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THE WESLEYAN VIEW OF THE SCRIPTURES
IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY EMPHASES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Division of Theology and Philosophy
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In Partial Fulfillment
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by
Earl David Owen
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APPROVED BY

Delbert R. Rose

William M. Arnett

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The first half of the twentieth century has brought marked changes in theological thought. Perhaps, the most vital and far-reaching alteration has been in respect to the Scriptures. Since theological system and Christian life depend upon one's view of the Scriptures, it is the conviction of this writer that one should know specifically what he believes about them.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

It is the purpose of this study to evaluate the historic Wesleyan view of the Scriptures in the light of twentieth-century theological views of them. Students of the Scriptures are aware of the fact that the nineteenth-century view of the Scriptures, held by the great scholars of Methodism, is not the prevailing view held by their descendants today. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have made a tremendous impact upon the historic Wesleyan view of the Holy Scriptures. This study has sought more fully to understand the position taken by earlier Wesleyan writers, and to

see if twentieth-century modifications of the position are really justified.

Importance of the Study

Liberal and neo-orthodox Methodists have written about their views concerning the Scriptures. However, to this writer's knowledge, no conservative Methodists have made any full-scale study of the Scriptures. Conservative Wesleyans have left the field to their conservative Calvinistic brethren. The work of these Calvinistic scholars is in no way to be depreciated. Conservative Calvinistic and conservative Wesleyan views have, perhaps, differed only in minor things, such as approach. This near approximation of conservative Calvinistic and Wesleyan scholars does not mean, however, that Wesleyans should entirely abandon the field. On the contrary, the conservative Wesleyan voice should be heard. The work of nineteenth-century Wesleyan scholars should be considered and an evaluation made, in the light of recent developments, by their descendants.

Method of Procedure

Materials for this study have been more plentiful in historic Wesleyan writers, rather than in present-day ones. Recent conservative Wesleyan views of the Scriptures are available, primarily, in periodical articles, lectures, and

portions of published works. The procedure of this study has been first to study historic Wesleyan writers. The next area of study consisted of what could be found that had been written by recent conservative Wesleyan scholars. Conservative Calvinistic scholars were also considered. The final area of investigation was the work of liberal and neo-orthodox scholars.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Wesleyan

The term "Wesleyan" refers to the system of theological thought which had John Wesley as its source. In this study, the term refers to the view of Scriptures held by Wesley and his successors. John Wesley, himself, did not set forth any extended theological treatise on the Scriptures, but the early theologians of Methodism have provided us with many such. Thus, the term "Wesleyan" as used in this study, has reference to John Wesley's view of the Scriptures as interpreted by the early theologians of the movement. This view, incidently, was essentially that held by Christianity up to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The Scriptures

The term "Scriptures" refers to the sixty-six

canonical books of the Bible, thirty-nine of which comprise the Old Testament, and twenty-seven the New Testament. These books are generally referred to collectively as the canon of Holy Scripture, or the books which have been divinely authorized to present God's revelation to man.

Liberalism

The term "liberalism" in theology, generally, refers to that system of thought which was dominant from Schleiermacher to Barth. According to Bernard Ramm, liberalism had a fourfold rootage: philosophical idealism, unreserved criticism, the supremacy of science, and the new learning.¹ Liberalism is naturalistic and humanistic. It merges special revelation with general revelation. It denies the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. Reason is held to be the source of authority.

Neo-Orthodoxy

The term "neo-orthodoxy" means a new orthodoxy. It is a reaction against an unrealistic liberalism. The avowed aim of this newer theology, which began with the publication of Karl Barth's Kölnbrief, is a return to the true reformation

¹ Everett F. Harrison (ed.), Baker's Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), p. 322.

theology. It has stressed the necessity of revelation. However, the Bible is only a record of, or witness to, revelation. Revelation is not in word, but in deed. Authority lies in a subjective authority of the Spirit, rather than the objective authority of the written Word.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The first chapter of this thesis is the introduction which states the problem and defines the terms used in the study. Chapter two is a consideration of revelation. It is presented in the framework of historic Wesleyan thought, along with liberal and neo-orthodox views. In chapter three, the same procedure is followed in regard to inspiration. Chapter four is an attempt to set forth the true authority of the Bible in the light of false claimants to authority. Chapter five is a reiteration of the findings of the previous chapters, and a conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVELATION

This chapter has been an attempt to set forth the Wesleyan doctrine of revelation. It is at the point of revelation that the supernatural character of Christianity comes into the greatest prominence, and thus, it is the point of greatest antagonism with the naturalistic element in the Church. Wesleyan scholars of the nineteenth century believed that revelation, and specifically biblical revelation, was supernaturally given to man by God Himself. The writer has sought, in this chapter, to set forth the Wesleyan view of revelation, along with modifications that modern scholars would make of it. The chapter has been divided into four sections: (1) Definition of Revelation, (2) The Necessity of Revelation, (3) The Nature of Revelation, and (4) Evidences for Revelation.

I. DEFINITION OF REVELATION

H. Orton Wiley, a contemporary Wesleyan scholar, has given the following succinct definition of revelation.

By revelation, in the broader sense of the term, is meant every manifestation of God to the consciousness of man, whether through nature and the course of human

history or through the higher disclosures of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Scriptures.¹

Liberalism, which denies the supernatural character of Christianity, has sought to modify such a view of revelation. Liberal theologians have either denied the possibility of revelation, or they have watered down the term so much that it does not retain much of its original meaning.

Early liberals, especially, attempted to make the religion of the Bible appear to be just like any other religion. They insisted that Christianity was part of an evolutionary development of religion. In reality, it was human discovery, not divine disclosure. The best that could be said for Christianity was that it was "the highest expression of an essence latent in all religions."²

A more chastened form of liberalism has spread out the meaning of revelation so as to include everything. By making everything sacred, it deprives Christianity of any claim to uniqueness. Truths of science, art, or any field of investigation are "revealed" truths. A representative of present day liberalism, L. Harold DeWolf, gives this definition of

¹H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1953), I, pp. 125-126.

²Carl F. H. Henry, Fifty Years of Protestant Theology (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), p. 16.

revelation. "By revelation is here meant any activity of God by which truth is disclosed to human persons."³

Neo-orthodoxy claims to be a return to Reformation theology. Revelation is truly a redemptive activity of God. Revelation for the neo-orthodox theologian consists of divine acts, not propositional truths. Revelation is a continuing thing. It comes by means of divine-human encounter. A definition by one of the great continental theologians--Emil Brunner has been quoted in a recent book edited by Merrill Tenney.

In the time of the apostles as in that of the Old Testament prophets, divine revelation always meant the whole of the divine activity for the salvation of the world. Divine revelation is not a book or a doctrine. Revelation is God Himself in His self-manifestation within history. Revelation is something that happens.⁴

II. THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION

The thought of Wesleyan scholars, as well as other conservatives, was that general revelation was inadequate for man's needs. General revelation was a reality, but a direct

³L. Harold Dewolf, A Theology of the Living Church (New York: Harper, 1953), p. 33.

⁴Merrill C. Tenney (ed.), The Word for This Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 30.

revelation of God was required. John Wesley showed very clearly the limitation of general revelation.

From the things that are seen we inferred the existence of an eternal, powerful Being, that is not seen. But still, although we acknowledge his being, we had no acquaintance with him.⁵

General revelation can go only so far, and then special revelation must assist it. It was held that reason was not sufficient to discern more than God's eternal power and Godhead. Without special revelation, man would remain ignorant of major moral and spiritual truths. Man would not know that God cared for the lost soul, and would forgive the person who trusted in Christ's provision. It is true that man once knew these facts, but the fall darkened the minds and moral natures of men. All one has to do to see what man would be like without special revelation is to look at pagan peoples and their religions.

It was further held that God was morally responsible to reveal His will to men. If men were moral creatures, then they must know what was expected of them. Men had sinned, and if God hated sin, He would see to it that men knew what they could do about it. Once the necessity of revelation was

⁵The Works of John Wesley (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), VI, p. 58.

established it would not be requisite to prove it was possible or probable. Revelation was necessary and therefore it would be possible. If it were needful, and not possible, God's power would be limited. The whole moral system demanded special revelation. Thus, Wesleyan scholars felt that special revelation was necessary.

Liberalism has not always felt the necessity of special divine revelation. Religion is an evolutionary development of some sort of innate principle. Reason is able to keep men on the evolutionary road to further progress in religion. It is held that man does not need any special revelation from God. God is in all of man's efforts. Liberalism emphasized a philosophical idealism which made God very immanent.⁶

Present-day liberalism would say that revelation was necessary. Revelation would be required for any truth to be grasped. Their definition of revelation is very broad. Liberalism would hold to the ability of human reason to gain insight into religious truth. According to a prominent Methodist theologian:

To reject rational criticism as an instrument for the

⁶Henry, loc. cit.

discovery of theological truth would be sure, in a short time, to result in religious regression in which all manner of long outgrown absurdity and immorality would return under the guise of paradoxical faith.⁷

Neo-orthodoxy has trained its big guns on the rationalistic emphasis of liberalism. Neo-orthodox men have charged that rationalism rules out faith. Karl Barth has denied general revelation in order to strengthen his case for special revelation.⁸ Some form of special revelation is necessary for neo-orthodox theologians, and, especially, as seen in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus Christ to the individual in the experience of encounter.⁹ There must be revelation continually, if man is to hear God's message. The Bible is the record of men who experienced encounter. These were special revelations to men of old, and would not be of value to men today other than to be read as religious biography. Revelation is needful, but only that which is presently made to men.¹⁰ Thus, Wesleyan theologians urged the necessity of special revelation. That revelation

⁷Dewolf, op. cit., p. 154.

⁸Henry, op. cit., p. 60.

⁹H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941), p. 153.

¹⁰John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 110.

was made in Jesus Christ, the Bible being the means of God giving His special Word to mankind. Liberalism has not seen the need of special revelation, and neo-orthodoxy stressed the necessity of special revelation, but has divorced it from the Bible.¹¹

III. THE NATURE OF REVELATION

It has been customary to divide revelation into the two categories of general and special revelation. Until recently, most theologians have accepted the belief that there was a direct and an indirect revelation of God to men. Such men, affirmed that this distinction was biblically founded. These theologians referred to such Scripture references as Psalms 19 and Romans 1.

General Revelation

General revelation has been defined by William B. Pope, one of the great theologians of nineteenth century Methodism, as:

. . . Every manifestation of God to the consciousness of man, whether by the constitution of the human mind, in the framework of nature, or in the processes of providential government.¹²

¹¹Tenney, loc. cit.

¹²William Burton Pope, Compendium of Christian Theology (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1880), I, p. 35.

Nature reveals God to men. Men have looked at the vast universe, and said that there must be a Creator. They have observed the intricacies and regularity of nature and said there must be a Designer and Sustainer. Indeed, the Scriptures have declared that nature presents God's eternal power and Godhead to men in such a clear manner that they are responsible to God for a proper response to such a revelation (Romans 1:20).

There has also been a revelation within man's nature. Just as man has been conscious of himself, so has he been aware that there was a divine Being that he should worship. God has revealed Himself to the consciousness of men in such a way that sin has not entirely blotted it out.

The last source of general revelation has been called providence. History shows that God is working out His will. History is not just a confusion of events, but it shows an order and design. God is behind history, and He has control of it.¹³

Liberalism has placed much emphasis upon general revelation. Men of liberal persuasion have felt that all that men really needed was general revelation.¹⁴ They have

¹³Wiley, op. cit., pp. 127-133.

¹⁴Dewolf, op. cit., p. 65.

limited revelation to general revelation. A plea was made that Christianity did not have any special normative revelation, and, perhaps, other religions had something to offer to the body of revelation.¹⁵

The content of general revelation included anything that brought enlightenment to men. The subject of the enlightenment did not need to be God. General revelation was so watered down that any meaning it previously possessed was lost.

While the liberal made all revelation general, some neo-orthodox thinkers, such as Karl Barth, have denied that there was any such thing as general revelation. Special revelation was the only form of revelation allowed. God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. If there was any such thing as general revelation, it was of such a nature as to be unintelligible. There was no need for general revelation. Such revelation was not personal and intimate. Revelation to be revelation must consist in God personally disclosing Himself to man in the act of encounter.¹⁶

It would not be difficult to claim too much for

¹⁵Carl F. H. Henry (ed.), Revelation and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 13-14.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 18-19.

general revelation, but early Wesleyan theologians felt they had a biblical basis for holding that it had a beginning value. Liberalism used it as its main workhorse, and some species of neo-orthodoxy, in reacting against liberalism's claims for it, denied it altogether.

Special Revelation

Wesleyan theologians held, with historic Christianity, that special revelation was that disclosure of God recorded in the Bible which culminated in Jesus Christ. John Wesley was quick to point out the limitations of general revelation, and his successors were of like disposition. General revelation could not make known to men God's redemptive plan. There were few who had walked in the light of general revelation, and special revelation became a necessity.¹⁷

The canon. The sixty-six books of the Bible were regarded as canonical. The Old and the New Testaments were esteemed as God's full and final special message to mankind. Jesus Christ and the apostles put their stamp of approval upon the canon of the Old Testament. Christ quoted from the accepted divisions of the Old Testament.¹⁸ Then in regard

¹⁷The Works of John Wesley, loc. cit.

¹⁸Edward John Carnell, The Case for Orthodox Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 44.

to the New Testament, Christ authorized its formulation. The test that the organizer of the New Testament canon applied was apostolic authorship or apostolic authorization.¹⁹

Men of liberal persuasion have argued that as the documents of the Old and New Testaments were of human origin, so was the collection of these documents. In order to fit these writings into their evolutionary framework of origins, they have felt they had to push up the dates of acceptance into the canon. This view has been held by such men as W. O. E. Oesterley, Theodore H. Robinson and Robert H. Pfeiffer.²⁰ Neo-orthodoxy has remained committed to this viewpoint, also. Such men as Nels F. S. Ferre', John Baillie, and H. Richard Niebuhr may be cited as examples here.²¹

Present conservative theologians have not accepted the view that the older concept of the canon was untenable. The books of the Bible were divinely-given revelations to men, and bore an intrinsic authority. They were only recognized as canonical by men. The church saw that they bore marks of divine authority, and so they were accepted as being part of the canon.

¹⁹Pope, op. cit., p. 199.

²⁰Henry (ed.), op. cit., p. 159.

²¹Carl F. H. Henry, The Protestant Ethic (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 53.

Scriptural genuineness. Wesleyan theologians accepted the genuineness of the Scriptures. The established authors of the Old Testament were recognized. Josephus had given the same authors for the Old Testament as we now have them.²² Christ and the Apostles held to the accepted authors of the Old Testament canon.

The New Testament authors have been sufficiently substantiated, also. The Apostles and early Christians would have been quick to correct any error in authorship in regard to books said to be written by their company or by someone known to them. Early Christian authors ascribed these books to the commonly accepted authors.²³ The enemies of Christianity would scarcely have allowed any book to be passed off as written by an Apostle when it had not been.

Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy do not vary greatly in their attitude toward the authenticity of the Scriptures. Very few books of the Bible have been allowed to retain the originally claimed author. Even when the evidence in favor of an author is so overwhelming that it cannot be denied, portions of the book are often said to be written by some

²²Samuel Wakefield, A Complete System of Christian Theology (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1859), p. 53.

²³Richard Watson, Theological Institutes (New York: Mason & Lane, 1836), I, p. 138.

other writer. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy are committed to developmental theories and, therefore, must allow time for the biblical narrative to develop. The result of this claim is that the alleged authors could not have written the books that bear their names.²⁴

Scriptural authenticity. The church, in general, has believed that what was recorded in the Scriptures was the truth. Wesleyan theologians of the earlier period felt that what was recorded in the Bible was to be accepted as fact. The people and events recorded in the Scriptures were actual. The historical facts of the Scriptures have been substantiated by other historical documents.²⁵ There were few men who questioned the authenticity of the Scriptures before the nineteenth century. The opponents of Christianity would certainly have not been slow in pointing out anything that was contrary to fact. A further argument for the authenticity of the Scriptures is the fact that they were soon translated into other languages. The Old Testament, for example, was translated into the Greek in the third century B. C.²⁶

²⁴Edwin Lewis, A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation (New York: Harper, 1940), p. 36.

²⁵Wiley, op. cit., p. 211.

²⁶Wakefield, loc. cit.

The general attitude of liberalism has been to deny the authenticity and historicity of the Scriptures. Liberalism has chosen to deny the reality of revelation and the supernatural, and, therefore, it has no other alternative than to discredit the Scriptures. Instead of the Scriptures being authentic and historical, some men consider them legendary. The writers were expressing nationalism and heroism in the form of a story. Samson and the other leaders in the book of Judges are cited as examples of forms of literature.²⁷

Liberalism has decided ahead of time that most of the Scriptures are not factual, and that their job is to discover the true circumstances behind the story. Some men feel that there are "crudities", and "barbarisms" in the Old Testament.²⁸ They insist that much of it must be dismissed as sub-Christian and unworthy of God. Their chief concern has been that they might understand the religion of Jesus. Behind the New Testament writers' attempt to portray Jesus as they thought of Him, the real form of Jesus' religion appears. Liberals have desired to follow the pattern of the

²⁷ DeWolf, op. cit., pp. 71, 72.

²⁸ Harold Kuhn, "Liberalism and the Old Testament," American Holiness Journal, II (January, 1943), 53-57; (February, 1943), 56-61.

religion of Jesus.²⁹

The approach of neo-orthodoxy has not been too heartening. Men in this tradition have accepted most of the tenets of liberalism. They urge that the meaning is all that is important; the surrounding circumstances are not a matter of concern. Much of the stories must be considered as "supernatural garnishings" and "imaginative mediums for truth". Christ is said to be their criteria of truth. Anything in the Scriptures that has not measured up to what they felt was God's revelation in Christ has been rejected as extra materials.³⁰

Scriptural inerrancy. It has been held by conservative theologians that the Scriptures were inerrantly given by God. Conservatives have believed that these writings were fully inspired by God. God's hand was in the writing of the autographs of the biblical books to the extent that the resulting products were without error. Liberalism has not felt that all of the biblical accounts were inspired. There are many obvious contradictions, and there are many instances where the actions and moral standards are sub-Christian. The

²⁹DeWolf, op. cit., p. 73.

³⁰Edwin Lewis, A Christian Manifesto (New York: Abingdon Press, 1934), pp. 61, 84.

Scriptures could not, therefore, be inerrant.³¹

The neo-orthodox theologian has gone the way of his liberal brother, and has declared that the Scriptures are a human production, and thus, fallible. Neo-orthodoxy's view of special revelation tends to reduce the Scriptures to a fallible book. Propositional revelation has been denied, and "revelation by encounter" has been substituted. Revelation has been given only in divine acts, and human interpretations of those acts could not be inerrant.³²

Scriptural integrity. Wesleyan theology has maintained that the Scriptures were not only inerrant but that they were also preserved without essential alterations. Many reasons have been given as proof of such a position. The Jews were unusually meticulous in the transmission of the Old Testament. It was held as sacred and they would not allow any errors in its transmission. The Jews and Samaritans served as a check upon each other before Christ, and after Christ the Jews and Christians were a check upon each other. The manuscripts of the New Testament have been in essential agreement, and witness to its integrity. Ancient versions

³¹ DeWolf, loc. cit.

³² William Hordern, The Case for a New Reformation Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 51.

have also been in agreement.³³

Liberal and neo-orthodox writers, as we have already seen, have denied the original inerrancy of the Scriptures. Some of these men have also taken what was left and claimed that there had been additions made by later writers. This has been called the work of the redactor. Rudolf Bultmann has been one who has held to such a position. It should be readily admitted that there are a few places that are undoubtedly additions. The last few verses of Mark 16 could be cited as an example.³⁴

Special revelation--historical. The biblical revelation was founded in history. God's dealings with the nation of Israel and with the early church were acts that occurred in the general stream of history. The events of Christ's life and death were concrete historical facts. Classical Wesleyan thought affirmed, with eighteen centuries of previous Christianity, that what was recorded in the Scriptures was rooted in history.

Liberalism rejected the historical basis of the Scriptures, and said that much of the material was built upon

³³Wakefield, op. cit., pp. 60-62.

³⁴Robert Paul Roth, "Bultmann: Genius or Apostle," Christianity Today, I (September, 1957), pp. 14-16.

fables and mythology. The miracles of Christ, His death and resurrection were only his friends' attempt to show that He was an unusual man. Archaeological discoveries have forced liberals to revise their findings in regard to many incidents that they claimed were mythological.³⁵

Neo-orthodoxy has presented a third view of the historical nature of special revelation. These men have made a historical dualism. According to Richard Niebuhr, there has been "internal" and "external" history. Internal history is history lived, and external history is history as seen by an observer. The biblical account is not objective history, but inner history. This inner history must be interpreted, and not taken at face value as the church has done for so long.³⁶

Special revelation--propositional. The historical content of divine revelation has been interpreted for man by God. Christianity and Wesleyanism have maintained that the Scriptures contain doctrinal or propositional truths. That Christ died for our sins was the doctrinal interpretation of

³⁵Henry, op. cit., p. 110.

³⁶Niebuhr, op. cit., pp. 77-90.

the death of Christ. Special revelation has been set forth in the form of propositions. The historical event was necessary in order that there might be the propositional statement, but the proposition must follow or man will not understand the significance of the historical event.

Liberalism has vigorously denied the reality of many doctrines. It has urged that life is all that is important. Doctrines are not the standard for life, but doctrines follow life. Doctrines flow out of life, and, hence, doctrines will change as the life is altered.³⁷

Special revelation--progressive. God's revelation of Himself has been progressively unfolded. He began by revealing Himself through nature, the conscience of man, and the history of the race. The special revelation of the Scriptures was also progressively given. The fact that revelation was delivered to man by degrees was the result of man's limited capacity. Since the fall, man never has been able to get a complete education all at once. Man has had to be prepared and conditioned before he could receive revelation. He has had to assimilate what had already been

³⁷ Samuel G. Craig, Christianity Rightly so Called (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1953), p. 125.

revealed to him before he could accept more. Revelation has not always been progressive. There have been times when man has strayed so far from what had already been revealed, that a second, less-advanced revelation had to be given. God had to accommodate Himself to the weakness and sinfulness of mankind. An illustration of this may be seen in the law on divorce. When man was in Eden, God said that divorce should not take place. An accommodation was later made through Moses.³⁸

Revelation is progressive for the liberal in that there is continual disclosure of God to man. Every activity of God is revelation. Man must have revelation or he would be without knowledge. There is continual revelation of that which is new. This is the way man obtains an education. It is claimed that that which we receive is through God's activity. Thus, man progressively receives revelation from others.³⁹

Neo-orthodoxy has not had much to say about progressive revelation. H. Richard Niebuhr deals with the subject, but his concept of it corresponds more with what Wesleyans

³⁸S. J. Gamertsfelder, Systematic Theology (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Evangelical Publishing House, 1921), p. 97.

³⁹DeWolf, op. cit., pp. 63, 64.

have called illumination. There are new "revelations" from God to the believers. This is in keeping with the idea in neo-orthodoxy that Christ reveals Himself to man in the experience of encounter.⁴⁰

Special revelation--final. Wesleyanism believed that with Jesus Christ God's self-disclosure of Himself ended. Whoever has seen Jesus Christ, whether in the flesh or in the Scriptures, has seen all that God has chosen to reveal to man in this age. Revelation ceased with the closing of the New Testament canon. There will be no further revelation until the second coming of Christ.

Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, particularly, have maintained that revelation is continuous. L. Harold DeWolf feels that "it would seem appropriate to designate as a special revelation any high moment of communication with God. . . ." ⁴¹ H. Richard Niebuhr claims "the God who revealed himself continues to reveal himself as the God of all times and places." ⁴² This was a natural result of their view of special revelation. Revelation has been any event of significant insight or of divine encounter for liberal and

⁴⁰Niebuhr, op. cit., pp. 132-137.

⁴¹DeWolf, op. cit., p. 66.

⁴²Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 136.

neo-orthodox theologians respectively. Continuous revelation has been, therefore, a logical result, and even a necessity.

IV. EVIDENCES FOR REVELATION

Classical Wesleyan writers have usually divided the evidences for revelation into external, internal, and collateral. This division has been followed in this study. These evidences for revelation have borne more weight with the conservative Christian than with the liberal. The liberal has looked upon them as unsteady props for an already fallen supernaturalism. The sharp sickle of liberalism's naturalism has struck at each evidence until they have proved (to themselves) that the use of evidence for revelation is a last-ditch attempt by fundamentalism to save the faith.

The evidences for revelation have been a source of assurance to the conservative. This does not mean, however, that the conservative has felt that revelation was on shaky ground. These evidences should be taken for what they are--supportive evidences--and they should not be asked to prove any more than they do.

External Evidences

External evidences have been regarded as those which were external to the Scriptures. They have usually been divided into miracle and prophecy.

Miracle. William Pope has said that a "miracle is the intervention of the Supreme Power in the established course of nature."⁴³ Historic Christianity had believed that God's concern for this world sometimes issued in the miraculous. Now, Mr. Hume's definition of miracle as a violation of nature presupposes a naturalistic concept of nature.⁴⁴ In this view, nature must be looked upon as self-creative and self-maintained. Nature, in this view, must be God or equal with God. Then, and then alone, could it be said that a miracle is a violation of nature.

Historic Christianity, on the other hand, has maintained a sovereign, eternal God. God's sovereignty over man and nature has not been questioned by conservative Christians. Nature is not a self-existent thing, but a created organ of God. Therefore, the sovereign God who created nature, is able to inject His power in or over nature at His will. This does not mean that God capriciously injects His power; rather, He does so only purposively for redemptive ends.⁴⁵

⁴³Pope, op. cit., p. 62.

⁴⁴John S. Banks, A Manual of Christian Doctrine (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1897), p. 53.

⁴⁵Harold B. Kuhn, "A Philosophy of the Christian Religion," A Syllabus (Wilmore, Kentucky: Asbury Seminary, 1962), p. 5.

Prophecy. Prophecy is miraculous knowledge. Just as a miracle was a manifestation of the omnipotence of God, so prophecy demonstrated the omniscience of God. What was said in the discussion of miracles, in regard to God's sovereignty, applies, also, to prophecy. A sovereign, all-knowing God could give to man a message that could not be obtained in any other way. Prophecy is forth-telling, as well as prediction. It is in regard to its prophetic aspect, however, that it is important as evidence of revelation.

Prophecies have been made in the Scriptures, and they have been fulfilled in history. Some prophecies have been given so clearly that their fulfillment has been unmistakable. The return of the Jews is an example of this.

Prophecy, like miracle, has a purpose. That purpose is the opening of the eyes of the spiritually blind. God uses prophecy to certify His message of redemption for all mankind. Some liberal and neo-orthodox men have felt that these prophecies were not miraculous. They have held that someone wrote them after the events actually occurred. This belief has led to a redating of the Scriptural documents.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Carl F. H. Henry (ed.), Revelation and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), p. 253.

Internal Evidences

Internal evidences have been considered as those which are within the Scriptures.

The witness of the Father. If God is a god of love and holiness, the fact of such a God is a witness for revelation. God has been said to be a god of love. He is also, a person--a person who wants to communicate His love to others. God could not have given His love to others if He had not revealed Himself to mankind. In revelation, especially as seen in Jesus Christ, God's love has been fully revealed to the world.

God is a holy God, and as such He hates sin. God must communicate to men if they are to know that He hates sin. This He has done in Jesus Christ, and at the same time He has lovingly provided a remedy for sin. Thus, Jesus Christ becomes God's revelation of His love and holiness.⁴⁷

The witness of the Son. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is the highest form of evidence of the special revelation of Scripture that we have. He claimed to be God's revelation to man. His claims were consistently

⁴⁷Wiley, op. cit., p. 135.

upheld by His sinless life, His teaching, and His death. In Christ, man has seen perfect love, and a perfect hatred for sin. Miracle comes to its height in Christ. The birth, life, ministry, and death of Christ were the ultimate in the miraculous. Those who have denied revelation must reject Christ's own claims for Himself and the claims of the New Testament writers.⁴⁸

The witness of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the most effective witness to revelation. He is Christ's gift to the church, and is the One whom Christ said would guide the church into all truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth of God's revelation of Christ as recorded in the Scriptures. He, especially, witnesses to the redemptive provision in Jesus Christ.⁴⁹

The Scriptures' own witness. The Scriptures themselves are an evidence for revelation. They substantiate their own claims. The Scriptures were written by men of God who were of varying temperments and abilities, and who lived in different ages. If these were merely human books, the unity that they display could not be possible. However,

⁴⁸Pope, op. cit., pp. 99-108.

⁴⁹Wiley, op. cit., p. 164.

according to Wesleyan theologians, from Genesis to Revelation there has been harmony of purpose and teaching.⁵⁰

The style of the writers' of Scripture was sober, simple and natural. These writers told of their own shortcomings and sins. They felt they were giving God's message to mankind, and there was a resultant care and concern that they would not promote their own ideas.⁵¹

In no other writings could there be found such standards of morality as there are in the Scriptures. The pagan and ethnic religions cannot compare with the teachings of the Christian revelation. The source of these standards and doctrines is God.⁵²

Collateral Evidences

Collateral evidences are those things which do not fit into either of the other two categories, but which are of significance as evidence.

The early diffusion of Christianity. During the first three centuries Christianity spread rapidly over the then known world. It is abundantly clear that if the Christian

⁵⁰Miner Raymond, Systematic Theology (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1877), I, p. 224.

⁵¹Watson, op. cit., p. 231.

⁵²Wakefield, op. cit., p. 106.

revelation had been a human movement it could not have survived. Those who carried Christianity in those days were not men of unusual means and ability. There were insurmountable difficulties that plagued the early church, such as persecution. Christianity could only have survived by divine assistance. The early spread of Christianity is, therefore, a strong witness for revelation.⁵³

The preservation of the record. Christianity started out as a small movement against overwhelming obstacles. But it not only survived the initial onslaught, it has continued in existence until today. Enemies without and within the church would have destroyed it long ago if it were only a human organization. The preservation of the Christian revelation is another witness to its truth.⁵⁴

The effects upon society. Christianity has morally transformed many societies through the centuries. It has changed the lives of people, and in so doing it has bettered society. The standards of the Christian revelation have

⁵³Thomas N. Ralston, Elements of Divinity (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1913), pp. 576, 682.

⁵⁴Benjamin Field, The Student's Handbook of Christian Theology, ed. John C. Symons (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1863), pp. 38-42.

been responsible for many of the benefits and advances of culture. Nations that have accepted the Christian revelation have been morally and spiritually superior to other nations. Christianity has elevated women, ended human sacrifice, destroyed slavery, instigated republican measures, and fostered medical and charitable organizations. The pragmatic test has been applied to Christianity and it has shown that it can meet that test.⁵⁵

The witness of historians. Many credible historians have verified the revelation of Christianity. Josephus has been a witness to the Old Testament revelation. Such Roman historians as Suetonius, and Tacitus, have mentioned things concerning the New Testament history which have corroborated it.⁵⁶

The witness of Christian experience. The witness from experience is another collateral evidence for revelation. This is the personal pragmatic test. Has this Christian revelation done something for me personally? Christians down through the centuries have answered in the affirmative. Countless multitudes have found their lives

⁵⁵Raymond, op. cit., pp. 201-204.

⁵⁶Wiley, op. cit., p. 211.

transformed by this Christian revelation. They have had their sins forgiven, their hearts cleansed and have been able to live a righteous life. Representatives from among the best and the worst, the wealthy and the poor, the ignorant and the learned have all had the revelation of the Scriptures verified in their lives. The witness from experience is quite convincing.⁵⁷

The witness of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is the final evidence for revelation. James Pratt has said, "Conversion is a natural human phenomenon, independent alike of supernatural interference and of theological prepossession. . . ." ⁵⁸ George Coe links conversion to adolescent development when he claims,

The fact, now well known, that adolescence is the period of life in which evangelistic influences have their maximum effectiveness, points to a connection between adolescent conversion and the sexual instinct.⁵⁹

Wesleyanism has held that conversion is a supernatural act of God wrought by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Do

⁵⁷ Raymond, op. cit., p. 210.

⁵⁸ James Bissett Pratt, The Religious Consciousness (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 125.

⁵⁹ George Allen Coe, Psychology of Religion (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1916), p. 173.

these psychological explanations of conversion do justice to an experience of conversion such as Saul of Tarsus claimed to have had? The fact that Saul of Tarsus was past adolescence when he claimed to have been converted would tend to rule out Professor Coe's explanation as far as Saul's experience is concerned.

Could Saul's experience have been merely a natural human response? This seems unlikely. It is questionable whether Saul would have responded to Christianity if it were only a human organization. Saul would have had to have been deceived or himself a deceiver. He could not have been deceived because the events which surrounded his conversion were too tangible and real. He saw a light, he was struck down, he was blind, and his sight was restored. Saul could not have been deceived, in the second place, because he was too well educated and trained. He could not have been deceived, lastly, because he was such an ardent zealot for the Jewish religion.⁶⁰

It is unthinkable that a man of the ability, honor, and position of Saul of Tarsus would have been a deceiver. He was at the top in his religion. Saul would not have become a deceiver when he knew it would cost him honor,

⁶⁰Field, op. cit., p. 46.

prestige, position, and even his life. The only reasonable answer is that Saul of Tarsus was supernaturally converted, and so, his conversion is a testimony for the Christian revelation.⁶¹

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 47.

CHAPTER III

INSPIRATION

The purpose of this chapter has been, first, to discover the prevailing conservative, Wesleyan understanding of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Secondly, the aim has been to understand this view in the light of liberal and neo-orthodox belief in inspiration. There has been an attempt to deal with the various theories of inspiration, and to set forth some of the objections to the conservative view of inspiration. The chapter has dealt with the following specific subjects: (1) Definition of Inspiration, (2) The Necessity of Inspiration, (3) The Possibility of Inspiration, (4) The Source of Inspiration, (5) The Scriptural Evidence of Inspiration, (6) The Elements of Inspiration, (7) The Theories of Inspiration, and (8) The Objections to Inspiration.

I. DEFINITION OF INSPIRATION

By inspiration we mean the actuating energy of the Holy Spirit through which holy men were qualified to receive religious truth, and to communicate it to others without error.¹

¹Wiley, op. cit., p. 169.

God chose men, who were living a holy and obedient life, to receive and record His message to mankind. These men were given divine revelation, and were commissioned to put it into written form. They were set aside for God to use in a very unique way. Wesleyan theologians believe that the inspiration of the writers of Scripture goes beyond anything else that might be designated by the term "inspiration". The natural faculties of these men were enlarged, and their minds were prepared to receive divine truth.²

The body of information that these inspired men wrote is, thus, divinely inspired truth. The Scriptures are the inspired word of God in written form. The will of God was, then, not only known by those who had been inspired, but it has also been known by diligent seekers in all generations since then. The Scriptures stand, then, as a unique body of literature. They are unlike anything else that has been written.³

Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, too, believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures. But in most instances their view of inspiration is something less than what historic Wesleyanism has ascribed to the Scriptures. Some liberals

²Pope, op. cit., p. 170.

³Ibid., p. 173.

describe inspiration as the inspiring effect that a religious genius may produce by his writings.⁴ Most neo-orthodox theologians have a much higher view of inspiration. They feel "the Bible is inspiring because it is inspired as a vehicle of the gospel of Christ. . . ."⁵ A main difference between the view of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy and that of conservatism is that conservatives hold that the body of divine truth was so inspired of the Holy Spirit as to be without error.⁶ Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy point to the fact of the human in the writing of Scripture, and say that there must be error and inconsistencies in the product. This fact should not be a source of concern, according to this view, but the message of God, which is, nevertheless, there, should be sought.⁷

II. THE NECESSITY OF INSPIRATION

Wesleyan theologians have urged that inspiration of

⁴Frank S. Hickman, Introduction to the Psychology of Religion (New York: Abington Press, 1929), p. 527.

⁵Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, The Authority of the Biblical Revelation (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1943), p. 119.

⁶Thos. O. Summers, Systematic Theology, rev. Jno. J. Tigert (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1902), I, p. 441.

⁷DeWolf, op. cit., p. 75.

the Scriptures was necessary. Without inspiration, the message of God's redemption could not be certainly known by man. The inspiration of the Scriptures is the crucial question in regard to man's redemption. If the Scriptures are not inspired of God, then the message of Christ is set adrift on the sea of human speculation and conjecture. Apart from divine inspiration of the Scriptures, man cannot know that Christ died to redeem mankind. There is no firm foundation for the Christian faith or for the preaching of the gospel.⁸

The nature of the Scriptures points to the necessity of their having been inspired of God. There are recorded events in the Scriptures that could not possibly be known by man. The account of the creation of the world and of man may be cited as a case in point. The prophets predicted events that transpired hundreds of years after their death--the fulfillment of them has been unmistakable, and so, divine inspiration is the only source of such information.⁹

The authoritative manner in which the Scriptures speak points to their inspiration. The writers did not

⁸Ralph Earle, "The Arminian View of Inspiration," The Preacher's Magazine, XXXIV (January, 1959), p. 23.

⁹Wakefield, op. cit., p. 72.

give choices, but they delivered ultimatums.

If the Scriptures were not divinely inspired, they could not claim as they do, to be the infallible standard of religious truth. Only as we are convinced that the writers were aided by a supernatural and divine influence, and this in such a manner as to be infallibly preserved from all error, can the sacred Scriptures become a divine rule of faith and practice.¹⁰

Liberals say that there must be a keenness of mental powers in order for someone to write sacred Scriptures. There must be a depth of spiritual intuition in a religious genius before he can produce inspirational material.¹¹ The neo-orthodox believe the writers of Scripture must have been divinely aided in their work. The writer needed inspiration to receive God's revelation, but that inspiration did not extend to the enabling of the writer to give an authoritative message that is without error.¹²

III. THE POSSIBILITY OF INSPIRATION

If God is God, then He is able to inspire men to write His will and purpose for the benefit of mankind. God may act upon the mind of man to the extent that He may desire in the fulfillment of His plan of salvation. He can understand the

¹⁰Wiley, op. cit., p. 173.

¹¹Hickman, op. cit., p. 534.

¹²Beillie, op. cit., p. 111.

mind of man, if men can perceive the results of other men's thinking. If God created the mind of man, He can enlarge the perceptions of that mind, and He can teach that mind things that could not otherwise be known by mankind.¹³

Liberalism allows for the possibility of inspiration. The weakness of man does not rule out the idea of inspiration. There are inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the Scriptures, according to liberalism, but these can be overlooked in the light of certain profound truths in them.¹⁴

Neo-orthodoxy, more or less, confines the possibility of inspiration to the writers and not to the Scriptures. God inspired these men to receive revelation, but this does not cover the transmission of the revelation in the same degree. The written form of the revelation was left up to the writers, and so, the account is full of error and inconsistencies.¹⁵

IV. THE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

"The Spirit gave us the Scriptures; they are His

¹³Wakefield, loc. cit.

¹⁴DeWolf, loc. cit.

¹⁵John Kelman Sutherland Reid, The Authority of Scripture (New York: Harper, n.d.), p. 174.

perfect work."¹⁶ This is the feeling of orthodox theologians in regard to the source of inspiration. The Spirit is the source of inspiration. Although men put the Scriptures into written form, it was the Spirit who inspired the revelation. The Spirit is the source of truth, and it is by Him that the truth of God is revealed to men.

Liberals place the source of inspiration in man. They have followed a naturalistic philosophy of life. God is immanent in the world, and therefore, there is no need for supernatural movings and disclosures to men. The supernatural is only an extension of the natural, and therefore, inspiration has its source in the minds of the intellectual genius.¹⁷

Neo-orthodoxy made the Spirit the source of inspiration. The Spirit takes the witness of revelation in the Scriptures and makes it inspiring to a present-day reader. The same Spirit that illuminated the writers of Scripture, causes the Scripture to become revelation to men today. The Spirit's inspiration was not such that it enabled the writers to give an infallible message.

The Bible, then, has been inspired by the Holy Spirit

¹⁶Pope, op. cit., p. 170.

¹⁷Hickman, op. cit., p. 523.

to testify to the divine revelation in Jesus Christ. There is no error or flaw in it which unfits it for this essential purpose.¹⁸

V. THE SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE OF INSPIRATION

The Scriptures, themselves, witness to their own inspiration. One part of the Bible substantiates another part. Each portion claims inspiration for itself. These claims are supported by divine evidence of their truthfulness.¹⁹

The Testimony of the Old Testament

The Old Testament writers, from Moses forward, claimed to have received their message from the Holy Spirit. There was a note of urgency and authority in the writings of the Old Testament because of this fact. The fulfillment of their prophecies supports their claim to the Spirit's inspiration.²⁰

The Testimony of Christ

Christ gave His witness to the inspiration of the Scriptures. He quoted from the three major divisions of the

¹⁸Cunliffe-Jones, loc. cit.

¹⁹Pope, op. cit., p. 157.

²⁰Wiley, op. cit., pp. 177, 178.

Old Testament. He spoke of the Old Testament as Scripture, and at times declared that it was fulfilled in Him. Christ said that all of the Old Testament must be fulfilled. He had a profound regard for the Old Testament as the word of God, and used it in His life and ministry. "When orthodoxy is asked why it accepts the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God, it answers, Because Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church, did."²¹

The Testimony of the Apostles

The apostles of Christ treated the Old Testament and the New Testament as the inspired word of God in written form. They quoted from the Old Testament, and claimed that certain prophecies were fulfilled in the life and ministry of the church. Paul claimed the entirety of Scripture was inspired of God. He declared that his own revelations were directly from the Spirit. Peter assigned the writings of Paul to the body of inspired writings.²²

Liberal and neo-orthodox theologians do not place much emphasis on the Scripture's claim to its inspiration. The charge of "proof-texting" is apt to be made if an appeal is

²¹Carnell, op. cit., p. 35.

²²Wiley, op. cit., pp. 179-182.

made to the Scriptures. The testimony of Christ and His apostles to the inspiration of the Old Testament is often regarded as an accommodation to prevailing religious opinion. They do not believe the prevailing belief, but rather than raise an issue they go along with it.²³ It is, also, claimed that Christ did not accept certain passages in the Old Testament. At times, Christ is said to have contradicted Old Testament commands.²⁴

VI. THE ELEMENTS OF INSPIRATION

Wesleyan theologians have said that there were various elements involved in inspiration. These were the elements of superintendence, elevation, and suggestion.

Superintendence

Superintendence was divine direction in inspiration. The writer was guided by the Holy Spirit in the use of already existent materials. This superintendence of the Spirit freed the writer from error or mistake in the recording of material. The element of superintendence was, also, the guidance of the Spirit as to what to select from

²³Cornell, op. cit., p. 30.

²⁴Hordern, op. cit., p. 87.

already existent materials. The Holy Spirit directed what should have been used and what should not have been used.²⁵

Elevation

Elevation was the influence of the Holy Spirit which raised the mental powers of the writer. The mind of the writer was not violated or overruled, but only enlarged to write heavenly truth. The writers wrote what they could never have written just by their own genius. They wrote in the natural way, but the natural was divinely subaidized.²⁶

Suggestion

Suggestion was the highest element in inspiration. The thoughts of God were suggested to the writer. This was the direct communication of divine truth that could not have been known by the writers. God's plan of salvation, the destiny of men, and of nations could only be known by God. These truths had to be disclosed by Him to man.²⁷

In conservative theology, these elements have not been considered as different degrees of inspiration. This,

²⁵A. M. Hills, Fundamental Christian Theology (Pasadena, California: C. J. Kline, 1931), I, p. 128.

²⁶Wakefield, op. cit., p. 80.

²⁷Hills, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

it is felt, would make various parts of the Scriptures of less value and authority.²⁸ In liberalism's view, there have been various degrees of inspiration. Inspiration originated with the writer, and therefore, every writer had a different measure of inspiration. The degree of inspiration depended upon the writer's mental abilities and religious insight.²⁹ In neo-orthodoxy, degrees of inspiration have been accepted. The fact that men have been used to give God's message to the world has made degrees of inspiration inevitable.

Consider again the question whether all parts of the Bible are equally inspired. An affirmative answer would mean that the hinderance presented to the divine mind was equal in all cases. This is an answer we cannot give, and we have already found Dr. Barth warning us that such a doctrine of the uniform (gleichmässig) inspiration of Scripture has issued in bad theology.³⁰

VII. THE THEORIES OF INSPIRATION

There have been several theories as to the inspiration of the Scriptures. The problem has been of the same kind as that over the true nature of Christ. Some have stressed the human element in inspiration, while others have stressed the

²⁸Wiley, op. cit., p. 171.

²⁹Hickman, op. cit., p. 527.

³⁰Baillie, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

divine. Still others have sought to do justice to both elements.³¹

The Dictation Theory

The dictation theory stressed the divine element. The human writer was only an amanuensis; he wrote only what was dictated to him by the Holy Spirit. The writer was completely passive; he did not have to formulate the materials. Every word, then, was the word of the Holy Spirit. Many times, however, the Spirit used words that the writers themselves would have used. The problems that this view has had to face are many. Those who have held this view have had to deal with such things as the differences in statements, freedom of quotation within Scripture, use of sources, and God's usual procedure with men.³²

The Intuition Theory

The intuition theory stressed the human element in inspiration. Inspiration was the work of a religious genius. The writers of Scripture were able, by their own natural powers, to grasp religious truth, and convey it to men. Those who have held this view have felt that it was more in

³¹Wiley, op. cit., p. 173.

³²Ibid., pp. 174-175.

keeping with the scientific mind. Science did not want to think that the supernatural invaded the life of men.³³ Those who have held this view have had to answer the charge that the darkened mind of man was incapable of grasping divine truth on its own. The charge was also made that the Scriptures were not, then, any different from other great writings.³⁴

The Illumination Theory

The illumination theory emphasized the human element. The inspiration of the Scriptures was held to be that same inspiration or illumination that every Christian has received. The only difference between the illumination that all Christians have received and that which the writers of Scripture received is in degree--there is no difference in kind. Critics of this view have charged that illumination was sufficient for one to have received insight into the Scriptures, but it was not sufficient to write them. Illumination, it is charged, only prepared the way for the reception of truth.³⁵

³³Hickman, op. cit., p. 523.

³⁴Wiley, op. cit., p. 175.

³⁵Hills, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

The Dynamical Theory

The dynamical theory was an attempt to give full consideration to both the human and the divine element in inspiration. The Spirit of God so enlightened, filled and guided the writer that the resulting product could be called the Word of God. But, in doing this, the Spirit allowed the man to use his abilities to the fullest degree; and the writer was never, at any time, made a mere passive instrument in the hands of the Spirit. Divine truth was, thus, communicated through man to the world.³⁶

The Verbal Theory

The theory of verbal inspiration has stressed the divine element. It has been close to the dictation theory in its emphasis. The Spirit guided the writers in the words they used. In the dictation theory, the words only passed through the writers, but the verbal theory has held that the writer was truly inspired. This theory has been indicted as calling for too much. It has been charged that there were certain materials that the writers copied, the writers did not use the same words in reference to the same event, and

³⁶John Miley, Systematic Theology (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1892), II, p. 436.

that man would have to have the original text if everything depended on the exact words of Scripture.³⁷

The Plenary Theory

The theory of plenary inspiration has emphasized both the divine and the human elements in the writing of the Scriptures. The term "plenary" means full. The entirety of Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit. This theory has not claimed that all the words of Scripture were inspired. However, the writers were inspired, and they were allowed to choose the words they wanted.³⁸ God so directed these men that the result was the truth of God in written form. This view has allowed for the use of existent materials and data. There were several elements of inspiration, and so not all elements were necessary at all times.

This theory has not claimed that, because all parts of the Scriptures were equally inspired, all parts are of equal revelatory importance. It has only argued in favor of a full inspiration of the body of Scripture, and that "the Bible becomes the infallible Word of God, the authoritative rule of faith and practice in the church."³⁹

³⁷Hills, op. cit., p. 126.

³⁸Ralph Earle, "Wesley and the Methodists," The Preacher's Magazine, XXXIV (July, 1959), p. 21.

³⁹Wiley, op. cit., p. 171.

VIII. THE OBJECTIONS TO INSPIRATION

The views of inspiration that have been held by Wesleyans and other conservative theologians have been frequently challenged. There have been various objections voiced.

Violation of Personality of Writers

There are those who say that the Scriptures could not be fully inspired because it would be a violation of the personalities of the human authors. God used men to give the world the Scriptures. He did not go beyond the abilities of men and make them give His message to men. God's word came to the authors of the Scriptures, and stimulated them to give their word to the world. Their word is a witness to the Word of God that they heard. The authors of the Scriptures were fallible men who wrote exactly according to their own individual talent and education. "God's way is not to override or to compel, nor does He triumph by annihilation."⁴⁰

Scientific Inaccuracies

Another objection to the full inspiration of the Scriptures is what has been called the scientific inaccu-

⁴⁰ Reid, op. cit., p. 154.

racies contained in them. The Scripture writers, it is claimed, made statements which have been shown to be erroneous scientific views. They accepted ideas concerning nature and the world which were later shown to be false and superstitious. If they had been fully and infallibly inspired by God, such beliefs and attitudes would not have been accepted--God would have informed them of the correct scientific view. For example, Jacob would have known that the placing of sticks before breeding animals would not have affected their progeny. The biblical writers would not have attributed disease to demon possession.⁴¹

Historical Inaccuracies

Some have objected to a full inspiration of the Scriptures because of what they felt was a lack of historical accuracy. There were portions of the biblical account that were no more than legend. Fictitious stories were invented as vehicles of religious truth. Preliterate people were very much given to hero tales about some of their people. These were stories handed down by each generation, and they represented the wild imagination of some of the people. The religious twist that was given to these stories made them

⁴¹ DeWolf, op. cit., p. 71.

that much more interesting and effective. Such accounts as Jephthah and Samson in the book of Judges have been included in this category.⁴²

Questionable Moral Standards

The claim for full inspiration of the Bible was also denied because of what has been known as morally unworthy passages. The destruction of people, such as the people of Canaan, could not have been an order from God. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ was completely contrary to such an idea. Therefore, this was the idea of men; God had nothing to do with it. Such commands were written in the Scriptures, and as a result, these passages were rejected as the Word of God.

But if every word of the Bible is not a word of God, then it is blasphemy to charge God with speaking all of them. There is not a lack of faith that causes me to deny that God ordered Saul to slaughter his enemies to the last woman and child (I Sam. 15:2-3) or that he sent bears to eat children who laughed at a prophet's bald head (I Kings 2:23-25). On the contrary, it is my faith in God through Christ that forces me to deny this.⁴³

Textual Variations

Textual variations have been another objection to the

⁴²ibid., pp. 71-72.

⁴³Hordern, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

Full inspiration of the Scriptures. There have been inconsistencies and contradictions in the Biblical accounts. God could not have inspired men to write when their accounts are so varied. These authors were allowed to write as they wished. The Scriptures were written by men, and therefore, they were not inspired to the extent that they were authoritative and infallible. There were contradictory reports of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, and the gospel records vary in the accounts of the same incident.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Oswolf, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

CHAPTER IV

AUTHORITY

The purpose of this chapter has been to consider the question of biblical authority. The subject of authority has been a most important consideration in recent study of the Scriptures. This chapter has sought to define biblical authority, to state the areas in which the Bible claims authority, and to consider the basis for biblical authority. False claims to religious authority have also been discussed. The chapter has been divided into the following categories: (1) Definition of Authority, (2) The Areas of Biblical Authority, (3) The Basis for Biblical Authority, and (4) False Claimants to Authority.

I. DEFINITION OF AUTHORITY

In almost all areas of life, there has been some form of external authority. The child soon finds that he is under the authority of his parents. As the child grows older, he discovers that he is governed by natural laws of the universe. It is not too long a period of time until civil, moral, and social laws exert authority over the individual. Just as there is an outside authority in these areas, so there has been an outside authority in religion. It would,

indeed, have been unique if religion were the only area without an external authority.¹

The Bible has claimed for itself the right to be the authority in religious matters. The Scriptures have been authoritative in that they are truthful. Specifically, they have been authoritative in religious matters. The Bible has not claimed to be the authority in matters of science. It has authoritatively given to man the message of God. The revelation of God, which culminated in Jesus Christ, has been authoritatively given to man in the Bible.

According to this view, they possess authority as making God known, and as testifying to His only Son, the Lord of the Church. Thus, the Bible is held to bring to each generation Him who is absolute Truth and Life.²

II. THE AREAS OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

The authority of the Scriptures has been closely linked to their inspiration. The Bible was God-inspired, and therefore, the stamp of God's authority has been upon it. Even though there was a definite human element in the production of the Scriptures, this has not meant that the

¹John Alfred Faulkner, Modernism and the Christian Faith (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1921), pp. 9-13.

²Herold Kuhn, "The Basis of Authority in Christianity," Archery Semination, II (Fall, 1947), p. 135.

Bible had to be a fallible book. The inspiration of the writers was sufficient to insure an infallible book.³

The Scriptures have not been in error on any subject with which they have dealt. The Bible has not been erroneous when it comes to science, because it is not a book of science. It may have had in its records certain beliefs that reflected the day and age in which it was written, which would not be held today, but this has not affected its authority. All that has been claimed for such incidents was that that which was recorded in the Scriptures reflected the accepted attitude of the time. The authority of the Scriptures has not been claimed over scientific realms, but only as to the message of redemption. In certain areas, such as the origin of the race, both the Scriptures and science speak. When there have been contradictions, conservative theologians have declared in favor of the Scriptures.⁴ The Scriptures are authoritative on the subjects of Christ, the facts of redemption, the doctrines of redemption, and morality.⁵

³George Allen Turner "Protestantism's Major Problem," The Christian Minister, V (October, 1953), p. 4.

⁴Olin Alfred Curtis, The Christian Faith (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1905), p. 174.

⁵Ibid., p. 173.

Christ

All that has been known about Christ has come to men through the Scriptures. Man's knowledge of Christ has culminated in experiential knowledge of Him, but there always had to be knowledge about Christ before there could be experiential knowledge of Him. That knowledge has come to the world only through the Christian Scriptures.

Without these sacred writings man could not have known of God's redeeming love. The incarnation, the crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ could not have been entirely known and understood by the world. The gracious deeds of mercy, and the acts of love which the Savior performed in behalf of needy multitudes on the Galilean sea and Judean hillside could not have been certainly known by man today.⁶

A reliable and authentic record of Jesus Christ was needed, and the Scriptures became just that. The Bible has brought the truth of Christ to every succeeding generation. Mankind has not been without a truthful account of the Christ of God. Conservative theologians have said that man could depend upon the biblical record of Christ and His work

⁶Carl F. H. Henry, The Protestant Dilemma (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 82-83.

upon earth. The Bible has been the trustworthy record of the One sent by God into the world. Olin Curtis has said, "the Bible is reliable in its account of our Lord, as to his character, as to his teachings, and as to his deeds."⁷

The Facts of Redemption

The Scriptures have given to man an authoritative record of all of the facts of redemption. From Genesis to Revelation, the facts of God's great redemptive plan have been unfolded. The Old Testament related the preparatory facts for the coming of the Messiah. The writers related God's acts to prepare a nation and a world for the appearing of the Savior. The New Testament has given man an authoritative account of all of the facts of the Redeemer's life and ministry. It has recorded the birth of Christ, His baptism, His temptation, His intercessory prayer, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. This history has been man's only authoritative record of the facts of redemption.⁸

The Doctrine of Redemption

The events of redemption became doctrine when they were put into propositional form. That Christ died was an

⁷Curtis, loc. cit.

⁸Ibid.

historical fact of redemption. That Christ died for man's sins was the doctrinal interpretation of that fact of redemption. The liberal has denied the possibility of revelation, and the neo-supernaturalist, although he has admitted that God's self-disclosure was in terms of saving acts, has denied propositional revelation; but the conservative has fully accepted doctrinal formulations.⁹

The Scripture writers interpreted for all ages the events of Christ's life. They set forth those events in inspired doctrinal form. God so moved upon the minds of the biblical authors that they knew what significance and interpretation He placed upon the events of Christ's earthly life. Olin Curtis has cautioned not to expect those doctrines to be arranged as systematic theology. He went on to say that, "the biblical doctrine is merely a practical statement of the significance of a redemptive fact."¹⁰ Carl Henry has warned that if the authority of the Scriptures is rejected, every other distinctively Christian doctrine must, also, be rejected.¹¹

⁹Henry, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

¹⁰Curtis, loc. cit.

¹¹Henry, op. cit., p. 76.

Morality

The Bible has been authoritative in matters of morals. Wesleyan theologians have held that the Scriptures placed the conduct of daily life on such a lofty plane that there was no comparison with the best ethics of other religions. Other religions have tended to degrade character and personality. They have even practiced immorality in the name of religion. Richard Watson said, "pagan religions have been destructive of morality rather than advancing it."¹²

The Sermon on the Mount has given mankind the purist set of morals they have known. The Scriptures have elevated women from the state of slavery to equality with men. The marriage relationship has been made sacred and monogamy has been set as the standard. Individual rights have been championed, and democratic principles have been laid down for governments. The Scriptures have promoted frugality, education, philanthropy and service.¹³

III. THE BASIS FOR BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

Wesleyan theologians have felt that there was much

¹²Watson, op. cit., p. 59.

¹³Raymond, op. cit., pp. 201-207.

evidence in favor of the claim of ultimate authority for the Scriptures. However, there have been four particularly salient arguments which have been set forth. The Bible has been held to be authoritative because it was inspired of God, it was sanctioned by Christ, the Holy Spirit witnessed to its authority, and it has met the test of life when obeyed.

The Inspiration of God

Conservative theologians have said that the Scriptures were authoritative because they were inspired of God. God has spoken the last word; His authority has been final. If God has had all authority in His hands, then He has been able to do as He wills. He could, then, have given His message to man through the Scriptures, and have put His seal of authority upon them. God has recorded His movements, and His revelation in the Holy Scriptures.¹⁴

God, then, has had the power to give to man an authoritative message. He could have so moved upon men that the message that came from their pen was also the word of the living God. It has been held that this has not been a violation of man's personality, but man has been able to use all of his abilities to their fullest degree. God's authority

¹⁴Carl F. H. Henry (ed.), Revelation and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), p. 371.

has been transferred to the Scriptures giving them the stamp of divine authority.¹⁵

The Sanction of Christ

A second basis for the authority of the Bible has been the sanction of Christ. Christianity has been revealed in Jesus Christ; He has been God's revelation of Himself. Christ has been greater than the Scriptures, but He has given His sanction to the Scriptures, and they have become the authoritative record of Him.¹⁶

Christ has put His stamp of approval upon the Old Testament. He quoted from the three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures. He said that not one particle could be taken from these Scriptures. Christ considered the Old Testament the Word of God, and as such, it was a message for man to receive and obey. Many times Christ re-interpreted the Old Testament to the people, but He was not disclaiming it. He was trying to bring its true message to the world.

Our Lord not only taught that the Old Testament is the authoritative word of God, but by his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and continued presence with and in his Church, demonstrated and proved that it is indeed the Word of the living God.¹⁷

¹⁵Pope, op. cit., p. 174.

¹⁶Kuhn, op. cit., p. 136.

¹⁷Henry, op. cit., p. 386.

The authority of Christ was delegated to His apostles. The apostles were commissioned by Christ, and then taught the message of God by Him. Thus, the apostles, through Christ, had the authority of God upon what they would say and write. The New Testament, then, received the mark of Christ's authority.¹⁸

The Witness of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has witnessed to the authority of the Scriptures. This has been primary to the Christian. For John Calvin, the Bible illuminated by the Holy Spirit was authoritative. In the heart of the believer, the Spirit has witnessed to the authority of the Scriptures. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth who has brought the truth of God to man, and who bore witness to that truth. "The reason why we believe the Bible is religious authority, is because the Spirit there meets the Spirit here, and they recognize each other."¹⁹

The Conclusion of Obedience

A final reason or basis for biblical authority has been the conclusion of obedience. Every person who has

¹⁸Ibid., p. 334.

¹⁹Faulkner, op. cit., p. 21.

accepted the authority of the Bible has found his life transformed. The Scriptures have pointed sinful man to the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world.

Society has been transformed and changed when biblical authority has been allowed to take control. Nations that have accepted Christian principles have been entirely different from other nations. The results of accepting the authority of the Scriptures has been an important reason for doing so. John Paul summed it up when he said:

Take its influence out of the libraries of the world, and they would be sterile; take its influence out of the social life of the world and all ideals of human brotherhood would stagger into the shadows. Take its influence out of the political government of the world and the average civilized man would wish for death.²⁰

IV. FALSE CLAIMANTS TO AUTHORITY

Conservatives have held that the Scriptures were the only ultimate authority in Christianity. The claim of other theologians for another authority has been held by conservatives to be false and substitutionary. There have been three primary substitutes set forth during the centuries: ecclesiasticism, reason, and experience.

²⁰ John Paul, What Is New Theology? (Upland, Indiana: Taylor University Press, 1921), p. 103.

Ecclesiasticism

Perhaps, the first false authority to raise its head was ecclesiasticism. This took two forms. The Greek Church held that councils were equally authoritative with the Scriptures, and the Roman Catholic Church said that tradition was on a par with the Scriptures. The Roman Catholic Church has held that both the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church were to be interpreted by Christ's Vicar, the Pope. The voice of the Church, thus, became final and irrevocable. People did not have any problem of decision in religious matters because the Church spoke with final authority on each matter.²¹

Reason

Another claim to authority, which conservative protestantism has called false, is reason. The rationalistic movement has made its mark upon religious authority. Rationalists in religion have denied that the Scriptures could be authoritative, or they rejected revelation and in doing so have undermined any basis for biblical authority. Authority was no longer outside of man; it was within him.

²¹Faulkner, op. cit., p. 9.

Christianity was made to show its credentials to the reason which came to possess not only the power to test revelation but also ability to discover by itself the necessary principles of religion. Accordingly, authority was sought in truths which were apparent to all right-minded men.²²

Experience

The third claimant to authority in religion has been experience. Christian experience was made the seat of authority. The doctrines of the Scriptures had to meet the test of individual experience. Anyone felt free to set aside any biblical doctrine that did not square with his own experience. This was supposed to free anyone from an enslaving bibliolatry. Authority came from the experience of one or more believers, and not from the Bible.²³ Harold Kuhn has summarized the claims for religious authority resting in experience.

The Bible is thus considered to be merely the fruit of the religious consciousness--an expression of religion rather than the authoritative revelation of God's will to man. In this view, religion has its 'locus' in the religious experience; in this 'experience' man feels his oneness with God, and from this experience of oneness springs religious authority.²⁴

²²Kuhn, op. cit., p. 133.

²³W. G. Foster, Jr., "Are Evangelicals Bibliolators?" United Evangelical Action, XII (August, 1953), p. 7.

²⁴Kuhn, loc. cit.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter of this thesis has been an attempt to summarize the study and state the conclusions in regard to it.

I. SUMMARY

Chapter one was the introductory chapter. The problem was historic Wesleyan theology, and modifications that liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have asked be made in this theology. The writer considered this study important because conservative Wesleyan writers had not treated the subject in its entirety. The writer read the material of historic Wesleyan theologians, and that of recent theologians from the conservative to the liberal position in both Calvinistic and Wesleyan tradition.

The term "Wesleyan" was defined as the view of John Wesley as interpreted by the early theologians of the movement. The term "Scriptures" referred to the sixty-six canonical books of the Bible. "Liberalism" referred to the naturalistic and humanistic interpretation of Christianity which was dominant from Schleiermacher to Barth. The term "neo-orthodoxy" referred to the theology of reaction which

is between liberalism and conservatism.

Chapter two was a consideration of the doctrine of revelation. Wesleyan theologians have held that revelation was a supernatural disclosure of God to man which culminated in Jesus Christ as recorded in the Scriptures. Liberalism believed that revelation was any discovery that man made of God through any means. Revelation for neo-orthodoxy has been what has happened when there was a divine-human encounter.

Wesleyan theologians have maintained that special revelation was necessary. Without special revelation man could only know that God existed, but he could not know God personally. Liberalism has said that revelation is necessary. They maintained that this has been true in all fields of knowledge. This revelation has come as the result of human ingenuity. Neo-orthodoxy has held to the necessity of special revelation as a result of encounter. Special revelation has been continuous; it has not been static or limited to a book.

General revelation has been considered by conservatives as the manifestation of God to man by means of the human mind, nature, and providence. Liberalism has held to general revelation. It has been the only kind of revelation for them, and has been looked upon as a discovery of truth. The neo-orthodox theologian has denied general revelation.

Revelation has had to be special and personal through divine-human encounter.

Special revelation has been defined by Wesleyan writers as the disclosure of God recorded in the Bible which was climaxed in Jesus Christ. The sixty-six books of the Bible were regarded as the canonical Scriptures. Christ put His stamp of approval upon the Old Testament, and He authorized the organization of the New Testament. Canonical rights were given to the Bible from God who inspired it, and were only recognized as canonical by men. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have argued that the books of the Bible were humanly given and arranged. They have revised the dates for the acceptance of books into the canon.

Conservatives have held to the genuineness of the Scriptures. This has been done on the authority of the word of Christ, His apostles, and the early Christian writers. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have not accepted many of the claims of orthodoxy in regard to authorship because they have been committed to developmental theories.

Wesleyan writers have maintained the authenticity of the Scriptures. Liberalism has denied this. They have said that men must get behind the New Testament picture of Jesus to the real Christ and His message. Neo-orthodoxy has taken nearly the same attitude toward the Scriptures. Christ has

been their test of truth, according to them, and they have felt free to reject whatever they thought was not true to Christ.

Scriptural inerrancy and integrity have been accepted by Wesleyan theologians. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have denied both. They have felt that the human was too much a part of the writing and preservation of these Scriptures for them to be without error.

Conservatives have maintained that revelation was historical, propositional, progressive, and final. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have, in varying degrees denied that revelation was part of history. They have not accepted any fixed set of doctrines. The idea of progressive revelation in liberalism and neo-orthodoxy has been entirely different from that in conservatism. In both cases it has been progressive without any finality.

Wesleyan theologians have said that there are evidences that substantiate the fact of revelation. External evidences were considered as those outside of the Scriptures--miracle and prophecy. Internal evidences were those within Scripture--the style of writing and the Trinity. Collateral evidences were those of secondary significance--the spread of Christianity and its effects upon individual

and society. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have not felt that these evidences prove anything.

Chapter three was a consideration of the doctrine of inspiration. Conservative writers have held inspiration to have been the moving of the Spirit upon men to the extent that what they wrote was without error. Liberalism has often looked upon inspiration as the inspiring effect produced by the writings of religious geniuses. Neo-orthodoxy has held to the belief that, although it was a human book, the Bible was an inspired vehicle of the gospel of Christ.

Inspiration was necessary so that man might have an authoritative message of redemption from God. Liberalism has held that there must have been a depth of intuition in a religious genius. Neo-orthodoxy has believed that inspiration was necessary, but that it covered only the receiving of revelation, and not the writing of it. If God be God, then such inspiration is impossible. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have believed that inspiration, as they conceive it, is possible. Wesleyanism and neo-orthodoxy have said that the Holy Spirit was the source of inspiration, but liberalism has said that man was its source.

Wesleyan theologians have maintained that the Scriptures themselves were an evidence of their inspiration. The fulfillment of prophecy pointed to the truth of the claim

of Old Testament writers to inspiration. Christ and the apostles supported the belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures. Liberal and neo-orthodox thinkers have not accepted such evidence as valid. Christ only accommodated Himself to prevalent ideas, and at times He showed that the Old Testament was not fully inspired by contradicting its commands.

There were three elements in inspiration. Superintendence insured the writers from error in the use of existent data. Elevation was the enlargement of human ability to receive divine truth. Suggestion was the communication of divine truth to the writer. Liberalism believed in degrees of inspiration which were measured by the ability of the various writers. Neo-orthodoxy has concluded that degrees of inspiration are inevitable because God used men to give His message.

Various theories of inspiration have been set forth. These theories have stressed the divine and excluded its human elements; or, they have emphasized the human and nullified the divine; or, they have made room for both the human and the divine. The verbal and the dictation theories stressed the divine element. The human element was emphasized by the intuition and the illumination theories. The dynamical and the plenary theories attempted to give due

consideration to both the human and the divine factors.

There have been objections to the conservative views of inspiration. Some have said that they violate or overrule the personality and abilities of the writers. Others have said that the conservative views of inspiration could not be accepted because of the scientific and historical inaccuracies that they feel have been recorded in the Scriptures. It has also been claimed that the Scriptures were not fully inspired because they contained moral standards unworthy of God; or because there were textual variations of similar accounts.

Chapter four dealt with the topic of authority. Wesleyan writers have held that the Scriptures were authoritative. The Scriptures gave to man God's message of truth and finality. The Scriptures were, primarily, concerned with speaking about the subjects of Christ, the facts of redemption, the doctrines of redemption, and morality.

The Scriptures have been accepted as authoritative because they were believed to be inspired of God. The sanction of Christ was put upon the Scriptures, and His authority was considered final. Another basis for the authority of the Scriptures was the witness of the Holy Spirit to men in the present time. The Spirit who inspired the Scriptures testifies to their truth today. Those who

have obeyed the Scriptures have found in their own experience that the declarations contained in them works in daily life.

Conservatives have believed that there have been three pretenders to the throne of authority--ecclesiasticism, reason, and experience. Ecclesiasticism is the claim of the church to authority in religious matters. Other theologians have believed that reason should have the final say in spiritual things. Some have held that experience is the only rightful judge in religion. Everything has had to measure up to the religious experience of the individual or he would not accept it.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The primary difference between liberalism and orthodoxy is that liberalism denies the supernatural. Neo-orthodoxy has sought to reaffirm the element of the supernatural in Christianity. Revelation for the liberal, therefore, has been a human achievement. Any knowledge that man has gained is revelation. Neo-orthodoxy and orthodoxy have agreed as to the supernatural character of revelation. The difference between the two is that neo-orthodoxy identifies revelation with Jesus Christ and the experience of divine-human encounter, whereas, orthodoxy identifies revelation with Jesus Christ and the Scriptures.

Orthodoxy has maintained that special divine revelation was necessary. Man could only know that there is a God; he could not have fellowship with Him. Liberalism has not believed that a divine revelation was necessary. Revelation was necessary, but men could attain it by himself. Neo-orthodoxy has argued for special revelation as seen in Christ, but revelation is separated from the Bible and becomes personal and subjective through encounter.

Wesleyanism has affirmed what is rather obvious to the thinking man--the fact that God has been revealed through nature, providence, and the human mind. Liberalism has accepted general revelation, but it has made general revelation far too "general". Truths of the natural realm should not have been considered as a revelation of God's will as it relates to man's relationship to His Creator. Neo-orthodoxy has gone too far in denying the reality of general revelation. But they have had to do this because they made revelation purely a subjective experience between man and God. General revelation should have been considered as the beginning in the progressive revelation of God to man. Wesleyanism did just this.

Special revelation was the disclosure of God in the Scriptures. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy were duped by naturalism into believing that evolution controlled every-

thing, and that, as a result, they had to discover the "true" authors and the "true" dates of the biblical records. If one believes in the supernatural nature of the biblical records, "the things that could not have possibly been written when it was claimed they were" could easily have been written then. God is God, and He has revealed unknown truths to men who faithfully recorded them. Prophecy and miracle are possible to an all-powerful Creator.

Nearly everyone close to the authors of the books of the Bible accepted their genuineness. Christ did not challenge the genuineness of the Old Testament. Whenever He named an author, of an Old Testament book, it was the accepted one. His word in this matter has been regarded as final.

Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have said that the Scriptures are not authentic in many places, but they have insisted that it was the "message" that is important. This is the height of inconsistency; if something has been permeated with falsity, it should be disregarded. There have been problems in regard to various passages, but not as many as some have insisted. There has been no justification for the wanton destruction of the Scriptures. Such a method, has been the result of preconceived opinions.

Conservatives have believed that the Scriptures are

inerrant and that their integrity has been substantiated. If God has inspired propositional revelation for man in the Bible, the product would have been inerrant. If this first premise is accepted, the second one almost has to be received. Some have demanded verbal agreement in various accounts. This would have destroyed the individuality of the writers.

Others have demanded equal revelation in all parts of the Scriptures. This would have completely disregarded the nature of man. Fallen man has never been able to understand everything at once. It has been urged that all quotations would have had to have been exact. But, literary standards were not the same then as they have been recently. Ancient people should not be required to speak as men in the present have spoken. Liberalism has mistakenly labeled all difficulties as errors. What were once labeled as fiction, had to be accepted as fact.

The evidence has been overwhelmingly in favor of the integrity of the Scriptures. The Scriptures have been handed down to the present generation without any essential change. The "redactor" has been a rather convenient "straw man", which has enabled some, Eultmann for instance, to reject anything that has not squared with their experience. Such additions, and they were few, such as Mark 16:9-20, have

been identified by proper textual criticism, and not on the basis of preconceived ideas of form criticism.

Wesleyanism has held that God's revelation of Himself was historical, propositional, progressive, and final. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have had their greatest problems with, and have been more confused in, these areas of revelation than almost any other.

The "inner history" of neo-orthodoxy is a trick of semantics, and might better have been called folklore. In the end it has amounted to no more than a revamping of liberalism's charge that the Bible contained fables and mythology. Archaeology has shown that some so-called "fables" were historical.

Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have spent a great deal of time denouncing propositional truth. Liberalism said it was interested in life, not in "doctrine". This, in reality, was liberalism's main "doctrine". Neo-orthodoxy has said that revelation should end in fellowship. Revelation was not information, but a relationship initiated by a divine-human encounter. By claiming that revelation has not given information, but fellowship, is the same as saying that a cure for a disease has been made available, but that there is no formula for it. God revealed Himself to man, and He interpreted that revelation to him.

The "problems", that is, the "difficulties" of the Bible, that have arisen within liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have very often been at the point of progressive and final revelation. They had no concept of progressive revelation as held by Wesleyanism, and so, they were forced to reject parts of the Scriptures as unworthy of Christ's revelation of God. This concept seems to be obscured by a blind-spot in their thinking. If they have had any idea of progressive revelation, it has been such that it has never become final. Liberal and neo-orthodox definitions of revelation have demanded that revelation be continuous through all the ages. This has left revelation to be subject to the whims and desires of men, and has freed it of any connection with the Scriptures.

It has been the conviction of conservatives that certain evidences substantiated their position. It has been difficult to say that they have "proved" anything, but these evidences have supported the claims of conservatives. Naturalism has been able to find "answers" and explanations for their evidences. Miracle and prophecy have been "naturalized" but still they have pointed to the truth of the Scriptures. Even the redating of the Scriptures has not entirely silenced the voice of prophecy. The fulfillment of some prophecies, such as the return of the Jews to Jerusalem,

have fallen on the other side of the critical dates.

There has been no end, and there could not have been any, to the attempt to discount these evidences. There has been no end to the discounting of the Scriptural records, and there has been no end to the denial of the witness of the members of the Godhead. Collateral evidences have been discounted by many, but they have appealed to the minds of others as rational and authenticating.

The matter of inspiration has been a vital concern to Wesleyan theologians. They have rightly maintained the necessity of divine assistance in the production of the Scriptures. The message of God could not have been discovered by human ingenuity. God had to communicate that message to the world. God inspired men to accomplish this task. Men have limited God if they deny the possibility of infallible inspiration. Liberalism's idea of inspiration has been naturalistic and therefore it has limited God. Neo-orthodoxy has inconsistently allowed for the inspiration of men, but not that of the Scriptures.

Liberalism has stressed the human elements in the production of the Scriptures, and very naturally, the theories of inspiration of liberalism have been those which emphasized the human--the intuition and the illumination theories. These concepts of inspiration are not sufficient, but some

conservatives have gone too far the other way with verbal and dictation theories. It must then be admitted that the Scriptures are both human and divine.

The whole philosophy of Christianity has stood behind the fact of the full and complete inspiration of the Scriptures. The supernatural nature of Christianity has been denied when this has not been allowed. The burden of proof is on the side of those who claim that the Scriptures were not fully inspired. Christ and the apostles were deceivers if the Scriptures are not true, because they accepted the truth and the inspiration of them. Liberalism has said that it is trying to return to "the religion of Jesus" and neo-orthodoxy has claimed that Christ is their authority; but both have done the opposite in rejecting the fact of the full inspiration of the Scriptures. If Christ and His apostles were "accommodating" themselves to their age, then they were unworthy of our loyalty.

The failure of some to comprehend the elements of inspiration has led them to an improper view of inspiration. Liberals have failed to understand the elements of inspiration, and they have had to weaken their view of inspiration. Some conservatives have not comprehended the elements of inspiration and they have claimed too much for their theory of inspiration. All of the portions of Scripture did not

have the same element of inspiration.

There has been a naturalistic philosophy behind many of the objections to the full inspiration of the Scriptures. A theologian's view of the natural and the supernatural has greatly influenced his decision as to whether or not full inspiration of the Scriptures was a violation of the personality of the writer.

Those who have claimed that there are scientific inaccuracies in the Scriptures have forgotten the purpose of the Scriptures. They were not written as a book on science. God was not obligated to tell the writers whether or not prevailing scientific views were correct or incorrect. His purpose was to give man a redemptive message. All that conservatives have argued for was that the prevailing beliefs of the people were accurately reflected.

Everything in the Scriptures is not readily understandable, and there are some seeming unexplainables that men will doubtless never understand in this life. On the other hand, many so-called historical inaccuracies were only that because of a naturalistic bias on the part of some interpreters.

Two things have caused some to fail to understand the moral standards of the Scriptures. Some have failed to understand the significance of progressive revelation, and

within progressive revelation the possibility of regression and accommodation. Others have failed to realize that God is a holy and righteous God, as well as, a loving God. Those who have travelled the full gamut of sin may receive immediate divine wrath, and that at the hands of other men.

Those who have said that there were textual variations, and that they can not therefore accept the full inspiration of the Scriptures have been asking too much of inspiration. They have placed the idea of inspiration completely on the divine side. They have also limited God in saying that man is so fallible that nothing could go through his hands without making it necessarily faulty. Full inspiration of the Scriptures does not mean that man's personality is overruled, and that everyone has to cross his "t's" and dot his "i's" in the same manner. Nor does it mean that each one has to bring in all of the details that the other biblical writer does.

Every theologian has had some source of authority. Conservatives have held that true authority resides in the Scriptures. The purpose of the Scriptures should be narrowed down to the areas in which they are authoritative. There is no error on any subject, but the basic area of authority is the message of God's redeeming love which culminated in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures have authoritatively given to the world the record and the significance

of the life and death of Christ. Apart from them man has not had a sure and certain word from God.

Again, there is sufficient evidence, for the unbiased seeker, of the authority of the Scriptures. The authority of the Trinity has had to be overruled by any who have rejected the authority of the Scriptures. Neo-orthodoxy has said that Christ was its authority and yet, it has not accepted His word in regard to the authority of the Scriptures. Christ was not setting aside the Old Testament in His pronouncements. He was only bringing out their true meaning. The fact that the Spirit within agrees with the Scriptures, and the fact that obedience to the Scriptures produces what they say it will, are rather conclusive evidence that the Scriptures possess divine authority.

The Greek and Roman churches have argued for the authority of the church by council and pope respectively. But the councils have not been unanimous in their decisions; at times they have been worldly and sinful. There is some evidence that at times the councils were used for political intrigue and selfish gains. Not infrequently popes have been men of unbridled passion and seekers for political domination. The most damaging argument against the claim to papal authority has been the fact that more than one man

has claimed it at the same time.

The claim that reason is authoritative also lacks proof. Reason is altogether too faulty and biased. It was not immune to the damaging effects of sin. The mind was darkened, and could not ever hope to be able to fully understand religious truth while still this side of the resurrection. Man must have an objective religious authority outside of himself. Those who have relied upon reason for spiritual truth have been without any real basis for authority because it has varied according to the individual.

The main difficulty with the position that experience is the basis of authority is that it has been entirely too subjective. There has been no outside authority at all. Anyone was free to set aside any biblical doctrine that did not square with his particular experience. There was no fixed system of belief. If God was not able to give man anything more authoritative than that, then it was not necessary for Him to give man anything. The church, reason, and experience fail to meet the requirements for a sound basis for authority.

The Wesleyan position has been justified. The evidence has been in its favor. There has been no need for Wesleyanism to change its views on the Scriptures. The

Wesleyan position has remained for many, intellectually and spiritually, the most satisfying view of the Holy Scriptures, even in the light of contemporary emphases.

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