31] This is not meant to
imply that the fundamentalists did not call Scripture God's Word. But

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[29]Traugott Rehwaldt, "The Other Understanding of the Inspiration
Texts," Concordia Theological Monthly 43 (June 1972):356.

[30]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:217.

[31]Pieper, "Ist die Heilige Schrift Wort Gottes?," p. 195.

the development of the doctrine certainly emphasized the human aspects of inspiration.

This is also indicated by the fact that Pieper does not go into near the detail concerning the mode of inspiration. He contends that Scripture describes inspiration as the Holy Spirit's use of men as "his mouthpieces or as his organs and instruments." Being given also the impulse to write they produced not their own words but the Word of God.[32]

But Pieper does not fall prey to the charge of a theory of mechanical dictation. He recognizes that the writers of Scripture were ". . . living, personal instruments, endowed with intellect and will and equipped with their own distinct style . . ."[33] He also allows that the writers may have done their own research, had access to prior historical knowledge, and generally were aware of their own personal experiences in the writing of Scripture. But all of these factors were used by the Holy Spirit through the process of inspiration.[34]

Of course, there were any number of objections to Pieper's formulation of the doctrine of inspiration. To those who said that the contents of the Scriptures were inspired but the words were not he answered that they were not even being logical. "Contents and word

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[32]Pieper, What is Christianity?, pp. 238-241.

[33]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:230.

[34]Pieper, What is Christianity?, p. 246.

stand in an indissoluble unity with one another."[35] You cannot have

the one without the other. The Roman Church tried to make a distinc-

tion between the apostle's spoken and written word. This would limit

the effectiveness of inspiration. But Pieper counters that the

apostles themselves declared that their written Word was identical with

their spoken word.[36]

Pieper also deals briefly, not nearly to the extent that

Warfield or Machen do, with the objections to inspiration based on the

contents of Scripture. To the problem of the New Testament imprecisely

quoting the Old Testament he replied that the Holy Spirit could quote

himself in any manner he wished.[37] Warfield had defended at this point

by saying that the apostles never claimed to be quoting directly, and

therefore did not have to be precise.

The fact that there are variant readings in the manuscripts of

Scripture available today does not cause Pieper much concern. He

refers to what seems to be his favorite verse in this regard, John

17:20. Because Jesus promised that all believers would come to faith

in him through the word of the apostles, ". . . we know that in spite

of the insignificant variant readings we have the actual words of the

apostles, preserved to us to this day."[38] Furthermore, it can be

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[35]Pieper, "Warum Glauben Wir der Heiligen Schrift?," p. 166.

[36]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:195.

[37]Ibid., 1:249.

[38]Pieper, What is Christianity?, p. 248.

proved that the variant readings do not change Christian doctrine in any way.

Because the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God they are also without error. "The statement of Scripture that inspiration extends not merely to a part, but to the entire Scriptures, together with the fact that Scripture does not consist of persons or things, but of words, declares at the same time the Scripture is perfectly inerrant [irrtumslos] in all its words and in every one of its words."[39] That Scripture is without error is also supported by the words of Christ that Scripture cannot be broken.

This position on inerrancy Pieper calls an a priori position. By that he means it is obtained beyond or before any human investigation into the matter. He calls on Luther for support saying that this is how he read Scripture and how all Christians should read Scripture.[40] As far as the alleged contradictions in the Bible are concerned Pieper is convinced that with proper thoroughness most of them can be alleviated.

Those theologians who rejected the doctrine of inerrancy were strictly censured by Pieper. His reasoning is, once again that if Scripture is said to contain errors its power to save will be limited because men will be made judges of whether any particular point is true. The following condition results.

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[39]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:221.

[40]Ibid., 1:281.

Men stand no longer under but over the Scripture. Then even if one concedes that they find every essential part of the salvific truth in Scripture, still the decision over what in the Scripture now is infallible [unfehlbar] truth and is to be taken in faith, depends on man. It is not the Holy Scripture which in the last instance determines our faith, but men who divide between truth and error in the Holy Scripture.[41]

This is what he means when in his Christian Dogmatics he says that,

"The principle of Protestantism, 'the sole authority of Scripture,' is turned upside down," by modern theology.[42] When the infallibility of Scripture is denied the contents of faith depend upon man and the concept of the Word of God as a means of grace is lost.

The Necessity of Inspiration and Inerrancy

Are the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy necessary? Can anyone who denies the authority of Scripture remain a Christian? Pieper answers this way.

Certainly not, if this denial is given the practical consequences lying in it. He who does not believe Christ and his apostles when they testify of Scripture, 'The Scripture cannot be broken' . . . will in a consequent manner also not believe by Christ and the apostles what they want to teach of the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ (emphasis added).[43]

This seemingly harsh attitude has garnered a good deal of criticism toward Pieper. But most such critics do not consider that Pieper is sincere about the "if" contained in this passage.

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[41]Francis Pieper, Unsere Stellung in Lehre und Praxis (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1896), p. 8.

[42]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:304.

[43]Francis Pieper, Das Fundament des Christlichen Glaubens (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1925), p. 45.

Traugott Rehwaldt objects to his former professor's emphasis on inspiration. He contends that Pieper went beyond the teaching of the Orthodox theologians by making inspiration or the authority of Scripture the foundation of the Christian faith. He draws this conclusion on the basis of the following sentence which Pieper dictated to his classes. "It follows consequently that no one can believe the Christ of John 3:16 who denies faith in the Christ of John 10:35."[44] He also calls attention to the eight results of the denial of inspiration which Pieper included in his Christian Dogmatics.[45] The results, for example that there could be no knowledge of Christ, that there could be no faith, and that there could be no communion with God, prove to Rehwaldt that inspiration is the foundation of faith for Pieper.

There are at least three reasons why Rehwaldt's presentation of Pieper's doctrine of inspiration should be considered a misunderstanding. In the first place the true foundation of the Christian faith could not be circumvented. If inspiration were the true foundation of Christianity Pieper's category of the fortunate inconsistency would be nonsense. But he is very sincere when he gives examples of men he believes truly to have faith and yet deny the verbal inspiration of Scripture. This is fortunate for them. It is also inconsistent theologizing. And it is dangerous. "If in the denial of the infallible divine authority of the Scripture faith is yet found in John 3:16

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[44] Rehwaldt, "Understanding Inspiration Texts," p. 356.

[45] Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:305-306.

and 1 John 1:7 it is an inconsistency which at any time can turn into a destructive consistency."[46]

The second reason deals with the results of the denial of inspiration. Each of the results is dependent on a conception of the Scripture as the Word of God being a means of grace. We have noted again and again how if men are allowed to judge over Scripture the power of the Gospel to save will be limited. The results listed by Pieper signify that Scripture has lost its efficacy. They thereby point to a more significant foundation of the Christian faith.

That brings out the third point. Whereas Pieper frequently states that whoever denies the inspiration of Scripture overthrows the foundation of the Christian faith it is not necessary to interpret him to mean that inspiration itself is that foundation.[47] As a matter of fact, in articles like Des Wesen des Christenthums, Das Fundament des christlichen Glaubens, and in the section in Christian Dogmatics on fundamental doctrines Pieper explicitly states that the foundation of the Christian faith is justification by grace through faith in Christ. How the denial of the authority of Scripture effects this foundation is the crux of the matter for Pieper.

The key to understanding Pieper in this regard is his penchant for consistency on the part of the theologian. For Pieper the rela-tionship of inspiration and the foundation of faith is a matter of

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[46]Pieper, Das Fundament, p. 48.

[47]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:232.

consistency. If one says he believes in Christ's word of salvation he

ought also to believe Christ's word about the Scripture. If one

believes Scripture to be errorless about Christ he ought also to

believe Scripture to be errorless about itself. In saying this Pieper

does not substitute the authority of Scripture for faith in the

redeeming work of Christ as the foundation of Christianity. Perhaps an

analogy would be helpful to present Pieper's case. If one begins to

tear down a castle brick by brick and is consistent, eventually he will

tear down the foundation on which it is built. If he stops before he

destroys the foundation he is fortunate, but he is inconsistent. For

Pieper the authority of Scripture is founded on the work Christ did for

the salvation of men.

That Pieper has this in mind is clear from the fact that at

points he attributes the rejection of Scripture as Word of God to the

more serious problem of an inability to accept the substitutionary

atonement of Christ. "Even so, the fact that the modern theologians do

not perceive Scripture (which verily is Christ's own Word, given us

through his Prophets and Apostles) to be the Word of God, is but a

symptom of a deeper-seated disease, namely that they have quite

generally discarded the doctrine of the satisfactio Christi vicar-

ia."[48] He concludes that if modern theology does not return to

teaching the satisfactio vicaria the Christian attitude toward the

Scriptures will never be attained.

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[48]Ibid., 1:300.

Scripture is Self-Authenticating

Scripture Testifies that It is Word of God

An important result of the process of inspiration is that the
Scripture is self-authenticating. That is, it testifies to its own
authority expecting to be received on that basis. "The divine author-
ity of Scripture rests solely on its nature, on its theopneusty. It is
a correct theological axiom: 'Scripture is αὐτόπιστος (worthy of
credence on its own account) because it is θεόπνευστος .'"[49] This
self-authentication or self-testimony is a direct result of the
Scripture being the Word of God because the Word of God has the power
to create faith. "The Holy Scripture is, because it is God's Word such
an object of perception that it creates its own organ of perception,
faith, and through that testifies to itself as divine truth."[50]

Pieper further describes this self-testimony of the Scripture as
the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word. ". . . we hold fast to
the divine authority of the Word of God, and indeed not merely because
we have recognized the claims of science as laughable and senseless
even before human reason but because we are previously (a priori)
convinced of the exclusive authority of the Holy Scripture by the
Spirit of God."[51] This is called the inner testimony of the Spirit
which he works through faith in Christ. Because the Scripture is

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[49]Ibid., 1:307.

[50]Pieper, "Warum Glauben Wir der Heiligen Schrift?," p. 164.

[51]Pieper, "Die Kirche und Gottes Wort," p. 35.

self-authenticating Pieper urges that if one doubts the authority of Scripture he ought do nothing more than read and reread the Scripture.

The self-testimony of Scripture represents a major difference in both method and content from the position of Fundamentalism. Particularly enlightening is the role which Pieper gives to reason. That reason must not be placed above the Scriptures has been discussed. The role of reason is always to serve the purpose of Scripture, that is to bring men to faith in Christ. To this end he urges that the extremes concerning the use of reason to defend the authority of Scripture be avoided. An over-emphasis would be to suggest that rational proofs can bring a person to faith. An under-emphasis would be to deny that rational proofs can instill a desire to read and hear the Scripture and so through the action of the Spirit in the Word bring a person to faith.[52]

In this connection we find the only real criticism Pieper made of the tradition that Fundamentalism followed. He suggests that Charles Hodge made "uncalled for obeisances before geologists and astronomers."[53] He openly disapproved of the attempts to prove the authority of Scripture on the basis of proving its inspiration and inerrancy.

> It is firmly established for us that the Scripture contains no errors, but in all in its words is absolute truth. And this we want to establish not first through a critical investigation of

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[52]Pieper, "Warum Glauben Wir der Heiligen Schrift?," pp. 193-197.

[53]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:271, n. 83.

Scripture, but this we believe on the grounds of the witness of
Scripture to itself, as we accept all articles of faith on this
ground. We are certainly pleased to be able to prove that the
contradictions, on which the enemies of the Scriptures call
actually do not exist. But on these proofs we do not base our
faith in the Scripture.[54]

Again and again he returns to the efficacy of Scripture, the power of

the Word to create faith in Christ as the major issue in the doctrine

of Scripture. Of whether Scripture must be proved rationally accep-

table to men he writes, "That is in the first place impossible and then

also opposed to our commission. Christ did not say to go and prove the

Gospel but to go and preach the Gospel."[55]

Scripture is Known as Word of God
on Christ's Authority

Since Pieper makes the efficacy of Scripture the decisive issue,

the message conveyed in Scripture, which supplies that efficacy, is of

primary importance to him. In the first place that message is of

Christ and it is on his authority that men are to believe in his word.

"We accept the Holy Bible as the only standard of truth because it is

not the word of man, but of our sovereign Lord and Savior, by means of

which he wishes to teach all men and to reign in their hearts and

consciences."[56]

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[54]Pieper, Unsere Stellung, p. 11.

[55]Pieper, "Die Kirche und Gottes Wort," pp. 27-28.

[56]Pieper, What is Christianity?, p. 215.

More explicitly the authority of Christ is the Gospel message, for it is through hearing that Christ died and rose, working the forgiveness of sin, and reconciling men to God, that faith is worked in that action. And it is for this message that the Scripture is given. "The essence of Christianity lies in the faith in the Gospel, in the faith in the forgiveness of sins, which Christ has won for men. In preaching this we make men blessed and obtain the goal of the Christian Church."[57] Or in another place he writes, "The doctrine concerning Christ is the foundation of this faith, for saving faith has as its object Christ in his vicarious satisfaction; it is faith in Christ."[58] Both of these quotations are at best insufficient indications of Pieper's persistent insistence that the foundation of the Christian faith is found only in the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ, and that all other doctrines are built on that foundation.

In Christian Dogmatics he writes in the section on fundamental doctrines, "But Scripture informs us further that faith in the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake presupposes and includes certain other doctrines."[59] The fourth of those doctrines listed is this, "Scripture teaches, furthermore, that saving faith is always faith in the Word of

[57]Francis Pieper, Das Wesen des Christenthums (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1903), p. 10.

[58]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:80.

[59]Ibid., 1:82.

Christ, faith in the external Word of the Gospel . . ."[60] It is that

Word which has the power to create faith. And for Pieper it is on

faith in Christ that the authority of the Scriptures is founded. A

rather course comparison might state the respective positions of

Fundamentalism and Pieper in this way. Warfield and Machen would save

Christianity from the ravages of Modernism by preaching the fundamental

of Biblical authority. Pieper would do it by preaching the Gospel of

Jesus Christ.

Scripture and the Confessions

It is not within the intended scope of this investigation to

examine the exegetical principles which rule in the two traditions.

If, in fact, it were there is no doubt that the differences exhibited

would be found to be even greater. But even a summary of Pieper's

doctrine of Scripture would be remiss if it did not include at least

passing mention of the relationship of Scripture to the Lutheran

Confessions.

Confessional Lutheranism, as mentioned in the introduction, had

provided a foundation for a consistent approach to the Scriptures.

From the late 16th century to the time of Pieper and even to today,

within the Missouri Synod, confessionalism meant to accept the Confes-

sions of the Church because they were a correct exposition of Scrip-

ture. The Confessions then, stood as a pivot around which all ap-

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[60] Ibid., 1:84.

proaches to Scripture had to revolve. That the Missouri Synod had the Confessions to turn to in order to help it maintain its doctrine through consistent interpretation contrasts it with the Fundamentalist movement. Warfield and Machen certainly had their confessions to turn to but they did not subscribe to those confessions as Lutherans do. Furthermore, the movement, being cross-denominational suffered as a result of having a number of different confessions involved.

For Pieper, the Confessions serve as a commitment to the doctrines found in Scripture, and thereby serve also as a guide to the correct exposition of Scripture. "In adopting its symbols, or Confessions, the Lutheran Church did not adopt doctrines which are foreign to Scripture, but confessed its faith in the doctrines revealed in Scripture."[61]

Pieper's influence upon the Missouri Synod was substantial. The Synod was not yet thirty years old when it began to hear his strong voice. As a professor at Concordia Seminary for fifty-three years he touched countless lives of Synodical pastors. As an author of a complete systematical work he is still being listened to by students and pastors of the Synod. As the president of the Synod he was able to have influence on the official positions of the Synod. It is to those official positions, particularly those concerning Scripture, which we turn to in the following chapter.

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[61]Ibid., 1:354.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD ON SCRIPTURE

The present study mandates that the position which the Lutheran
Church-Missouri Synod takes be clearly demonstrated. To a large extent
this has already been accomplished in the chapter on Francis Pieper.
It is the contention of this paper that the Missouri Synod has con-
tinued in what has here been called the traditional Lutheran doctrine
of Scripture as it was presented by Francis Pieper. Though the
official statements of the Synod are few there are enough to support
this contention.

One preliminary comment should be made concerning the more
recent statements of the Synod. Recent Missouri Synod work on the
doctrine of Scripture has been undertaken in opposition to a much less
coarse opponent than the Modernism of the first decades of this
century. Modernism was interested in coordinating Christianity with
scientific advances by reducing it to a system of morality. In the
last few decades the Missouri Synod has found itself forced to contend
with men, within and without the Synod, who sincerely feel that the
traditional formulations of inspiration and inerrancy do not do
justice to what Scripture says of itself. This may be a contributing
factor to the nature of the official statements of the Synod. They are
less polemical than are the writings of Pieper.

The fact that polemic is less characteristic of recent work can be seen in both statements adopted by the Synod in convention and in work done by the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations. Both of these sources represent Missouri thought concerning the doctrine of Scripture. And both of them exhibit a willingness to study the doctrine, and if necessary to restate portions of it in terms that communicate effectively with respect to the time. Nevertheless, it shall become clear that, while some elaborations are made on formulations of Pieper, neither the official position nor the documents produced by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations differs from them in substance.

Official Statements

The Constitution

The Constitution of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, adopted in 1847, presents a long standing tradition of respect for the Scripture. Article two of the constitution establishes the fact that the Church holds the Scripture to be the Word of God. It reads in part:

> The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation: 1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice; . . .[1]

Acceptance of this article is a prerequisite for membership in the Synod. This is evidence of the deep commitment the Synod has made to its position toward the Scriptures.

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[1] Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Handbook of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, 1981 Edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), p. 11.

Another example of this commitment is the statement that
Scripture is the norm of faith and practice. In Article eight under
the section concerning resolutions at synodical meetings further
elaboration is made of this point. "All matters of doctrine and of
conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God."[2] This is not
only a statement of the acceptance of the authority of Scripture, it is
also a confession of confidence in the perspicuity of Scripture.

That the constitution calls Scripture the "written Word of God"
is indicative of its posture on the nature of Scripture. But what is
only implied in the constitution is made quite explicit in other
official statements.

Brief Statement

In 1929 a select committee, including Francis Pieper, was
instructed by the Synod's Committee on Intersynodical Matters to
prepare a short and simple presentation of the doctrinal positions of
the Missouri Synod. The result was the "Brief Statement of the
Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," which was adopted at the
1932 synodical convention.[3]

The first article of doctrine which "Brief Statement" treats is
that of Scripture. Clearly, Francis Pieper had a good deal of influ-
ence on the production of this document. Even the wording of the

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[2]Ibid., p. 15.

[3]Lutheran Cyclopedia, 1975 ed., s.v. "Brief Statement." Some
feel that this is primarily the work of Pieper. See Carl Meyer, "The
Role of the Brief Statement," Concordia Theological Monthly 33 (April 1962):33

section on Scripture is similar to that which Pieper used in many of his works.

"Brief Statement" is composed in three sections. The first section makes the point that Scripture is the Word of God through the process of inspiration. The process is specifically called verbal inspiration, but other than that it is not described. Verbal inspiration is held to because it is taught by Scripture itself, not because it is a theological deduction. On the other hand, inerrancy is presented more or less as a deduction. "Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35."[4]

The second section deals with the fact that Scripture is the sole source of doctrine. By this it is meant that all doctrines and all teachers are to be subject to the statements of Scripture. Furthermore, confidence in the perspicuity of Scripture is demonstrated because Scripture is to interpret Scripture, that is the clear passages are to be used to make the more obscure passages plain.

The third section most clearly reflects the concerns noted as those of Francis Pieper in the preceding chapter. The contention that Scripture is partly the Word of God and partly the word of man is rejected. The reason given for this stance is that such a position ". . . sets up men as judges over the Word of God, and thus overthrows

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[4]Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 3.

the foundation of the Christian Church and its faith."[5] The concern is that the Gospel is not to be hindered by the fact that men can decide which parts of it to believe.

Statement on Scripture

In 1958 the Synodical Conference, of which the Missouri Synod was a member, adopted a "Statement on Scripture" which was prepared for it by a committee on doctrinal unity. The following year it was adopted in convention by the Missouri Synod. That the "Statement on Scripture" is representative of Missouri doctrine and cannot be said to contradict earlier statements but only elaborates upon them is shown by one of the reasons adoption was urged in the resolution. It reads that, "Whereas, The Statement on Scripture contains nothing new and is in harmony with the Lutheran Confessions and with the public teaching (publica doctrina) of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, . . ." it is resolved that the statement should be adopted.[6]

Because this statement was accepted as presenting nothing new it is quite important, for it makes explicit the purpose and nature of Scripture. Scripture is, according to this document, unequivocally the Word of God. Because it is the Word of God it "carries its own authority in itself." Where Scripture speaks, God speaks. The possibility of what has been called an indigenous authority does not exist.

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[5]Ibid., p. 4.

[6]Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings 44th Regular Convention (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 189.

The process by which Scripture came into being and exists as the Word of God is referred to as verbal inspiration. Scripture is in its entirety and in its parts the Word of God. "Inspiration means, then, that mighty act of God whereby He spoke His Word in the words of men and made them the effective and final vehicle of his revelation."[7] The description of this process as a mere mechanical dictation is rejected because the apostles and prophets knew that they were giving the words of the Holy Spirit and yet felt responsible for what they wrote. Furthermore, the fact that inspiration applies to all parts of Scripture means that it is also inerrant in all its parts, for God is the author of Scripture.

Perhaps the most enlightening element of "Statement on Scripture" is found in its firm commitment to the Gospel message as the ground of the nature and function of Scripture. There are two pertinent passages in this regard. The first stresses the exclusivicity of Scripture as the source of doctrine.

> We believe and teach that God has given us His Holy Scripture to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:13-17). We <u>therefore</u> confess Scripture to be the only, but all-sufficient <u>foundation</u> of our faith . . .(emphasis added)[8]

With Pieper the Synod declares that Scripture is authoritative because it delivers the Gospel of Christ.

The second passage is important because it extends this authority to every word of Scripture.

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[7]Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, "Statement on Scripture," <u>Lutheran Witness</u> 78 (February 24, 1959):8.

[8]Ibid., p. 9.

> All Scripture is written because of Christ and has a connection
> with the revelation of God in Christ, some passages directly, and
> some more remotely. Every word of Scripture is <u>therefore</u> an
> organic part of the Scripture's witness to Christ (emphasis
> added).[9]

Because Scripture is about Christ all of its words are about Christ.

Therefore, parts of Scripture cannot be taken to be less authoritative

because they allegedly do not pertain to Christ. The overwhelming

concern is that the source of authority be maintained as the inspired

and inerrant Word of God because it is the source of the Gospel.

A Statement

The close of the decade of the sixties and the early seventies

were years of turmoil in the Missouri Synod. Not the least among the

points of controversy was the doctrine of Scripture. At the 1971

synodical convention the desire was expressed to continue with the

commitment toward Scripture as found in the constitution. To this end

<u>A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles</u> was produced and

adopted at the 1973 convention, as a means to promote unity within the

Synod.[10]

By far the major concern treated in the document is that of the

doctrine of Scripture. The effort to speak to the needs of the times

takes the form, in this document of specific points of contemporary

theology which are rejected. Still the tone of the work is sober and

not given to personal polemics.

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[9]Ibid., p. 8.

[10]Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, <u>A Statement of Scriptural and
Confessional Principles</u> (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973),
p. 5.

A Statement upholds the position that every word of Scripture is the Word of God, and that it became so through the process of inspiration. The document contends that as the Word of God ". . . all Scripture bears witness to Jesus Christ and that its primary purpose is to make men wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ."[11] In this connection two technical terms are introduced. As the Word of God which is to bring men to faith in Christ, Scripture is said to have causative authority, that is the power to bring men to faith. Furthermore as God's exclusive revelation of the Gospel of Christ, Scripture also has normative authority, that is the right to act as the sole source of doctrine.[12]

Another important element of A Statement is that it introduces the terms "formal" and "material principle" into official statements of the Synod. The distinction is quite helpful for a system of doctrine which relies heavily on the Gospel as the purpose of the Scriptures. The Gospel of salvation through faith in Christ is the material principle for which the Scripture is given. It is the norm of Scripture in that sense. Scripture is the formal principle. It is given for the Gospel but it is also the place from which we derive the correct announcement of the Gospel.

The concern for the relationship between Gospel and Scripture characterizes much of the Synod's official literature on the doctrine of Scripture. This is in distinction from fundamentalist literature. The significance of the Gospel is also distinct from the doctrine of

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[11]Ibid., p. 1

[12]Ibid., p. 2

the fundamentalists in the role that it plays in relation to the infallibility of Scripture. A Statement concludes, "We hold that the opinion that Scripture contains errors is a violation of the sola scriptura principle, for it rests upon the acceptance of some norm or criterion of truth above the Scriptures."[13] In other words the relationship between the Gospel and Scripture is such that if error is found in Scripture the authority of the Gospel is called into question.

Finally, a contribution of A Statement is a willingness to recognize "apparent" contradictions without feeling the necessity to undergo mental gymnastics to reconcile them. It is taken on faith that these are contradictions only to man's limited rational knowledge. In addition to this a helpful statement is made concerning the unity of Scripture. "While acknowledging the rich variety of language and style in Scripture and recognizing differences of emphasis in various accounts of the same event or topic, we nevertheless affirm that the same doctrine of the Gospel, in all its articles, is presented through-out the entire Scripture."[14] Both of these trends represent a dif-ferent tack than that of the fundamentalist attempts to harmonize all "alleged" contradictions.

Statement of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) is a committee accountable to the President of the Synod and the Synod in convention whose job it is, among other things, to prepare studies

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[13]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[14]Ibid., p. 3.

concerning specific matters of doctrine. The work of the CTCR does not have the same official status as do those documents which have been adopted in convention. Brief reviews of four pertinent reports are included here because the CTCR is generally a good monitor of the thoughts of the Synod. The Commission serves as a guide to give the Synod direction in complex matters.

Revelation, Inspiration, and Inerrancy

In 1962 in response to some of the issues raised by Dr. Martin Scharlemann's exploratory papers the CTCR was requested to formulate a study document dealing with the doctrine of Scripture. At one point Dr. Scharlemann, a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, had attempted to support the contention that Scripture contained errors.[15] He did not wish to reject the doctrine of inspiration. His conclusion was the Scripture was inspired truth, but not truth in propositional form. Rather Scripture was pictured as truth ". . . revealed in the diverse language of total existence." It was truth adapted to men of a former age.[16] In this way Scripture could communicate truth to men of this age and still contain errors.

With Dr. Scharlemann's work in mind the Commission first produced A Study Document: Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy. This was presented in the mode of an exploratory paper, offering two positions on the topics and pointing out positive and negative elements of each. In 1965 the CTCR revised that study document with a more

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[15]Martin Scharlemann, The Inerrancy of Scripture (reprint, St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1977), p. 1.

[16]Ibid., p. 14.

positive, single treatment of the subject. In reviewing what men such as Dr. Scharlemann had been saying this document more firmly supported the traditional stance toward Scripture than had the first statement.

The revised document made statements on inspiration and inerrancy. In respect to both of these issues the Commission emphasized the divine element. The theme of the statement on inspiration was that the nature of inspiration was a work of the Holy Spirit. "If we want to understand inspiration more fully, we therefore turn to what the Scriptures say about the power, work, and blessing of the Holy Spirit in general and apply the knowledge gained in this way to our understanding of inspiration."[17]

The most significant result of the fact that inspiration was the work of the Holy Spirit is that it makes the Scripture words divine words of power.

> It means that we recognize that the Spirit of power was at work in the apostles and prophets when they wrote the words of the Holy Scriptures. We also recognize that the Spirit of power is at work in and through these words now when they are read, spoken, preached, or sung. We know that the inspired word is a divinely created word, not a word produced by men but a word given by God. We know the inspired word as a divinely creative word, a word with a power that no merely human word has.[18]

This emphasis on the power of the word to create faith coupled with the confession that inspiration is verbal inspiration places this document squarely in the traditional doctrine of Scripture.

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[17]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Revision of the Study Document Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 2.

[18]Ibid.

The theme of the statement on inerrancy is that the inerrancy of Scripture is a matter of faith. It may not be possible to prove inerrancy to the satisfaction of man's rational needs. But it is to be believed because Scripture is God's Word.

> When we make that confession our own, our faith, a faith created by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures themselves, expresses the conviction that the witness of Scripture in all its parts in their intended sense is true and wholly reliable. These words of the Scriptures are inerrant because they are inspired by God--words taught by the Holy Spirit, written by men moved by the Holy Spirit. These inspired words in all their various forms are the word of God.[19]

Contemporary Biblical Studies

This report of the CTCR, produced in 1967, is primarily directed at the use of the Historical-Critical method of study of the Bible. As such it goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is interesting to note what the Commission calls a presupposition necessary for the correct study of Scripture. "In the joy of this faith and with praise to God we affirm our unconditional loyalty and commitment to the inspired Scriptures as the written Word of God."[20] Again, the nature of Scripture appears in the thoughts of the Synod as a matter of faith. It should be stated here that both the Missouri Synod and Fundamentalism rejected the Historical-Critical Method as a result of its presuppositions concerning the nature of Scripture, (i.e. Scripture is not the Word of God).

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[19] Ibid., p. 4.

[20] Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 8.

Gospel and Scripture

Due to a growing trend of confusion of the relationship of the Gospel to Scripture the Commission was asked to deal with the subject. In 1972 it produced the document Gospel and Scripture. By describing the Gospel as the chief article of the Christian faith, that is its material principle, and Scripture as the source of the Gospel, that is the formal principle, the CTCR hoped to clarify the issues. Two extremes were to be avoided. What is termed a "fundamentalistic" attitude was deemed as inadequate because it made the Bible rather than the Gospel the center of faith. On the other hand, Gospel reductionism was criticized because it made any matters in Scripture not explicitly involved with the Gospel to be concerns open to extra-biblical judgment.[21]

There is a sense in which the Gospel is the norm of Scripture.

The Gospel is the norm in the Scriptures in the sense that it absolutely prohibits understanding any passage to teach salvation by works. It is not norm in the sense that the center of Scripture becomes a device to sanction a view of the Bible and a method of interpreting it which virtually denies that the whole Bible is God's inspired, authoritative Word on all matters concerning which it speaks.[22]

The concern that the Gospel be allowed to stand as the material principle without abusing the authority of the formal principle is an important quality of the Lutheran doctrine of Scripture when compared to the fundamentalist doctrine. The Gospel is the seat of the author-

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[21]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Gospel and Scripture (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), p. 4.

[22]Ibid., p. 12.

ity of Scripture but it cannot be set in opposition to the Scripture
because the Scripture was given by God for the sake of the Gospel.[23]

There is also a sense in which the Scripture is the norm of the
Gospel. "When Lutherans teach that Scripture is the norm of the
Gospel, they mean simply that the content of the Gospel and the terms
in which this content is expressed must be taken from the Scrip-
tures."[24] The Scripture is God's means of communicating the Gospel.
For this reason the Symbols of the Lutheran Church very closely
interrelate the formal and material principles. So much so that,
"Opinions which disagree with Scripture at the same time diminish the
glory of Christ's passion," and "When the Gospel is lost sight of, the
Scriptures are distorted."[25] This understanding of the interrelation-
ship supports the case for the inerrancy of Scripture.

> The truthfulness of the Gospel does not depend upon the inerrancy
> of the Scriptures. Because the Bible is inerrant, it teaches the
> truth of the Gospel inerrantly. Biblical inerrancy assures that
> the Gospel (which is true per se) is correctly presented in the
> Scriptures. An errant medium might distort the message.[26]

The Synod's attitude toward Scripture is a result of faith in
the Gospel. "Accordingly, our view of the Bible is a result of our
faith in the Gospel; our faith in the Gospel is not a result of our
view of the Bible."[27] This simply means that the Gospel has the power
to bring men to faith, and through this faith the medium which created

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[23] Ibid., p. 14.

[24] Ibid., p. 17.

[25] Ibid., p. 18.

[26] Ibid., p. 22, n. 13.

[27] Ibid., p. 15.

that faith is recognized to be truthful. What Scripture says of itself, of its inspiration and its inerrancy, is then taken on its own word. In addition, as God's Word the Scripture claims to be the sole source of doctrine. The attempt to set this normative authority in opposition to the causative authority of Scripture is seen as a violation of the nature of the relationship of the Gospel and Scripture.[28]

The Inspiration of Scripture

This pamphlet produced by the Commission in 1975 is divided into three sections. The first describes the process of inspiration. "Inspiration is a mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit connected with the writing of the Sacred Scriptures, irrespective of whether the authors obtained knowledge concerning the things of which they wrote by revelation or by research."[29] The use of the term "mysterious" is a confession that the fact but not the mode of inspiration is taught in Scripture. In other words the Synod confesses that it is not clear how the Holy Spirit used men of varying backgrounds, who used various styles and kinds of literary forms, and who had both natural and supernatural sources of knowledge. But it is clear from Scripture that all Scripture is inspired. "Nevertheless, inspiration is the operation of the Holy Spirit which makes the words of Scripture God's Word and

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[28]Ibid., p. 21

[29]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, The Inspiration of Scripture (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), p. 7.

assures that through all the rich variety found in the Scriptures God
speaks His eternal and immutable truth to us."[30]

The second section deals with inspiration and history. God
acted in human history and caused his word to be communicated in human
history. If historical investigation produces difficulties in the
biblical record the doctrine of inspiration urges the believer to see
these not as errors but as "inspired variety." This may not satisfy
human reason. But it is faith which claims God's Word to be infallible
truth. "Faith affirms that even in the presence of difficulties which
human reason may regard as deficiencies, we have, nevertheless, in the
Scriptures God's totally reliable Word which cannot mislead and deceive
us."[31]

The final section treats the authority of Scripture. The fact
that the Holy Spirit works through Scripture to create faith is called
the causative authority of Scripture. The right of Scripture to
regulate doctrine is a result of the causative authority and is called
normative authority.[32] This simply means that, "First faith is wrought
by the Gospel, and then faith recognizes the Scriptures as the very
Word of God profitable for teaching."[33]

These sources complete the picture of the Missouri Synod
doctrine of Scripture. Since they all carry official status, to one
degree or another, it cannot be objected that the Synod does not really

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[30]Ibid., p. 8.

[31]Ibid., p. 10.

[32]Ibid., p. 14.

[33]Ibid., p. 16.

uphold this doctrine. While the Synod's stance on Scripture is clear it may be necessary to draw out some themes in order to facilitate a comparison with the doctrine of Fundamentalism. This will be accomplished in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

THEMES OF A TRADITIONAL LUTHERAN

DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

What men like Francis Pieper and the Missouri Synod accomplished
was to maintain a distinctly Lutheran doctrine of Scripture in the face
of liberalizing influences on the one hand, and fundamentalist tenden-
cies on the other. In order to make this more clear this short chapter
will draw out themes from the two preceding chapters. These themes can
be dealt with under four sub-headings.

An Emphasis on the Relationship Between
Gospel and Scripture

One of the major characteristics of a Lutheran doctrine of
Scripture, as presented in this study is the emphasis on the relation-
ship between the Gospel and Scripture. This is important to the
doctrine of Scripture because Scripture was given for the sake of the
Gospel. That is, the heart and center of the message of Scripture, and
of all Christian doctrine, is the Gospel of salvation through Christ.
Lutherans have labored hard to define this relationship so as not to
allow either the Gospel or the means by which it is communicated, that
is, the Scripture to be given less honor than it is due.

In this respect two terms have historically been used to clarify
matters. The Gospel has been called the material principle. This
simply means that it is the Gospel which is the matter or the concern

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for which Scripture was given.[1] In this sense the Gospel is the norm

of Scripture because all interpretation of Scripture must be done in a

way that it agrees with the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith

in Christ, without any merit through works of the law.

Scripture has been called the formal principle. This means that

Scripture is the form, or structure in which the Gospel is communi-

cated. In this sense Scripture is the norm of the Gospel because all

announcements of the Gospel must be done in a way that agrees with the

manner in which it is announced in the Scripture.[2]

The correct pronouncement of the Gospel is the decisive factor

in the Lutheran doctrine of Scripture. This is because the Gospel is a

means of grace and, as shall be seen more clearly in the next section,

it has the power to create faith. Now, it must also be recognized that

the nature of the relationship between Gospel and Scripture is under-

stood in such a way that any error in the formal principle may impede

the effectiveness of the Gospel as a means of grace.[3] This is con-

sidered to be the testimony of Scripture itself. And this interrela-

tion of Gospel and Scripture, along with the testimony of Scripture is

the reason for the strong stand on the infallibility of Scripture.

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[1]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-
Missouri Synod, Gospel and Scripture (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing
House, 1972), p. 12. See also Francis Pieper, Das Wesen des Christen-
thums (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1903), p. 10.

[2]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-
Missouri Synod, Gospel and Scripture, p. 17.

[3]Ibid., p. 22. See also Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Brief
Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis:
Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 4.

In short, the Lutheran attitude toward Scripture is determined by its attitude toward the Gospel. In conjunction with the testimony of Scripture, the nature of Scripture as the exclusive correct communication of the Gospel governs its status in the Church. Furthermore, in a slightly different context the next section will show how this attitude toward Scripture is a direct result of faith in the Gospel.

A Derived Authority for Scripture

For the Lutheran, Scripture is what it is because it is the Word of God. It is not conceived of as a collection of independent, eternal truths. Scripture is truth because it is God's Word. Since Scripture claims to be God's own Word the process by which it came into being is an important aspect of the nature of Scripture.

Inspiration in no way supplants the Gospel as the foundation of Christianity. But inspiration is Scripture's own teaching as to its origin.[4] Therefore inspiration is an assurance that the Gospel is correctly delivered in the Bible. Inspiration is the means by which God used men to communicate his Word, in written form, to men. Further speculation as to the mode of inspiration is minimized, although care is taken to reject the charge that the Lutheran doctrine is one of dictation.

The role of the Holy Spirit in the process of inspiration is given full treatment. It is the Spirit of God, at work in and through the Word which gives it power and authority. There is an intimate

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[4]Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics 4 vols., trans. Theodore Engelder and John T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950-1953) 1:217. See also Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Brief Statement, p. 3.

connection between the Spirit and the Word.[5] The Spirit does not work

immediately, but mediately, that is through the means of grace, in this

case the Word of God.[6]

The subject of derived authority for Scripture is explicated by

the use of the terms of causative and normative authority. Causative

authority refers to the power of the Word, as a result of the Spirit's

work, to bring men to faith in Christ. Because of the understanding of

the Word as a means of grace stress is placed on the causative authori-

ty of Scripture. This reflects the distinction made earlier between

the fundamentalist emphasis on authority and the Lutheran emphasis on

power. Authority refers to rights and privileges. Power refers to

ability. The causative authority of Scripture is its ability to bring

men to faith.[7]

In the Lutheran doctrine of Scripture authority is a result of

power. In other words, the normative authority of Scripture is a

result of its causative authority.[8] The normative authority of

Scripture is its right to norm, or judge in all matters of doctrine.

The relationship between the causative and normative authority of

Scripture is understood in such a way that once faith in Christ is

worked under the auspices of causative authority the believer is also

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[5]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-
Missouri Synod, Revision of the Study Document Revelation, Inspiration,
Inerrancy (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 2.

[6]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:317.

[7]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-
Missouri Synod, The Inspiration of Scripture (St. Louis: Concordia
Publishing House, 1975), p. 14.

[8]Ibid.

brought to recognize the right of Scripture to rule in matters of doctrine and practice. This, once again, illustrates the Lutheran concern for the primacy of the Gospel.

The Lutheran conception of the authority of Scripture is here called a derived authority because it is always demonstrated as a result of the fact that Scripture is God's own Word. The nature of Scripture as God's Word is described in Scripture as happening through the process of inspiration. Since inspiration insures that Scripture is God's Word it also is closely connected with the inerrancy of Scripture. Inerrancy means that because Scripture is God's Word it cannot lead men astray, that no part of it is in error.[9]

But there are two important elements to the subject of inerrancy which characterize the Lutheran treatment. In the first place, inerrancy is stated as a matter of faith.[10] What "apparent" discrepancies exist in Scripture are not all necessarily able to be harmonized to the satisfaction of human reason. The goal in this doctrine of Scripture is not to satisfy reason. It is confessed that some of these apparent discrepancies may be solved only at the end of time when God solves them. But this admission in no way impairs the fact that Scripture cannot communicate error because God is the author. It is a matter of faith that God cannot lie or be mistaken in any of the matters contained in Scripture.

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[9]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Revision of the Study Document Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy, p. 4.

[10]Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 2.

Secondly, inerrancy is also a matter of faith because of the implications of the relationship between the Gospel and Scripture. Inerrancy, as portrayed in the Lutheran doctrine, has as its primary result the fact that the correct announcement of the Gospel is insured. It was stated earlier that the interrelation of Gospel and Scripture was such that an errant medium of the message would impede that message. Thus it is faith that recognizes that Scripture was given in an inerrant form in order that the Gospel might not suffer.[11]

A Self-Authenticating Scripture

Because Scripture is God's Word it is self-authenticating. This means that it does not rely upon the testimony of men to be found the Word of God or the correct announcement of the Gospel.[12] The role of reason is involved in this case. Reason is not to be used in any way that it may be considered a judge over Scripture. This includes even depending on men to testify to the authority of Scripture. The role of reason is to be only to serve the purposes of Scripture, that is bringing men to faith. But if satisfying reason is made a criterion for the authority of Scripture reason is no longer in a servant role.

The ministerial role of reason is also defined in the task of the interpretation of Scripture. Lutherans are cautious to insist that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. This means that Scripture is to be handled in such a way that the clear passages are to be used to interpret those passages which are more obscure. In other words the

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[11]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[12]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:307.

interpreter is not to make the most logical interpretation his ultimate

goal but rather that which most clearly is attested to by other clear

portions of Scripture.[13]

Consistency

Consistency is a rather broad topic which applies to a number of

areas in this doctrine of Scripture. In the first place, for example,

it applies to the dominant concern that the Gospel be given primacy.

It is the person and work of Christ which is the heart and center of

the Christian faith. It is also the person and work of Christ which is

the heart and center of the Lutheran doctrine of Scripture.

Another example of what is here called consistency is the full

treatment of the properties of Scripture. The properties attributed to

Scripture which have been mentioned in the preceding chapters follow

from the fact that Scripture is the inspired Word of God. In this

light something that Robert Preus has said of the seventeenth century

Lutheran dogmaticians appears to apply here also. He said that in

reading the dogmaticians one cannot help but feel that the emphasis

made by them on the inspiration of Scripture is made in order to

support the divine properties of Scripture.[14]

If inspiration insures that Scripture is the Word of God it also

insures that Scripture is authoritative because God's authority is

applied to it. As God's Word Scripture is also efficacious, that is,

it has the power to bring men to faith. Another property that Scrip-

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[13]Ibid., 1:361.

[14]Robert Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture (Mankato, MN: Lutheran Synod Book Co., 1955), p. 76.

ture will have if it is consistently maintained that it is the Word of God is its sufficiency. Scripture communicates all that is necessary for men to know in order for them to be saved. Finally, as the Word of God, Scripture is clear. The message of salvation is available to all who read Scripture. It is not a hidden message.[15]

The rejection of certain approaches to Scripture is a matter of consistency. If it is clear that a particular approach to the doctrine or the interpretation of Scripture will hinder or distort the Gospel it is promptly rejected. Thus, many formulations of the doctrine and many methods of interpretation have been rejected outright on the basis of their presuppositions that God cannot or will not supernaturally break into this world. This would either eliminate or severely limit any concept of an inspired, written form of the Word of God.[16]

Finally, the doctrine of Scripture is consistently related to other doctrines. Because of the intimate relation between the Gospel and Scripture the doctrine of Scripture can never become an isolated doctrine for Lutherans. By consciously making Christ the center of the doctrine of Scripture Lutherans also consciously relate it to all other doctrines. The doctrine of Scripture then does not become the single rallying point of doctrine. If it had there would, no doubt, have been more contact between Lutherans and fundamentalists.

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[15]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:307-330.

[16]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), pp. 5-6. See also Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, A Statement, pp. 3-4.

PART III

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN LUTHERAN AND FUNDAMENTALIST

DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER SEVEN

COMPARISON OF LUTHERAN AND FUNDAMENTALIST

DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE

By now the careful reader, provided he has found acceptable the
data presented here, will have drawn some of his own conclusions
concerning the validity of labeling the Missouri Synod doctrine of
Scripture as fundamentalist. It is not a particularly difficult task
to recognize the differences which support the thesis. There is
sufficient difference in both structure and content of the doctrine of
Scripture to deny the charge that the Missouri Synod doctrine is
fundamentalist. The major differences are worked out under broad
themes in this chapter.

On the other hand, it would be foolhardy not to recognize the
similarities which exist between the two views. The point is not to
establish that the views are mutually exclusive, but that there is
enough difference to allow for scholarly recognition of the fact and to
suggest that theological discussions ought to avoid the equation of
fundamentalist and traditional Lutheran doctrines of Scripture. The
comparison begins with similarities.

Similarities

Some of the similarities were recognized by those who lived
through the period in which Fundamentalism flourished. Even Francis
Pieper observed that there was a certain sense in which both traditions

could find comfort in each other. Of Benjamin Warfield he wrote,

"Because of this stand he had to endure opposition and derision from

many in his own church body; in these trials he found much comfort in

the fact that 'an entire Lutheran Synod' unanimously subscribed to the

doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture."[1] John Theodore Mueller

further explains the source of the similarity. "So far as I know our

professors and pastors have always kept away from fundamentalism as

this was an essentially Reformed movement. However, since we have

taught verbal and plenary inspiration, as did the fundamentalists,

though from a different orientation, we were at times charged a being

fundamentalists."[2]

The difference in orientation mentioned by Mueller will be

examined further in the following section. Here it must be noted that

the difference in the manner in which the doctrine of Scripture was

taught may not have been, in certain individual cases, as great as men

like Pieper or Mueller would have hoped it to be. Richard Caemmerer

has said that The Fundamentals, ". . . did much to divert the preaching

of the Missouri Synod from the Gospel as a means of grace to a deposit

of doctrine to be accepted by a faith which is the duty of man."[3]

Milton Rudnick notes in quoting Caemmerer that he may be

overstating the case. Nevertheless, it is apparent in sources which

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[1]Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 4 vols., trans. Theodore
Engelder and John T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House,
1950-1953), 1:272, n. 83.

[2]John T. Mueller, quoted by Milton Rudnick in Fundamentalism and
the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 105.

[3]Richard Caemmerer, quoted by Milton Rudnick in Fundamentalism,
p. 106.

quote The Fundamentals that there is a tendency to invest more energy

in the establishment of the inspiration of Scripture on the basis of

external verification than on the authority of the Gospel. Although

there is not room here for full treatment of these sources, both Paul

Kretzmann's The Foundations Must Stand, and Theodore Engelder's

Scripture Cannot Be Broken make use of fundamentalist literature. They

also both exhibit a willingness to present the inspiration and inerran-

cy of Scripture as one would expect a fundamentalist to do.

> In this respect the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible is
> fundamental for the entire corpus doctrinae. If . . . Christian
> theologians, preachers and teachers cannot be sure of the matters
> which they present in their teaching then the Bible will cease to
> be the one norm of doctrine and rule of life and Christianity will
> cease to be the one absolute religion (emphasis added).[4]

This is not meant to imply that these men were fundamentalists, but

that their work in this area displays more fundamentalist influence

than the official Missouri Synod position does.

Beyond this influence there are other ways in which it might be

said that there are common points between the two groups. Leigh

Jordahl suggests that both have developed a posture which ". . . seeks

to preserve the pre-modern forms of the faith in an atmosphere which

dismisses and explicitly repudiates modernity insofar as that would

demand religious readjustment."[5] This would be a fair representation

of both groups if the qualification is included that the Missouri Synod

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[4]Paul Kretzmann, The Foundations Must Stand (St. Louis:
Concordia Publishing House, 1936), p. 3.

[5]Leigh Jordahl, "The Theology of Franz Pieper: A Resource for
Fundamentalistic Thought Modes Among American Lutherans," The Lutheran
Quarterly 23 (May 1971):122.

does not reject communicating traditional content in modern language.
This is seen in the most recent publications of the Synod on Scripture.

The most pertinent similarity is, of course, the common accep-
tance of the Bible as the written Word of God. Theodore Engelder made
this observation years ago.

> Are we Fundamentalists? Our Western District declared that true
> fundamentalism means: 1) Unqualified acceptance of every word of
> the Bible as divine, infallible, and eternal truth. . . . When the
> term of reproach "Fundamentalists" refers to this point, we are
> proud to be called that. We are not in accord with Fundamen-
> talists on other important matters.[6]

Both fundamentalists and the Missouri Synod hold Scripture to be
inspired and inerrant, and both hold it to be normative for doctrine
and practice. Warfield wrote,

> The writers of this article are sincerely convinced of the
> perfect, soundness of the great catholic doctrine of biblical
> inspiration--i.e. that the Scriptures not only contain, but ARE,
> THE WORD OF GOD, and hence that all their elements and all their
> affirmations are absolutely errorless . . .[7]

Compare this to these words of Pieper.

> The Bible is a book truly unique. It is, in distinction from the
> millions of other books in the world, God's Word. . . . Scripture
> is neither a human nor a 'divine-human' report on God's Word and
> the 'facts of revelation,' but is itself the Word of God.[8]

And note the similarity to the words of the Synod's constitution.

> The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without
> reservation: 1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament

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[6]Theodore Engelder, Scripture Cannot Be Broken (St. Louis:
Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 438, n. 333.

[7]Benjamin Warfield and Archibald Hodge, Inspiration, introduc-
tion and appendices by Roger Nicole (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book
House, 1979), p. 26.

[8]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:216.

as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice; . . .[9]

In today's world of theology the number of those who could ascribe to these statements and understand them as they have been described in the preceding chapters is dwindling. In fact, to read men like James Barr one would expect to find virtually no one holding such an "untenable" position.[10] In view of the narrow confines of this theological spectrum it is not unnatural to expect those who hold the Bible with such esteem to be cast in the same category. However, what follows will portray this generalization as shortsighted and impractical.

Differences

The differences that exist between the fundamentalist and the traditional Lutheran doctrines of Scripture are many. What is intended is that the analysis offered here lands somewhere between being so general that it becomes a mere caricature of the actual positions, and on the other hand, so specific that it becomes tediously impractical.

The sub-headings are stated as they are, not to imply an actual conflict, as if the two positions have consciously opposed one another on these grounds. This would be overstating the case. Rather they are intended to convey the idea that the fundamentalist and Lutheran doctrines of Scripture are not merely gradations of high respect for

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[9] Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Handbook of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, 1981 Edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), p. 11.

[10] James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (New York: Harper & Row Publishing, 1973), pp. 5-12.

biblical authority. These are significant differences which cannot be harmonized, and therefore, do stand over against one another. Furthermore, since this is being written from a Lutheran perspective the differences noted represent areas at which a Lutheran might object to being labeled a fundamentalist.

Reductionism vs. Confessionalism

By nature the Fundamentalist movement was a reductionistic one. That is, it sought to reduce doctrinal matters to the fundamentals which had to be defended against the changes which Modernism supported. By contrast the Missouri Synod had a rich doctrinal history to support and maintain.

With respect to the doctrine of Scripture Rudnick writes, "The allegation that the Missouri Synod's doctrine of Biblical inerrancy is derived from Fundamentalism represents a misunderstanding of the history of theology. Not Fundamentalism but Lutheran Orthodoxy is the Synod's source of this doctrine."[11]

Following the formative years, beginning around 1580 with the publication of the Book of Concord, Lutheranism entered a period of relative unity. During this period, known as the Age of Orthodoxy, many doctrinal formulations were solidified. It was at this time that what this study has called the traditional Lutheran doctrine of Scripture was crystallized. Even a cursory glance at Pieper's work will show the use he made of the Orthodox dogmaticians and of the Confessions in order to give a complete doctrinal stance. Reducing the

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[11]Rudnick, Fundamentalism, p. 113.

doctrine of Scripture to a defense of its authority would not suffice

for Pieper. "This reductionism is in sharp contrast to Franz Pieper,

whose efforts were directed at recovering and applying to the 20th

century situation the theology of high Lutheran confessionalism that

had received its fullest dogmatic expression in the work of the 17th

century dogmaticians."[12]

The result of this strong confessional element in the Missouri

Synod is that it does not reduce its theology or its doctrinal stance

to a point where the doctrine of Scripture is either its sole center or

the agency for union with other denominations. The doctrine of

Scripture is given its nature and form only in relation to the central

doctrine of the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

The fundamentalist tendency is otherwise. "It seems to me that

fundamentalist theology is a theology of one major doctrine--the

inerrancy of biblical autographs . . . the first point on which all

others depend in the inerrant Bible in its original manuscripts."[13] In

this sense then, although we have not agreed with James Barr's implica-

tion that the belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is the sole criteri-

on for the employment of the appellation of "fundamentalist," we can

agree that fundamentalists use the inerrancy of Scripture to determine

the status of other doctrines. ". . . the inerrancy of the Bible, the

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[12]Jordahl, "Theology of Franz Pieper," p. 124.

[13]Morris Ashcraft, "The Theology of Fundamentalism," Review and Expositor 79 (Winter, 1982):39.

entire Bible including its details, is indeed the constant principle of rationality within Fundamentalism."[14]

The impression that Fundamentalism creates is that the doctrine of Scripture is of primary importance, in the exclusive sense, to the nature of Christianity. In other words there is a tendency evident to announce the Bible before it announces Christ. This can be seen both in the formation of the movement and in what it stood for. The sentiments of J. Gresham Machen may be recalled, who said that despite what other elements might be involved he had to take his stand with those who stood for the Word of God.[15]

Morris Ashcraft finds the same impression in what the movement stood for. He quotes Charles Hodge to the effect that theology is concerned with the facts of the Bible as principles and general truths. Warfield and Machen could not have agreed more. But Ashcraft concludes, "One might have expected the concern of theology to be the facts of God and its object the systematization of those facts about God. Instead, we find the Bible exalted into the role of something that sounds ultimate in itself."[16]

The difference between the fundamentalist tendency to reduce doctrinal matters to the point that the doctrine of Scripture becomes the center and foundation of the Christian faith and the confessional Lutheran concept of producing a full doctrinal system by shaping the

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[14]James Barr, Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), p. 53.

[15]J. Gresham Machen, quoted by Ned Stonehouse in J. Gresham Machen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1955), p. 337.

[16]Ashcraft, "Theology of Fundamentalism," p. 35.

doctrine of Scripture in relation to the Gospel is a great one. This

difference leads to other differences, such as the unionism of the

fundamentalist movement which the Synod could not support. Because of

the Lutheran emphasis on the Gospel this difference is also related to

other differences which will be explored, particularly the following

one.

Authority vs. Power

This distinction does not mean that Lutherans deny the authority

of Scripture or that fundamentalists deny the power of Scripture. It

does mean that there is a difference in emphasis. In short, fundamen-

talists emphasized the authority of Scripture for authority's sake

because man needs something to rely on. Lutherans emphasized the power

of the Gospel to bring men to faith and built the authority of Scrip-

ture upon that foundation.

Pieper says that the Gospel, found in Scripture is a means of

grace.[17] "Statement on Scripture" establishes that Scripture is given

because of Christ, to make men wise unto salvation.[18] A Statement on

Scriptural and Confessional Principles introduces the term causative

authority to describe Scripture's power to bring men to faith.[19] And

the CTCR document The Inspiration of Scripture clarifies the issue by

showing that Scripture's right to regulate doctrine is a result of its

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[17]Pieper, Dogmatics, 1:317 and 3:107.

[18]Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, "Statement on Scripture,"
Lutheran Witness 18 (February 24, 1959):9.

[19]Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, A Statement of Scripture and
Confessional Principles (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932),
p. 2.

causative authority.[20] Each of these sources is emphasizing the power

of Scripture. Each of them clearly makes Christ and the message of

salvation through faith in him alone the center and source of the

doctrine of Scripture. Christ, as the message of the Gospel itself, is

the source of the power of the Scripture. And Lutherans understand the

relationship between Gospel and Scripture to be such that they cannot

be opposed to one another. Therefore, trust in the words of Scripture

is the result of faith in the Gospel.[21]

Fundamentalist doctrine is contrary to this. It tends to

develop an indigenous authority for Scripture. Both Warfield and

Machen defend Scripture as a deposit of truth readily available to

reason. Caemmerer did a fine job of summarizing this view of Scripture

when he said that it pictures Scripture as, ". . . a deposit of

doctrine to be accepted by faith which is the duty of man."[22] Nowhere

do Warfield or Machen even imply that the authority of Scripture is

built on the Gospel. Rather they rely on the apostles as trustworthy

teachers of doctrine to justify their trust in Scripture.[23]

Another element of this difference is that Lutheran doctrine

does not fail to establish the fact that Scripture is what it is

because it is the Word of God. Furthermore, by making the nature of

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[20]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, The Inspiration of Scripture (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), p. 14.

[21]See J. Gresham Machen, What is Christianity?, ed. Ned Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1951), p. 254.

[22]Richard Caemmerer, quoted by Rudnick in Fundamentalism, p. 106.

[23]Benjamin Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 180.

Scripture explicit it also brings to light the consequent properties of Scripture such as its authority, efficacy, sufficiency, and perspicuity. By tacitly divorcing the authority of Scripture from the fact that it is God's communication of the Gospel Fundamentalism weakens the power of Scripture and de-emphasizes its consequent properties. The result is that more pressure is placed on the capacity of human reason to recognize Scripture as truth. This introduces the next difference to be taken up.

Reason vs. Faith

Perhaps the widest divergence in the two doctrines of Scripture is in relation to the role of reason with respect to the authority of Scripture. Rudnick has noted a hesitancy on the part of members of Synod to be involved in the Fundamentalist movement on this account.

> A basic principle of Reformed theology, at least as members of the Missouri Synod understood it, was to interpret Scripture in the light of human reason. This incipient rationalism, according to Missouri Synod observers, was the foundational weakness of Reformed theology. . . . This factor, too, loomed large in the thinking of the Missouri Synod and inhibited involvement in the Fundamentalist movement.[24]

But it was not only in the interpretation of Scripture that there was an over-estimation of the powers of reason, but also in the very doctrine of Scripture. This can be seen in the following characterizations of the function of the authority of Scripture of each position. For the fundamentalist position the function of the authority of Scripture was to satisfy reason. In other words, Scripture

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[24]Rudnick, Fundamentalism, p. 86.

functioned as an authority which proved itself through "observable phenomena" to be the most reasonable truth available to men.

For the Lutheran doctrine of Scripture authority is conceived in another way. The authority of Scripture is to function as a means of grace. Scripture's function is to create faith. Lutheran doctrine does not maintain that faith is unreasonable, or opposed to reason but that there are points at which it may be called to accept things which are above or beyond reason. In this context then, Scripture is said to be self-authenticating. It does not depend on human reason to justify its authority. It creates faith in Christ, and on the basis of that faith leads the believer to accept the Scripture as the written Word of God.

The fundamentalist conception of the role of reason is uniquely related to its development of the doctrine of inerrancy.

> In their efforts to defend Calvinism and with it the orthodox doctrines of Christianity, the Princeton theologians, [and Fundamentalism in general], developed a system of doctrines grounded in reason and biblical inerrancy. Thus they stressed the importance of reason in authenticating Christian faith and the need for an inerrant text which revealed ultimate truth.[25]

Because Scripture is conceived of as the ultimate truth available to reason the fundamentalist uses the term inerrancy with a different connotation than the Lutheran does. For the fundamentalist the inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture will always agree with correct reasoning. It is Charles Hodge who said, "The Scriptures never

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[25]Bill Leonard, "The Origin and Character of Fundamentalism," Review and Expositor 79 (Winter 1982):7.

demand faith except on the ground of evidence."[26] The Lutheran understanding of the doctrine of inerrancy is that Scripture cannot contain error but that there may be points which are above or beyond explanation through the use of human reason.[27]

Put simply the fundamentalist formulation of inerrancy is a matter of achieving the correct reasoning. The Lutheran formulation of inerrancy is a matter of faith that God's Word cannot deceive. There is also evidence for this in the pronounced fundamentalist concern for the harmonization of Bible difficulties. Of course, harmonization is not in and of itself an abuse of reason, but the authority of Scripture must not rest upon its success. Admittedly, attempts at harmonization did occupy much Lutheran attention in the early part of this century particularly the work of William Arndt, but this has tapered with the clearer confession of inerrancy as a matter of faith. This may even be seen in as minor a point as the shift from the use of the term "alleged" difficulties as seen in Pieper's work, to the use of "apparent" difficulties in A Statement.[28] "Alleged" implies that the difficulties do not really exist. "Apparent" admits that there are difficulties but that they only appear as such to human reason.

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[26]Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1873), 1:53, c.f. Benjamin Warfield, Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield, 2 vols., ed. John Meeter (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973), 1:584.

[27]Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, A Statement, pp. 2-3, and Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Inspiration, p. 10.

[28]Francis Pieper, What is Christianity?, trans. John Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1933), p. 250, and Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, A Statement, p. 3.

Finally, the dependance on reason led fundamentalists to an over-emphasis on the original autographs. Jordahl suggests that this, ". . . preoccupation with original autographs represented a defensive apologetic."[29] If any error appeared insurmountable fundamentalists could always claim that it was not part of the original text. In fact, Warfield used proof that the error was in the autograph as a criteria for proof of any error in Scripture.[30]

Human vs. Divine

Finally, there is one more rather ironic difference between the two formulations of the doctrine of Scripture. This is more a matter of structure, or time devoted to specific portions of the doctrine. Still it is quite interesting to note that in the development of the fundamentalist doctrine much time is spent on the human element of Scripture. We have already seen how Scripture functions as an authority which satisfies human reason that it is ultimate truth. There is also a lot of emphasis on the apostles as trustworthy teachers of doctrine. But the most obvious example of this tendency is the amount of time spent on describing the mode of inspiration. Despite a confession that the mode of inspiration is a mystery Warfield does his best to describe it. In the course of that description Warfield gave so much room to the human element in the production of Scripture that ". . . in the evangelical world Hodge's and Warfield's article was

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[29]Jordahl, "Theology of Franz Pieper," p. 129.

[30]Warfield, Inspiration, p. 36.

construed by some as presenting a lowered view of inspiration."[31] It is not meant by this that Warfield or the fundamentalists ever denied or slighted the divinity of Scripture. But their preoccupation with the human aspects of Scripture is characteristic of their entire doctrine of Scripture and indicative of a dependence on human reason.

By centering the doctrine of Scripture in the Gospel of Christ the Missouri Synod avoids this emphasis on the human element. The Synod does not ignore the issue of the human element. It has commented on the actions of the apostles in the process of writing. But at the same time it has confessed that it is not clear how the Holy Spirit used the apostles.[32] In general it should be said that the Synod has left it as a matter of faith that God was able to accomplish the task of communicating his Word in written form.

These differences, so apparent lead to but one conclusion. To identify the Lutheran and fundamentalist doctrines of Scripture is not a fair use of the available facts. The wide divergence in these doctrines suggests that those who identify the two have failed to do their homework.

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[31]Roger Nicole in the Introduction to Warfield, Inspiration, p. xiii.

[32]Commission on Theology and Church Relations-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Inspiration, p. 8.

CONCLUSION

This study was opened with the objective that the development of the distinction between the fundamentalist and the Lutheran doctrine of Scripture would contribute to the avoidance of unnecessary confusion. That confusion was seen in the misuse of the term Fundamentalism as it was applied to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This presentation, through the use of case studies to define the fundamentalist and the traditional Lutheran doctrines of Scripture, has shown that the Missouri Synod has not in the past and does not in the present hold a fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture. In doing this it has shown that the use of belief in the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture as the sole criterion for categorizing a system of belief as fundamentalist is impractical and misleading.

The study was begun in an attitude of respect for the fundamentalist position. Fundamentalism, and what is now called Evangelicalism has something positive to say about the adherence to Scripture as the sole source and norm of doctrine, about Scripture being the Word of God. It should not be ignored. It should be met with a clear delineation of the Synod's stance which informs Evangelicalism, as ironically as it sounds, of the Lutheran concern for the primacy of the Gospel in the doctrine of Scripture.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Missouri Synod has legitimate cause to be impatient with those who fail to recognize the

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difference between the fundamentalist and Missouri's position. Refusal to appreciate the distinction cannot be termed a scholarly generalization. This position too, can be met with the confident claim that Missouri's doctrine of Scripture is not fundamentalist. Certainly it is not, as some commentators put it, "a failure to lean on Jesus Christ." It is because of Jesus Christ, and out of a concern for a pure pronunciation of his Gospel message that the Synod's doctrine of Scripture is stated as it is.

S.D.G.

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