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THE DOCTRINE OF BIBLICAL INERRANCY
IN THE AMERICAN REFORMED TRADITION, 1865-1918
VIEWS OF THE BIBLE IN AN AGE OF DIVISION

BY

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I. Introduction

There is an increasing unanimity of opinion among historians of America's cultural, intellectual, and religious history that the years between 1865 and 1935 form a distinct "epoch" or "period." A number of important books published in recent years reflect this conception. Lefferts Loetscher in his masterly work on the Presbyterian Church entitled The Broadening Church (1954) deals with the years 1864 to 1936. In 1980, George Marsden produced Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925. In The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930 (1982), Ferenc Szasz views these years as a distinct period in this country's religious history.¹

The years 1865 to 1935 may be typified as an "age of division" for the American Protestant church. The church as a whole and particular denominations were rift by conflicts over important matters into "liberal" and "conservative" camps. Of course, the most well-known battles between "liberals" and "conservatives" took place in the twenties during the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy. This remains a blatant example of the major cleavage that American Protestantism was undergoing.²

Both the fundamentalists and the modernists of the twenties were groups with historical antecedents. Ernest Sandeen, in The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930 (1970), traces the religious forces and movements that eventually formed the "conservative" side of the post World War I conflicts. William Hutchison, in The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism (1976), describes, on the other hand, the development of a "liberal" perspective. It is within this historical framework of two divergent theological points of view that the terms "conservative" and "liberal" will be employed.³

The present essay examines the development of conservative and liberal views of the Bible that were central to these opposing perspectives which became movements by 1918. The schisms of the twenties were the ecclesiastical outworkings of theological divisions which had been developing since 1865. The Baptist historian Norman Maring observed this phenomenon among Baptists in "Baptists and Changing Views of the Bible, 1865-1918."⁴ Grant Wacker, in his essay "The Demise of Biblical Civilization" presents ideas which are helpful in constructing a conceptual framework of Protestant history in America from 1865 to 1935.⁵ Such a framework is necessary to understand the development of two biblical perspectives by 1918. Wacker asserts that until the 1920s and 1930s a broad evangelical Protestant consensus gripped the mainstream of American culture. The homogeneity of the consensus was a product, at least in part, of common assumptions held by evangelicals about the nature of the Bible. The inter-war years were a watershed for religion in America. For many Protestants, religion was changing "from a set of beliefs to a social occasion." During these years the over-all influence of religion in the culture began to decline, and secularism became more pronounced.⁶

A basic reason for such changes in American culture was that during the years from the 1880s to the 1920s American thought was undergoing a veritable revolution. Wacker considers the central point of this revolution to have been a change in historical consciousness, a paradigm-shift in the way people thought.⁷ A new intellectual paradigm of radical relativism, later called the "hallmark of the modern mind," became ascendant during these years.⁸ Historicist assumptions conquered the social disciplines from the 1880s to the 1920s, having a deep impact on religious thought.

For Wacker the acceptance of "an historical understanding of culture," which insists that God's self-revelation is mediated through the flow of history, was an important and general characteristic of Protestant liberalism in the years under scrutiny.⁹ For the modernists, even divine things must be known "squarely within the historical process or not at all."¹⁰ Conversely, the "insistence that the method and content of revelation were not a function merely of historical processes stood at the core of what came to be known...as fundamentalism."¹¹

If a central difference between the emerging fundamentalists and modernists lay in divergent responses to the historicist paradigm, it is understandable that the reactions of each group to the new ideas of evolution, comparative religion, and the higher criticism of the Bible (which were in great part the fruit of nineteenth-century scholars accustomed to a relativistic paradigm) should accordingly vary. Liberals tended to be fairly open to the new intellectual currents. Although conservatives responded in various ways to these "threats of modernism" (for example, B. B. Warfield accepted biological evolutionary concepts to a greater extent than did William Bell Riley), they were generally unreceptive to such views, especially to the higher criticism.

During the years under focus, critical biblical scholarship deeply changed the way in which many American theologians and churchmen viewed the Bible.¹² Such scholarship had existed in America before the Civil War in a small number of German-influenced thinkers such as Theodore Parker, but for various reasons it had no significant impact on the immediate post-war theological scene.¹³ Critical views were gaining prominence and definition in the 1870s and 1880s, but after 1890 the storm

hit. In general, liberal ideas advanced at this time, whereas arguments for "inerrancy, infallibility and verbal inspiration" fought a losing battle.¹⁴

This storm of controversy over the Bible was especially important in the history of fundamentalism. Some have said that fundamentalism as a movement came into existence during the struggles over the Bible. Timothy Weber, for example, notes that "from one angle...fundamentalism may be seen as an organized and often militant movement to protect the Bible from all its enemies."¹⁵ Ernest Sandeen presents a similar understanding in The Roots of Fundamentalism. He asserts that fundamentalism came about in the late nineteenth century through the formation of a "working agreement" between two distinct theological heritages, both committed to a "high view" of the Bible. United against theological liberalism, people in the millenarian movement along with representatives of the Princeton school of theology worked together to "defend" the Bible. The Fundamentals, a series of anti-modernist pamphlets published from 1910 to 1915, can be seen as fruit of such a union.¹⁶ Sandeen understands the importance of the controversy over inerrancy: "When many others carried on, supported by their personal experience or faith in the church, why did some Christians demand an inerrant Bible? This is the central question of Fundamentalist historiography."¹⁷

Additionally, the question of inerrancy implies deeper issues. The controversy over inerrancy was not merely that liberals and conservatives had honest differences as to whether there were contradictions and historical inaccuracies in the biblical text. A liberal such as William Newton Clarke, for example, rejected inerrancy because it implied both verbal and

propositional revelation, which he denied, and biblical inspiration, which he considered the biggest obstacle to radical change and progress in theology.¹⁸ For the fundamentalist, the inerrancy of Scripture was the answer to the question of authority, and many cherished assumptions and beliefs were supported by the doctrine. As James Barr, the historian of modern-day fundamentalism, has said:

The position of the Bible within fundamentalist religion stands high above the particular formulations that seek to grasp it and the various arguments that are used to defend it. The religion is an entirety, in which the supreme position of the Bible is central; faith in Christ and the experience of Salvation, as fundamentalists see it, are not separable from this position of the Bible.¹⁹

Barr's comment is particularly applicable if inerrancy is to be considered a "particular formulation" of the fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture. Because the doctrine of inerrancy often represented so much, it was worthy of defense.

In this essay, both sides of the controversy over the Bible and inerrancy from 1865 to 1918 are examined with focus on the self-proclaimed "defenders of orthodoxy;" the liberals are used as a foil to conservative viewpoints. Northern Baptists and Northern Presbyterians receive primary attention, since they are the clearest examples of the development of two separate perspectives on Scripture within a denomination. The millenarians also played a role in the conflict over inerrancy; they too receive attention in this study.

II. The Post-Bellum Setting and the 1870s

On 10 April 1865 the nation returned to peace. At the time, Protestantism also was at peace within itself, at least regarding the Bible. This was

not to last much longer, however, since the nation was swept into the intellectually turbulent years of the latter nineteenth century. The dominant force in American religious life in the immediate years after Appomattox was still evangelical Protestantism. Among Protestants, the most widely held perspective on the Bible was conservative, and it remained dominant until the higher criticism of the Bible altered many people's views after 1880.

According to Szasz, a high view of Scripture was an integral part of the American Republic in its early years. He noted that the authors of many nineteenth-century memoirs remembered the conservative way of reading Scripture among their families:

In Sixty Years with the Bible: A Record of Experience, William N. Clarke noted that when his family read from Scripture, they accepted the words as truth. There were no contradictions, for there could be none. How could God contradict Himself?... R. Heber Newton caricatured this stance, but perhaps not too wildly when he noted in 1883: 'A book let down out of the skies, immaculate, infallible, oracular -- this is the traditional view of the Bible.'²⁰

Szasz went on to describe reactions to the dominance of the traditional view:

Scientists despaired at the prevalence of such views, freethinkers scoffed at them, and liberal theologians tried their best to modify them. But the [traditional] reading persisted.... To exchange this fixed conception of Scripture for a historical-critical perspective was to undergo a genuine revolution in thought. This revolution first took place in the seminaries and from there reached into the congregations.... This change came about because of the spread of higher criticism.²¹

The higher criticism of the Bible had little effect on the Protestant theological atmosphere from 1865 to 1870. At the time critical scholarship did little to sway Protestants from a traditional view of the Bible.²² At

this point, a word of explanation concerning biblical criticism is in order.

In various ways and for various purposes, questions such as the following have been asked since the early years of Christianity: "What are the most trustworthy extant texts of the Bible? When, by whom, why, and for whom were these writings penned? What relationship historically and theologically do these writings have with each other?" But what is known historically as biblical criticism is in great part the product of the same modes of thinking that led to the development of modern secular historiography. Looking at biblical criticism from this angle, it is merely the application of modern historical methods to the Bible. This could also be said about the more specific disciplines of higher criticism, lower criticism, redaction criticism, form criticism, and biblical theology.²³

Certain presuppositions of modern historical methodology, however, run counter to a belief in the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. First, this methodology presupposes that the Bible is a human document claiming to be a valid record of certain historical events; hence it is possible to question the historicity of such a record. Next, the question of whether these records are true or not presupposes that there is some standard by which to judge their historicity, and this standard must be founded on present historical, archeological, and scientific knowledge. Of course, it is just such a methodology that separates tales and myths from facts about the past and in part has facilitated the enormous expansion of human knowledge during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But in the minds of people who accepted the presupposition that the Bible was errorless and absolutely true in

detail, this methodology could not be used without qualifications on the scriptures.²⁴

American biblical scholars in the early nineteenth century such as Theodore Parker (1810-1859) had no a priori commitment to inerrancy. They accepted the modern historical methodology in their study of the Bible. Largely Unitarians, they were opposed to "orthodox Calvinism" and believed that biblical criticism could do some theological purging in New England, allowing for theological renewal:

Convinced that traditional New England theology represented a distortion of the religion of Jesus and the apostles, they attempted to restore primitive Christianity by means of a rational and scientific interpretation of Scripture.²⁵

In America, Harvard was the institutional leader in critical biblical studies, appointing Joseph Stevens Buckminster to the first academic position in biblical criticism in 1811. Harvard financially supported liberals Edward Everett and George Bancroft in their studies in Germany. Both earned the Ph.D. from Gottingen by 1820. They became influential proponents of a liberal approach to the Bible. It was also at Harvard that Andrews Norton and George R. Noyes taught. All the above men were leaders in the struggle to promote and defend "the liberal position on Scripture."²⁶

Even at this time, when the higher criticism had little influence in America, conservative voices opposing certain conclusions of such criticism were not lacking. Andover Seminary was the stronghold for biblical studies of a conservative, defensive nature in the New England of the 1810s and 20s. Moses Stuart (1780-1852), who had been influenced by Timothy Dwight and the Boston conservative Jedidiah Morse, sought a

way of "reconciling new methods of biblical research with traditional Calvinistic theology."²⁷ From his position as Professor of Sacred Literature at Andover, Stuart defended the Bible's authenticity, canonicity, and inspiration.²⁸

Although biblical studies were pursued by some of New England's keenest intellects during the first decades of the nineteenth century, and although there was active theological debate between liberals and conservatives over issues raised by new scholarship, such activity began to wane in the 1840s and 1860s. By the end of the Civil War, this early group of biblical scholars had died, and biblical criticism no longer had an important part in New England theological discussion.²⁹ Early critical biblical studies had little lasting impact, to the extent that when the higher criticism began to make major inroads on the American theological situation in the 1880s and 1890s, it was considered a novel development. In The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America: 1800-1870, Jerry Wayne Brown concludes that,

The strangest feature of American critical biblical studies in this early period is the fact that they vanished so quickly and made so little impact on the development of American religion after the Civil War. When Charles Briggs accepted appointment to the Edward Robinson Professorship at Union Theological Seminary in 1890 and pronounced his agreement on certain points of German higher criticism, it was generally thought that something new had been introduced to America.³⁰

The theological scene from 1865 to 1870 was influenced surprisingly little by biblical criticism. What, then, was the theological atmosphere among Protestants? As mentioned above, the dominant opinion was conservative, and there seems to have been little conflict over the issue of the Bible.

Throughout the 1860s, Northern Baptist churchmen and theologians generally took a "high" view of Scripture. Norman Maring states, "In the 1860s Baptists shared a predominant belief in the inerrancy of the Bible."³¹ Before 1870, some Baptists had been quite definitive in their formulations of inspiration and inerrancy. They asserted that the original Scriptures penned by the biblical authors were inspired by God and hence free from error of any kind, and that errorlessness was not necessarily an attribute of copies or translations of these autographs. In 1855, an article in the Freewill Baptist Quarterly stated that inspiration extends to every word, "relates to the original production of the books of Scripture, and denotes that divine superintendence of their production, which secured them from error."³² The author of the article made it clear that although he had a high view of the modern versions of the Bible, he did not "claim for any translation the inspiration that pertains to the original."³³ Three years later the Baptist Christian Review claimed "inspiration and infallibility only for the original Scriptures" and would not "vouch for the entire accuracy of copyists and translators."³⁴ Scrupulous distinctions as to biblical inspiration such as these may not have been widespread in 1865, but they were in existence, a fact which had later ramifications, as shall be seen. Additionally, there was little dispute in the Church at that time over the nature of the Bible.

Maring suggests that perhaps the lack of conflict over the Bible among the Baptists was the product of an unquestioned acceptance of traditional views or of a general ignorance of the profound theological significance of the issues concerning the inspiration and authority of Scripture. This is not to say, however, that all Americans were ignorant

of recent work in theological and biblical studies by German scholars. A number of American scholars, including Baptists, had studied abroad and were familiar with contemporary German thought on these subjects. Horatio B. Hackett, who later taught Alvah Hovey, Henry Weston, and Ezekiel G. Robinson, was one such scholar. But most Americans' contact with German theology had been with its conservative and mediating representatives who conditioned them against more radical conclusions.³⁵ The same was true at a popular level:

For American readers German thought was made available in journals and popular periodicals. For nearly thirty years the Baptist Christian Review had kept its constituents abreast of current publications, and for a decade after 1857 The Baptist Quarterly disseminated ideas from Germany and England. However, articles and reviews were generally slanted in a conservative direction, and readers were thus insulated from the impact of the new ideas and were not encouraged to consider them as live options.³⁶

Another possible reason why Americans were unaware of the revolutionary theological importance of new scholarship was that they could imagine no profound variance between scholarship (i.e., science) and Scripture. A lasting ante-bellum faith in the compatibility of research and revealed religion made even conservatives open to "the scientific study of Scripture" and might have assuaged people's reactions to threats against a "traditional" view of the Bible in the name of science.³⁷

Whatever the reasons for the dominance of conservative biblical opinion immediately after the Civil War, it was not to continue long unchallenged. For the Baptists, the first breezes of an approaching storm came in 1867 with The Human Element in the Inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures by Thomas F. Curtis, a professor of theology at the Baptist College in Lewisburg,

Pennsylvania. Curtis says: "For many years, I conscientiously and earnestly struggled to maintain the current theories of Infallibility and of Scripture Inspiration, until all possibility of doing so reasonably and honestly was gone."³⁸

Since he could no longer accept the College's statement of faith without qualification, Curtis resigned his teaching position. Coming to believe in the multiple authorship of the Pentateuch and other Old Testament historical books and finding what seemed to be blatant scientific errors in the Bible, Curtis revised his conception of inspiration. He concluded that "an infallible revelation is not necessary for man, and it is not possible."³⁹ He viewed inspiration as the process in which God gave to the biblical writers certain basic insights into reality which men communicated in the context of their own human experience. Consequently, for Curtis the Bible's authority lay in the changeless truths it expressed, rather than the words it used to express them. He also emphasized the authority of individual Christian experience:

But he who walks with God, and experiences the power of grace, and lives in the truths of Christianity, knows that the religion of Jesus is no dream or delusion. He may meet with a thousand specious objections that he cannot answer, but he has evidence within himself that nothing can shake.⁴⁰

Three elements in Curtis characterized much subsequent thought by Christians of a liberal persuasion: an openness to biblical criticism; an insistence on the infallible truths contained in the Bible but expressed by men in fallible language; and an emphasis upon the authority of Christian experience.

Reaction to "this broadside against infallibility," which was "the

first one fired by a prominent Baptist, and the only one for several years," varied.⁴¹ Conservatives with less refined understandings of inspiration and infallibility were often at a loss as to how to respond. Henry G. Weston became president of Crozer Theological Seminary, but even he did not have an answer to Curtis. He wrote to his colleague Alvah Hovey in 1867:

Having to review in a slipshod way Curtis on Inspiration before our Pastor's conference, and that subject being one in which I am all at sea, except so far as a dogged belief in inspiration goes, without being able to define what "Inspiration" is, or what its metes and bounds are...I want you to give me what ideas you can conveniently put on two pages of note paper. I'll fight for them to the death, for I shall heartily believe just what you say.⁴²

Other conservatives, equally prominent, defended infallibility with sharper definition. In 1868 Lemuel Moss responded to Curtis in the Baptist Quarterly:

Of course inspiration can be predicated only of the original Scriptures, because they only are the writings of inspired men. There is no evidence that these books have been miraculously preserved from errors of transmission.... Nor can translators or interpreters, or their work, claim exemption from human infirmity.⁴³

The theologian Alvah Hovey, president of the Newton Theological Institution, was likewise a defender of infallibility. His fourteen-page reply to Weston must have both defended infallibility and met his friend's need.⁴⁴ One scholar commented on Hovey's thought in the following way:

Baptist theologian Alvah Hovey affirmed the divine infallibility of the sacred writings 'as they came from the hands of inspired men, and not as we have them now in the best editions of the New Testament.' Responding to the objection that inerrancy in the originals is useless without the complement of

Churches in 1869 expressed a fairly conservative Presbyterian view of the Bible and its authority in the Church:

The reunion shall be effected on the doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis of our common standards; the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments shall be acknowledged to be the inspired Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice; the Confession of Faith shall continue to be sincerely received and adopted as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.⁴⁹

All 113 New School Presbyteries voted for reunion on this basis, as did 126 of a total of 144 Presbyteries of the Old School. The biblical conservatism of such a document is emphasized when one examines the "traditional" views of Dr. Henry Boynton Smith, principal architect of the reunion. It is also probable that the 18 Old School Presbyteries that did not favor reunion on this basis did so because it was not theologically conservative enough. Dr. Charles Hodge, the foremost Old School theologian, doubted whether reunion under such terms sufficiently guarded distinctive Calvinism. To conservatives, Dr. Hodge was proved right since theological laxity increased in the Church during successive decades. Although phrases like "the only infallible rule" and "the system of doctrine" were to be points of contention between conservative and liberal churchmen with the rise of biblical criticism and biblical theology, explicitly defined "traditional" theology became increasingly difficult to enforce in the latter nineteenth century. Loetscher says that after this reunion "it would be increasingly difficult to protect historic Calvinism against variations that might undermine its essential character."⁵⁰ Loetscher charts the gradual acceptance of theological liberalism and the increasing inability of conservatives to enforce their "historic Calvinism" in The Broadening Church.

At this point the biblical opinions of the two most representative New and Old School theologians in 1870 need to be examined. Dr. Henry Boynton Smith, from his influential position at Union Seminary, strongly promulgated a conservative view of the Bible, considering "the whole of historical Christianity" at stake in the controversy over biblical criticism which arose towards the end of his lifetime.⁵¹ For him, the Bible was inspired by God, hence it was "not merely the words of men, but also the word of God."⁵² He explained inspiration as follows:

We are to adduce the evidence that this position [on inspiration] holds true of the original, canonical Scriptures, that they are given by a divine inspiration, that they are the word of God, and, as such, an infallible and final authority for faith and life.⁵³

According to Smith, the canon of Scripture is based on "the testimony of Christ and the Apostles." The Old Testament consists of those writings accepted by Jesus and the apostles, and the New Testament writings are those "which have apostolic authority." External evidences of "divine inspiration" are the Bible's own claim to inspiration, the effect the Bible has had on men's lives, and its remarkable style. According to Smith, "the witness of the Spirit in our hearts" is an internal evidence of the Bible's inspiration.⁵⁴

Smith distinguished between revelation and inspiration. Inspiration, a "divine influence," did not hinder the biblical authors from expressing their individuality, but it did secure "the communication of truth in an infallible manner, so that, when rightly interpreted, no error is conveyed." Smith clearly believed in the inerrancy of Scripture and, as he said, in its "plenary" inspiration.⁵⁵ Though he studied in Germany for three years, he rejected the negative conclusions of German biblical criticism. Until his

death in 1877, Dr. Smith was "the unchallenged Nestor of New School men," his biblical conservatism being fairly widespread in that school.⁵⁶ It is somewhat ironic that soon after 1877 Union Seminary and the Presbytery of New York came to be among the strongest proponents of liberalism in the Church.

The Old School was the other powerful theological heritage in the Presbyterian Church. At the time of reunion, as mentioned above, 144 out of the Church's 257 Presbyteries were connected with the Old School. This School had long been typified by its traditional Calvinist theology and conservative nature. The Presbyterian Seminary at Princeton, established in 1812, was the fullest and most influential expression of the Old School heritage for over a century. Its four greatest theologians, the principal expounders of the "Princeton Theology," were: Archibald Alexander (1772-1851), Charles Hodge (1797-1878), Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886), and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921). Each had a substantial voice in the theology of the Church in his day. By 1870, A. A. Hodge had already published important work, but his father was then the most influential of the Princetonians. J. David Hoeverler, Jr., called Charles Hodge "the most brilliant and resolute voice of Princeton Calvinism and the leading spokesman for the Old School."⁵⁷ Hodge had expressed his conservative view of the Bible before 1872, when he presented it fully in his Systematic Theology.⁵⁸

Hodge formulated his doctrine of Scripture after what he considered to be the historic Protestant conviction. After quoting from the Smalcald Articles of the Lutheran Church, the Helvetic Confession, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, and the Westminster Confession, he says:

From these statements it appears that Protestants hold, (1) That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are therefore infallible and of divine authority in all things pertaining to faith and practice, and consequently free from all error whether of doctrine, fact, or precept. (2) That they contain all the extant supernatural revelations of God designed to be a rule of faith and practice to his Church. (3) That they are sufficiently perspicuous to be understood by the people, in the use of ordinary means and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, in all things necessary to faith or practice, without the need of any infallible interpreter.⁵⁹

Hodge goes on to explain this position. As to the canon of Scripture, the Old Testament consists of those books recognized by Christ and his apostles as "the written Word of God." In like manner, the New Testament is those books which can be proved to have been written by the apostles or have received their sanction. Archibald Alexander, the founder of Princeton Seminary, had expressed the same doctrine earlier in Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained; or The Bible Complete Without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Traditions (1826).⁶⁰ Many conservatives in the Reformed tradition followed Hodge in his emphasis on apostolic testimony.

Next, Hodge enters into the mechanics of biblical inspiration and infallibility. He recognizes that his view of inspiration presupposes a personal, infinite God who is both transcendent and immanent in his relationship to his creation. This God is a free agent, generally acting through secondary causes, though able to act immediately, in supernatural works. The Bible itself is the product of a supernatural work. To Hodge, stating these presuppositions is important because "a large class of the objections to the doctrine of inspiration, which for many minds are the most effective, arise from the rejection of one or other of the presumptions specified."⁶¹

On the basis of these presuppositions, Hodge develops the logic of inspiration. The Scriptures are infallible because they are the very word of God; and they are the word of God because they were given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The object of inspiration was to secure infallibility in teaching, and its effect was to preserve the recipient from error in teaching. But inspiration is not the same as revelation. The object of revelation was to supernaturally communicate knowledge; its effect was to "render its recipient wiser." This does not mean, however, that inspiration and revelation were mutually exclusive in their influence. Furthermore, Hodge continues, the fact that God supernaturally saw to it that what the biblical penmen wrote was errorless does not imply that they were his dictation machines or that they wrote in a state of ecstasy. They wrote freely with full intellectual power and individual mental characteristics. "The Church has never held what has been stigmatized as the mechanical theory of inspiration."⁶²

For Dr. Hodge, the principal and overriding proof of this view of inspiration is that it is the Scriptural view of inspiration. To some this may seem like circular reasoning, but it is a rational theological assertion for a thinker who believes that the Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science--the storehouse of facts to which he must continually refer and upon which he must base his generalizations. Hodge goes to lengths to assert that the Bible teaches the view of inspiration that he expounds.

Two additional assertions follow from the testimony of Christ and the apostles concerning the Bible. First, says Hodge, inspiration extends equally to all parts of Scripture. The whole volume is the word of God;

thus the inspiration that secures inerrancy "is not confined to moral and religious truths, but extends to the statements of facts, whether scientific, historical, or geographical."⁶³ Second, inspiration and inerrancy extend to the very words of Scripture. Together these two assertions form what Hodge calls "the doctrine of plenary inspiration." This does not imply, however, that the biblical authors had plenary knowledge on all matters of history, science, and philosophy, or that they were in any way different from their contemporaries except when they acted as spokesmen of God.⁶⁴

One may have noticed that up to this point no mention has been made of the doctrine of inerrancy in the original autographs alone. Hodge seems to imply the doctrine rather than to vigorously state it as did his son and Warfield. Like his son, Hodge does admit that there are alleged discrepancies in the present text of Scripture. He deals with these by saying that the majority of them are only apparent, yielding to a careful examination; others are the errors of transcribers; the remaining few, whose origins are unknown at present, are of such minor importance that they cannot overthrow the clear biblical teaching of plenary inspiration.⁶⁵

As reflected in the writings of the leading theologians of both the Old and New Schools, the Presbyterian Church was markedly conservative in its view of Scripture from 1865 to 1870. There seems to have been little serious contention over the matter. But this relative placidity was soon to be ruffled.

The millenarian movement in America had long been dominated by a conservative view of the Bible. The movement was somewhat "para-denominational," having as its patriarch John Nelson Darby (1800-1882),

the leader of the separatist Plymouth Brethren group in Britain. But individual millenarians maintained their ties with the Calvinistic denominations. In the 1860s and 1870s the movement was developing a self-consciousness and was coming into public prominence. During this period its leaders began to organize Bible and prophetic conferences which, along with their books and certain millenarian periodicals, were to have a sizeable influence on Protestantism, at least at the popular level, during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the imminent second coming of Christ to establish his thousand-year reign was the emphasis of millenarians, they seem to have held a belief in the plenary inspiration and infallibility of the Bible from early days onward. In the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of books by European conservatives were approvingly received by American millenarians. The Inspiration of the Scriptures by Alexander Carson and The Books of the Old and New Testaments Proved to be Canonical by Robert Haldane were two defenses of verbal and plenary inspiration so received in the 1830s.⁶⁶ Ernest

Sandeen adds:

These two works, though often quoted and referred to admiringly by millenarians, did not receive the volume of praise heaped upon the most quoted defense of verbal inspiration, Louis Gausse's Theopneustia. Although written originally in French, this work was quickly translated and widely distributed in the English-speaking world, its argument being quoted in the United States by 1842.⁶⁷

Louis Gausse (1790-1840), a professor of theology in Geneva, taught inerrancy in a form similar to Charles Hodge. For him the Bible was God's word, verbally, equally, and entirely inspired by the Holy Spirit, which made it error-free. The Scripture is obviously the product of individual men, bearing their imprint from first to last, yet its writing was fully

superintended by God and is totally his word. It is completely inerrant in the histories, the prophecies, the epistles, the psalms, and the gospels. Inspiration extends to the original texts, Gausson asserted, and not to any translations of the holy writ. However, the word does have authority today since proper scholarship and lower criticism can produce a very acceptable copy of the original Hebrew and Greek texts.

Gausson believed that the Bible alone proves this "Theopneustic Doctrine." This is because for Gausson, as for Hodge, in all theological matters the critical and final question is "What does Scripture say?"⁶⁸ If one takes into account the similarities between Gausson's views and those of Charles Hodge, as well as the fact that Gausson was popular among American millenarians in the 1840s, it comes as no surprise that after 1880 the spiritual descendants of the early millenarians accepted the ideas of A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield (Charles Hodge's intellectual heirs) with similar enthusiasm.⁶⁹

In the 1860s and 1870s, as noted above, millenarianism became more organized. The best expression of this was the series of prophetic and Bible conferences, the most influential of which was the Niagara Conference. In the early years this conference was called the Believer's Meeting for Bible Study. It originated with a small but important group of men associated with the journal Waymarks in the Wilderness.⁷⁰ In 1868, the same year that the first informal conference was held, an article entitled "Inspiration" was published in this millenarian periodical that affirmed that the Scriptures were plenary inspired. It asserted that only the original texts of Scripture and not any copies or translations were inspired: "Neither the imperfection of translations, nor the variation

of manuscripts affect the questions as to the original perfection of the text."⁷¹ Ten years later, in 1878, James Brookes, a Presbyterian minister and the controlling spirit of the Niagara conference, drew up a fourteen-point Niagara creed which served as a doctrinal basis for the teaching at the conference. It was an unofficial guide to Niagara teaching until 1890, when it was officially adopted. The first article dealt with the Bible:

We believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, by which we understand the whole of the Book called the Bible; nor do we take the statement in the sense in which it is sometimes foolishly said that works of human genius are inspired, but in the sense that the Holy Ghost gave the very words of the sacred writings to holy men of old; and that His Divine inspiration is not in different degrees, but extends equally and fully to all parts of these writings, historical, poetical, doctrinal and prophetic, and to the smallest word, and inflection of a word, provided such a word is found in the original manuscripts.⁷²

Following this statement was a long list of Scriptural references.

The Niagara creed was a strong assertion of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the original autographs of Scripture. The words "inerrant" and "infallible" are not mentioned, but Ernest Sendeen assures us that "the millenarians assumed that divine inspiration had so controlled the writing of the Bible that the resultant text was free from error or fallibility."⁷³ The references to Carson, Haldane, Gausson, Waymarks in the Wilderness, and the Niagara creed are all evidences that a conservative conception of Scripture dominated millenarianism throughout the nineteenth century. In addition, it seems that this movement was never substantially influenced by theological liberalism or liberal scholarship, except perhaps in a reactionary manner.

The membership of millenarianism was comprised principally of Presbyterians and Baptists. This is natural, since "the millenarian movement was providing a refuge for those whose basic orientation to Christianity was formed through the Calvinist theological heritage."⁷⁴ Because of this, a history which treats an aspect of American Reformed religious life and theology must consider the conservative influence of the millenarians.

In summary, a conservative or "traditional" view of the Bible still dominated the Northern Baptist and Presbyterian denominations, as well as the ambiguously para-denominational millenarian movement, after the Civil War. This was the background for the turbulent events of the subsequent fifty years. As was seen in Thomas Curtis's book of 1867, new winds had already begun to blow.

III. Refining the Liberal and Conservative Positions in the 1880s and 90s

In the 1880s and 90s, former breezes of theological liberalism became the gusts of a raging wind. American life and thought were changing; theology was only a few steps behind. The nation grew in economic strength; technology, industrial production, and prosperity increased. As suggested above, new modes of thought which challenged traditionally-construed Christian theology received an ever-wider hearing and acceptance. The idea of evolution stimulated many concepts and attitudes characteristic of the late nineteenth century. In all fields it made change, and not fixity, the universal law. When taken far enough, evolutionary thinking eliminated the possibility of any kind of absolute, including religious and ethical absolutes. Evolution was not automatically accepted by all thinkers at the

time, nor were its more radical implications immediately drawn, but soon even the most conservative circles felt the disturbing effects of the new doctrine. The challenge of biological evolution to the creation narrative in Genesis was clear enough.⁷⁵

Other studies as well were unsettling to the minds of religious thinkers. The comparative study of religion brought the uniqueness of Christianity into question. Psychology seemed to be proving that even man's inner spiritual experience was subject to the laws of cause and effect, able to be examined scientifically. All such studies based on theories of development (whether they were directly discussed by theologians in the 1880s and 90s or not) were "conditioning the climate and in part defining the problems of all theological discussion."⁷⁶

The fundamental difference between liberal and conservative theology was how each responded to the new climate. Loefferts Loetscher described liberal theology as "an attempt to mediate between historic orthodoxy and the radically altered scientific and cultural outlook."⁷⁷ Conversely, traditionalistic theology considered the new outlook antithetical to the "historic orthodoxy" and would accept no compromises. Conservative leaders of American religious thought (Archibald Alexander Hodge and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, for example) were conscious of the increasing influence of relativism in the thought forms and academic disciplines of the late nineteenth century. They were disturbed by the correlative growth of a mediating theology in Europe and in America. Consequently, they developed their own theological thought and apologetic in conscious opposition to liberalism on many points. Likewise, liberal leaders (Charles Briggs, for example) expounded their ideas while fully aware of their differences from the conservatives.

This section describes how the conservative and liberal positions were refined and defined from the 1870s to the 1890s. The following section treats the manner in which both positions were diffused within Reformed Protestantism. Dividing a single historical process in this way is artificial, but it is an attempt to describe how American Protestantism became ever more divided over the issue of the Bible. Since these years saw the growth of the modernist movement, additional comment on the roots of Protestant liberalism is in order.

Throughout the nineteenth century, many German theologians were influential liberals. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is considered the father of modern theological liberalism. He emphasized the immanence as opposed to the transcendence of God, seeking to abolish the distinction between God and the world. Since this distinction between the sacred and the secular was false, according to Schleiermacher, religion and culture must interpenetrate each other. Albert Ritschl (1822-89), though critical of Schleiermacher, also stressed only the essential and the relevant in theology. He rejected the traditional doctrines of original sin, Christ's atonement, and eternal damnation, and sought to free Christian theology from metaphysical speculation. It should rather be an attempt to express judgments of value, especially that of the saving significance of Jesus of Nazareth. Ritschl stressed Christ's moral perfection; he equated God with love and denied the holiness and wrath of God.⁷⁸

Similar ideas can be found in American theologians. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, liberal Protestantism was characterized by an emphasis on the benevolence and fatherhood of God, the supreme ethical and religious example of Christ, and a belief in the

freedom, social nature, and essential goodness of man combined with a belief in the duty to correct all conditions (social injustice, ignorance, etc.) that stultify man's nature.⁷⁹

William R. Hutchison perceptively analyzes American Protestant liberalism in The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism. He identifies three central notions implied by the word "modernism." (Liberalism and modernism are used interchangeably by Hutchison and in the present essay.) The first notion was that religious ideas need to be consciously adapted to modern thought and culture. This included a willingness to discard more traditional theological forms if found to be irrational in the light of modern knowledge, or irrelevant to what was regarded as the central core of religious experience. Liberals felt strongly that the communication of the Christian gospel must adjust itself to the times or be forgotten. A second and more profound notion was that God is immanent in human history and cultural development as well as revealed through them. Following this was the belief that human society was progressing toward realization of the Kingdom of God on earth. Liberalism emphasized the divine presence in man and in nature. It fostered an optimistic outlook on man and the future. Although it de-emphasized God's transcendence, one traditional doctrine that was exceedingly important for liberalism was the Incarnation, which testified to the real presence of God in humanity and in history. Additionally, modernists emphasized Christian ethics over Christian doctrine, "orthopraxis" over "orthodoxy" (to use a contemporary expression). Because modernism was an attitude and a method of theological adaptation rather than a system of ideas, its adherents were understandably of a wide variety of theological persuasions.

But as a "new theology" developed and became increasingly accepted and respectable from the 1870s to 1920, a reactionary conservatism was more and more likely to protest all kinds of liberalism.⁸⁰

A conservative protest against liberalism arose among the Congregationalists during the 1880s and 90s, but little came of it. The liberal element was already strong in the denomination. Congregationalists adopted a new creed, irenic in tone, in the year 1883. This was five years before Presbyterian liberals even attempted such a venture. In 1884 the Andover Review was founded. This journalistic expression of a seminary which was originally intended to be a "bastion of orthodoxy" was the principal voice of liberal ideas in the denomination for the ten stormy years of its life. But the conservative-liberal storms ended among the Congregationalists in 1892-93 with the tolerance of liberal views.⁸¹

Northern Baptist conservatives and liberals vociferously opposed each other, but there was not a "head-on" clash as in the Presbyterian Church. Baptists' congregational church structure allowed individuals to hold varying positions, even on important issues, without ecclesiastical reprisal by either party. At the 1892 Baptist Congress both a liberal and a conservative position on the Bible were expounded from the platform.⁸² The two positions tended to become hermetically sealed from each other since they were not forced into continuous public conflict. Eventually the denomination's principal open forums for liberal-conservative dialogue were abolished. The Baptist Quarterly ceased publication after 1892, and the final Baptist Congress was held in 1905. The Baptist historian Norman Mering noted that by 1918,

...these two parties largely isolated themselves from each other.... There were few media by which

interchange of thought could take place. The cross-fertilization of ideas which should have gone on through the seminaries was stifled, because each party had its own seminaries and there was little commerce between them. Hence, instead of creative tensions, the denomination had only tensions, and a schizophrenia developed for which no treatment was sought.⁸³

There certainly was "commerce" and "interchange of thought" between Presbyterian liberals and conservatives, though to call the protracted, intense, and often bitter conflict between the two groups "creative tensions" would certainly be a euphemism. Still, it is precisely such face-to-face interaction that makes the history of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. the best example of how two views of the Bible developed in distinct opposition to each other. Three of the most influential figures in the late nineteenth-century debate over the Bible came from Presbyterian ranks: Charles A. Briggs, a liberal affiliated with Union Theological Seminary in New York, and Archibald Alexander Hodge and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, both conservatives affiliated with Princeton Theological Seminary. The divergent views of the Bible held by these men shall be examined within the context of theological and political developments within the Presbyterian Church.

As seen above, a traditional high view of the Bible was dominant in the Presbyterian Church in 1865, though the following decade saw the beginnings of a new view of the Bible within the denomination. Charles Briggs was at the center of the new movement. Briggs had studied in Germany after his graduation from Union Seminary. Though he regretted German scholars' lack of reverence toward the Bible, he was stimulated by their methodology and biblical theology.⁸⁴ A critical examination of the biblical text and the theology that could be built upon such an examination was central for

Briggs and for nascent Presbyterian liberalism. He published two important articles entitled "Biblical Theology" in the American Presbyterian Review during the year 1870.⁸⁵ According to Briggs, "The discussion of the Higher Criticism in the United States began for the Presbyterian body, in the plea for freedom of criticism in my inaugural address as Professor of Hebrew in the Union Theological Seminary, N. Y., in 1876. This was received with a mild opposition."⁸⁶ As Briggs' influence increased, opposition to him intensified apace.

Two other incidents in the Presbyterian Church were antecedents to large-scale conservative-liberal conflict. One was the David Swing trial.⁸⁷ Swing, a New School Presbyterian, became pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago in 1866. Following the Chicago fire of 1871 his ministry moved to Central Music Hall, where he preached weekly to thousands. His message was attractive to people struggling with difficult religious questions. According to this uncomely and plain-speaking preacher, Christianity was a way of living properly rather than a system of belief, a "mode of virtue, rather than a jumble of doctrines."⁸⁸ Swing felt that all religious expressions were dependent upon the culture within which they were formulated; apart from that culture they could not be understood.

Such doctrine brought Swing into conflict with Chicago conservatives, who charged that he had departed from the Westminster Confession, the authoritative statement of Presbyterianism. For Swing, all creeds and even the Scriptures themselves were less than absolute truth. He saw need for the improvement and cultural adaptation of all doctrinal and creedal expressions.⁸⁹

The conservative Francis Patton presented formal charges of heresy

against Professor Swing on 13 April 1874. These charges were of a negative nature: for not having maintained the truths of the gospel, and for not accepting the Westminster Confession as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scripture. Because of the negative character of the charges and the fact that Swing had not categorically denied the doctrines which Patton accused him of rejecting, the defendant was acquitted of both charges on 20 May of the same year. Patton announced at once that he would appeal the case, and Swing withdrew voluntarily from the denomination, protesting the lack of toleration on the part of Patton. Swing also hoped "to secure to the Synod and to the Assembly that peace which alone can lead to a calm review and restatement of doctrine." He wanted the Church to reformulate its position "by committees, and without the stormy passions that gather around an 'accuser' and an 'accused.'"⁹⁰ Contrary to these desires, the Swing trial set a precedent for dealing with liberal-conservative conflicts over the Bible through prosecution for heresy.

The second incident was the formal ecclesiastical trial of the Reverend William C. McCune before the Cincinnati Presbytery in 1877 and before the General Assembly of 1878. McCune, a member of the Old School Presbytery of Cincinnati, favored transcending denominational divisions. This desire found practical application when McCune was invited to minister at a non-denominational church near Cincinnati. He denounced denominationalism in the churches as sinful. On the level of practical church administration, he had accepted ministerial service outside the Presbytery without its permission, rejected infant baptism, and advocated a revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith in the interests of church union.⁹¹

To Thomas H. Skinner, another Old School pastor from Cincinnati, all

of the above added up to "liberalism and broad-churchism." Skinner brought McCune to trial before the Cincinnati Presbytery. "Never before in all our history," he declared, "has there been such a disposition to put 'Union before Truth' as there is today."⁹² The Presbytery acquitted McCune, but Skinner took the matter to the General Assembly of 1878. The Assembly rebuked the Reverend McCune and the decision of the Cincinnati Presbytery by a vote of more than four to one. The Presbytery had "erred in not sustaining these charges, and in not reprimanding Mr. McCune for his unsound statements, and his disloyal action in the premises."⁹³ Both the McCune and Swing cases are examples of an aggressive conservatism attacking a budding liberalism in the ecclesiastical courts. They served as precedents for the Briggs and Smith trials of the 1890s.

In the meantime, other events were focusing attention on the issues surrounding biblical criticism and theological liberalism. From 1876 to 1880 American Presbyterians eagerly followed the conflict in the Free Church of Scotland over the "progressive" opinions of William Robertson Smith, professor at the Scottish Free Church College of Aberdeen. The General Assembly of the Free Church dismissed heresy charges against Smith in 1880. But a subsequent article by the young professor on "Hebrew Language and Literature" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica showed such a commitment to the pentateuchal theories of the German scholar Julius Wellhausen and raised such a general furor, that the Assembly of 1881 removed Smith from his academic chair.⁹⁴

In the same year the Presbyterian Review began publishing a series of articles dealing with the Bible and the higher criticism. The Review had been founded in 1880 by a coalition of both Old and New School interests

as an expression of the "honeymoon spirit" of their reunion. Dr. Charles A. Briggs and Dr. Archibald A. Hodge were chosen as its managing editors by the faculties of Union and Princeton Seminaries, respectively. The series was comprised of eight articles dealing with various issues raised by the higher criticism. Charles A. Briggs and Henry P. Smith took up the affirmative (or liberal) position. W. Henry Green, Francis L. Patton, Archibald A. Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield advocated what Briggs called "the traditional theories." Two other contributors took a middle position.⁹⁵

The articles in the series by Briggs and Hodge-Warfield are central to the present discussion of the refinement of the liberal and conservative positions. Charles Briggs published three articles in the series. The first was entitled "The Right, Duty, and Limits of Biblical Criticism," the second "Biblical Theology," and the third "Critical Study of the Higher Criticism, with Special Reference to the Pentateuch." These articles served as the basis for Briggs' Biblical Study: Its Principles, Methods, and History, published in 1882. This book serves as a good example of Briggs' view of the Bible at the time.⁹⁶

Briggs was not a naturalist who accepted a man-centered and materialistic explanation of the genesis and nature of Scripture, nor was he a traditional theologian content to take the Bible at face value and use it to formulate and proof-text customary dogmas. Rather, he classified himself as an evangelical theologian and biblical critic, interpreting the Bible in "the evangelical spirit of the Biblical authors" in an attempt to produce "the vital and experimental religion of the Reformers and Puritan fathers."⁹⁷ Briggs felt that both scholasticism and rationalism contradicted his

evangelicalism. Rationalism, in great part a reaction to scholasticism, could never be overcome by the dry opinions of the latter, but only by experiential religion. Protestant scholasticism, the tendency toward theological system-building, had as its architect Francis Turretin (1623-87). Briggs credits Turretin with inventing the doctrine of verbal inspiration of the Bible. In Briggs' opinion, verbal inspiration erected "dogmatic barriers against Biblical criticism" and destroyed the vital, experiential power of Protestantism.⁹⁸

For Briggs, the Bible was indeed inspired by God, but not the very words. Rather than being the word of God in the verbal sense, it is God's word in that it contains the divine message. This message is the ideas and concepts of divine truth that are conveyed to the soul of man through the external words, which are purely instrumental. Briggs distinguished between the external and the internal word of Scripture. After citing the Westminster Confession and the 1881 Hodge-Warfield article "Inspiration," Briggs seems to agree that the external words of the original texts of the Bible are authentic and errorless. But for him inspiration lies beyond Hodge and Warfield's "superintendence," behind the external letter. He wrote:

Doubtless by God's 'singular care and providence [the Holy Scriptures] have been kept pure in all ages, and are therefore authentic.' Doubtless throughout the whole work of the authors 'the Holy Spirit was present, causing His energies to flow into the spontaneous exercises of the writers' faculties, elevating and directing where need be, and everywhere securing the errorless expression in language of the thought designed by God;' but we cannot in the symbolical or historical use of the term call this providential care of His Word or superintendence over its external production—inspiration. Such providential care and superintendence is not different in kind with regard to the Word of God, the visible church

of God or the forms of the sacraments.
Inspiration lies back of the external letter.⁹⁹

Inspiration, in Briggs' view, lies in the spiritual content--the ideas expressed through the words.

Briggs freely admitted that there were errors and inconsistencies in the Bible. Because of this, he rejected biblical inerrancy and called a preoccupation with disproving alleged errors "Bibliolatry."¹⁰⁰ He also accepted certain results of the higher criticism such as the multiple authorship of the Pentateuch.

Briggs and the conservatives held different presuppositions. He refused to accept verbal inspiration and to deduce from it that the Scriptures, as they came from the hands of the biblical authors, were absolutely errorless. To him biblical inerrancy was an a priori definition which begs the question in the debate over the historicity of the biblical documents. This was unacceptable.¹⁰¹

When he asserted that the inspiration and authority of the Bible did not reside in its words but in the spirit behind them, which is understood in part by Christian experience, Briggs opened wide the floodgate for all types of biblical criticism. He understood and welcomed this, but he seems not to have realized that others would go beyond the limits that he set on biblical criticism. Briggs felt that the Bible was inerrant as an expression of "matters of faith" and "the historic events and institutions with which they are inseparably united."¹⁰² Biblical criticism had no business impugning the central historical Christian verities. "Higher criticism comes into conflict with the authority of Scripture when it finds that its statements are not authoritative and its revelations are not credible."¹⁰³ But why cannot biblical criticism question or disprove

even matters of faith such as Jesus' Incarnation and virgin birth (which Briggs accepted), as recorded in the gospel narratives? Briggs was a moderate who would not accept such criticism, though later, more radical liberals would.¹⁰⁴

A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield would have no open floodgates. In an effort to shore up what they saw as the "Church doctrine of Scripture," they contributed the first article, entitled "Inspiration," in the Presbyterian Review series on the higher criticism. In it they argued for a fully inspired and fully inerrant Bible with all the Scottish Common Sense logic for which they are justly famed.¹⁰⁵

What then is inspiration? Inspiration is the superintendence by God over the biblical writers in their writing which accounts for nothing other than the absolute infallibility of what they have written. Hodge and Warfield use this sharp definition in order to distinguish the question of inspiration from other questions (such as revelation and the genesis of Scripture). They realize that this doctrine presupposes God's total sovereignty over a truly free will:

The only really dangerous opposition to the Church doctrine of Inspiration comes either directly or indirectly, but always ultimately, from some false view of God's relation to the world, of His methods of working, and of the possibility of a supernatural agency penetrating and altering the course of a natural process.¹⁰⁶

This presupposition allows Hodge and Warfield to move to the next step in their argument--the Bible is fully the work of men and fully the work of God. They admit that the human agency is apparent in the substance and form of all the biblical writings, and they disassociate themselves from the verbal dictation theorists. God did not use the writers as mere

amanuenses; they had a free, rational, and creative part in the process of composition. Still, in each writer's work "the Holy Spirit was present, causing His energies to flow into the spontaneous exercises of the writer's faculties, elevating and directing where need be, and everywhere securing the errorless expression in language of the thought designed by God."¹⁰⁷ This is inspiration--the divine superintendence in the process of composing the Bible.

The Princetonians rejected Briggs' distinction between the outer words and the inner concepts of Scripture:

It is self evident that, just so far as the thoughts of Scripture...are inspired, the words in which those thoughts are expressed must be inspired also.... The Scriptures are a product of human thought, and every process of human thought involves language.... Whatever discrepancies, or other human limitations may attach to the sacred record, the line (of inspired or not inspired, of infallible or fallible) can never rationally be drawn between the thoughts and the words of Scripture.¹⁰⁸

Hodge and Warfield next discuss the other great dividing point among "believing scholars" (purely naturalistic scholarship is invalid to them since it rejects the Christian presupposition of supernatural revelation and superintendence). According to the Princetonians, "the more liberal school of Christian scholars" holds that the Scriptures are plenary inspired and hence a divinely infallible and authoritative rule of faith and practice. But Scripture is limited by occasional inaccuracies in matters which are not essential to its great end of teaching spiritual truth. Assertions in the Bible concerning geography, archeology, philosophy, history, and natural science might contain errors.

Hodge and Warfield contrast this view with "the great Catholic doctrine

of Biblical Inspiration," which is "that the Scriptures not only contain, but are the Word of God, and hence that all their elements and all their affirmations are absolutely errorless, and binding the faith and obedience of men."¹⁰⁹ The debate then is whether the Bible is inspired and infallible in all its assertions (including historical and scientific assertions), or whether infallible only in those concerning its central spiritual message. The Princetonians admit that this debate can only be resolved by an exhaustive and impartial examination of the assertions of the Scriptures themselves to see if they are subject to error, inaccuracies, or contradictions. Hodge and Warfield welcome such an examination. However, the Princetonians say, the burden of proof rests upon those who admit to the existence of errors in Scripture. Those who deny the existence of errors have the presumption in their favor since, "the prime facie evidence of the claims of Scripture is assuredly all in favor of an errorless infallibility of all Scriptural affirmations."¹¹⁰ These men constantly appeal to Scripture.

Hodge and Warfield made clear the conditions for proving an error in the Bible. First, the alleged discrepant statement must be shown to exist in the original autograph of the sacred book. The Princetonians never claimed that God fully guarded from error the process of transcribing the Bible. Their emphasis on the original autographs is an attempt to free themselves from having to account for the mistakes of scribes and copyists. Second, the interpretation which occasions the apparent discrepancy must be the one which the passage was evidently intended to bear. In other words, using the sound principles of historico-grammatical exegesis, the proper meaning of the passage needs to be determined. Faulty interpretation or lack of understanding of the historical circumstances of a particular

assertion of Scripture disqualifies the attempt to prove an error. Finally, it must be shown that the true sense of some part of the original autograph is directly and necessarily inconsistent with some certainly known fact of history, or truth of science, or another statement of Scripture certainly ascertained. At this point the critic will have truly proved the existence of an error in the Bible. "We believe that it can be shown." Hodge and Warfield add, in the boldest sentence of the article, "that this has never yet been successfully done in the case of one single alleged instance of error in the Word of God."¹¹¹

The article "Inspiration" is a strong defense of a verbally and plenary inspired Bible in the original autographs which is consequently error-free in all its affirmations. Such well-defined theological definitions became a rallying point for Presbyterian conservatives in their struggle against the liberals during the 1880s and 90s.

Coming to a close in 1883, the series of articles in the Presbyterian Review successfully brought into open discussion certain questions raised by the higher criticism. Greater theological harmony among Presbyterians, however, was not the result. Tension between those holding liberal and conservative views of the Bible continued to increase. Charles Hodge was succeeded by Francis Patton as an editor of the Presbyterian Review; Patton was in turn succeeded by Benjamin Warfield. Relations between these men and Charles Briggs, the other editor, were increasingly strained. American Presbyterianism (1885) and Messianic Prophecy (1886) furthered Briggs' status as "dangerous" to conservatives who held positions of influence at that time. The nascent controversy over revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith, in which Briggs and Warfield found themselves at odds,

was the last straw. The weak and divided Presbyterian Review ceased publication in October 1889.¹¹²

The movement for revision of the Westminster standards resulted from long theological tensions and exemplified the growing rift between late nineteenth-century "progressives" and conservatives. Biblical issues were not directly part of the controversy, but in 1889, when the General Assembly voted to submit a questionnaire to the presbyteries concerning revision, churchmen more liberal on the biblical question were most often revisionist. Briggs, an early leader in the revisionist movement, was an example of this. Whither?, published in 1889, further provoked the opponents of Briggs. He attempted to make way for credal revision by turning the tables on conservatives who claimed to be faithful guardians of Westminster orthodoxy. In the book he asserted that it was actually his opponents the Princetonians who had departed from the Confession, in the direction of a Calvinistic scholasticism. But the revision movement failed in the General Assembly of 1893. In the same year, Charles Briggs was suspended from the Presbyterian ministry for heresy. The conservative reaction triggered by the Briggs case was a factor in the failure of the movement for revision.¹¹³

By 1890, the conservative element within the denomination was well-organized and ready to defend the truth against the compromising liberals. In January 1890, four months after the last issue of the Presbyterian Review, Dr. Warfield put out the first issue of the Presbyterian and Reformed Review. The journal was under his complete control and boasted impressive support, a sign of conservative vigor.¹¹⁴

In November 1890 the board of Union Seminary transferred Charles Briggs to the recently endowed chair of biblical theology. On 20 January 1891

Dr. Briggs gave an inaugural address entitled, "The Authority of Holy Scripture." For conservative, Briggs showed his true, radical colors in this address and proved himself to be utterly heterodox. First, he confused the final source of Christian authority by mentioning three different sources and implying their equality. The Church (represented by the Catholic Newman), Reason (represented by the Unitarian Martineau), and the Bible (represented by the Protestant Spurgeon) were all sources of authority for Briggs. One was not necessarily superior to another; as he put it, "The average opinion of the Christian world would not assign him [Spurgeon] a higher place in the kingdom of God than Martineau or Newman."¹¹⁵ He seems to have set aside the Protestant belief in the final authority of Scripture.

Briggs went on to talk about divine authority in the Bible, blasting six "barriers" to the exercise of this authority. Superstition, which is the "bibliolatry" of over-emphasizing the Bible's external word, is one. The doctrine of verbal inspiration, which hinders the operation of the Bible's true authority, is another. Attacking the Princetonians' concept of canonicity based on apostolic sanction, he next criticized hyper-preoccupation with the authenticity of biblical writings. "It may be regarded as the certain results of the science of the Higher Criticism," he added, "that Moses did not write the Pentateuch."¹¹⁶ He assailed the doctrine of inerrancy and the conception of miracles as violations of the laws of nature. The common conception that prophecy was the foretelling of future events, a minute prediction, was a sixth barrier.¹¹⁷

Briggs seems to have been impassioned to provoke his own condemnation by conservative, "orthodox" churchmen. When the General Assembly convened

in May 1891, sixty-three presbyteries requested that action be taken against Professor Briggs. His prosecution proceeded apace. First there was a time of political fencing between the General Assembly and Union Seminary in which relations between the two broke down. The Seminary supported Briggs and would not allow the Assembly to veto his appointment to the new post. Next came the trial of Briggs before his own Presbytery of New York. The case was dismissed; the wording of the resolution expressed a desire for tolerance and inclusive churchmanship. But Briggs' prosecutors appealed directly to the General Assembly. One of them wrote:

This appeal from the action of the Presbytery of New York brings before the General Assembly a question more serious and important in results than any that has ever been presented to it; the question, namely, whether a type of theology utterly antagonistic to the traditional theology of the denomination shall be solemnly condemned by its highest tribunal, or whether it shall be endorsed by it directly in words, or indirectly by inaction and tolerance.¹¹⁸

The General Assembly of 1892 voted to sustain the appeal of the prosecuting committee. This Assembly rebuked the New York Presbytery's decision, reopened the case, and affirmed the commitment of the Presbyterian Church of the U. S. A. to the high view of the Bible expressed by Hodge and Warfield. This was the famous "Portland Deliverance." It read in part:

Our Church holds that the inspired Word, as it came from God, is without error.... All who enter office in our Church solemnly profess to receive them [i.e. "the sacred books"] as the only infallible rule of faith and practice. If they change their belief on this point, Christian honor demands that they should withdraw from our ministry.¹¹⁹

The Portland Deliverance and the Briggs case were topics of intense discussion

throughout the following year in preparation for the next General Assembly.

The General Assembly of 1893 was held in Washington, D.C.; during the trial of Charles Briggs, people packed the church in which it was held. The Assembly tried the case on appeal, allotting four and a half hours to the prosecuting committee for remarks, seven hours to Briggs, and two and a half hours to the Presbytery of New York. When all was finished, the Assembly rendered its decision through a roll-call vote. Two hundred and ninety-five commissioners voted to fully sustain the prosecutor's appeal, eighty-four to partially sustain it, one hundred sixteen not to sustain it. The result was as follows:

This General Assembly...does hereby suspend Charles A. Briggs, the said appellee, from the office of a minister in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, until such time as he shall give satisfactory evidence of repentance to the General Assembly.¹²⁰

A note was attached to the final decision of the Assembly that repudiated Briggs' mistaken views, including the errancy of Scripture and the doctrine that Reason and the Church are co-fountains of divine authority along with the Scriptures.¹²¹ In the Briggs case a strong, well-organized majority of conservatives with a sharply-defined theology used the ecclesiastical court system to take action against a liberal thinker who publicly rejected certain of their views.

The final incident in the Presbyterian liberal-conservative controversy deserving mention is the Smith case. Henry Preserved Smith was a biblical scholar at Lane Seminary in Cincinnati. He contributed a few articles to the Presbyterian Review series on the higher criticism. Briggs was his close friend, and Smith had promised him during the aftermath of his 1891 inaugural address that, "If it comes to an open battle, I will take

your side."¹²² To his own detriment, Smith fulfilled this promise.

In a paper read before the Presbyterian Ministerial Association of Cincinnati in March 1891, Smith joined Briggs in assailing the doctrine of verbal inspiration. This paper and another by a fellow Lane scholar were published under the title Biblical Scholarship and Inspiration. The book publicly committed Smith to a critical view of the Bible in which he rejected biblical inerrancy. He also argued that a doctrinal qualification should be required only at ordination. It was tacitly against Smith that the Portland Deliverance of 1892 directly affirmed inerrancy and a constant (as opposed to "momentary") doctrinal qualification for ministers. In this same year, the Presbytery of Cincinnati formed a committee to prosecute Smith on charges of heresy. On 13 December he was found guilty and dismissed from the ministry.¹²³

In October 1893 the Synod of Ohio refused Smith's appeals. He subsequently appealed to the General Assembly of 1894. The case centered on a single issue--biblical inerrancy. Was the Assembly willing to commit itself to suspend from ministry all those who denied inerrancy? Smith was charged "with teaching...that the Holy Spirit did not so control the inspired writers in their composition of the Holy Scriptures as to make their utterances absolutely truthful, i.e., free from error when interpreted in their natural and intended sense."¹²⁴ The Assembly rejected Smith's appeal. Apparently, conservative opinion had become even more crystallized between the Briggs trial of 1893 and the Smith trial of 1894. Dr. Henry P. Smith's suspension remained operative. In the last years of the nineteenth century, Presbyterian ministers definitely needed to be able to affirm their belief in a very high view of Scripture.

We have been examining how a liberal and a conservative view of the Bible became more refined in the 1880s and 90s. Using the Presbyterians as the model with special attention on Briggs, Hodge, and Warfield, we have seen subtle and not so subtle differences between two types of Christian thinkers. Also, the process of polarization and a certain amount of open strife between the two camps had begun. As zealous liberals sought to spread their enlightened perspective on Scripture, and as vigorous conservatives continued to strengthen the dikes against the rising tide of heresy, the theological atmosphere within Reformed Protestantism grew increasingly more turbulent.

IV. The Popularization and Polarization of the Positions: 1890 to 1918

As two distinct views of the Bible developed in the 1870s and 80s, they attracted followings and became movements. The years from 1890 to 1918 saw the development of self-conscious progressive and fundamentalist movements. These two theological movements found expression within the denominations (in opposing groups of conservatives and liberals); however, the growing conflict between them was trans-denominational. Not only did conservatives struggle against liberals within the Presbyterian and Baptist denominations, but alignments were formed whose concerns were broader than those of a single denomination.

Despite its many faces, theological liberalism grew in influence and numbers as 1918 approached. William Hutchison comments:

The new Theology made impressive gains in the 1890s.... By the end of the decade liberalism, while still probably in a numerical minority, had attained a voice equal to those of the older and new conservatism that opposed it, and...its

dynamism or momentum as a movement by that time was at least as great as that of any opposing faction. The evidence for such an assessment lies in the history of the denominations... and perhaps even more in the history of a liberal popularization and systematizing that went on outside or across the denominations.¹²⁵

The other intra- and trans-denominational movement examined is fundamentalism. In large measure, fundamentalism was a reaction to liberalism. The defense of the Scriptures was at the heart of the movement. J. Schoneberg Setzer, in his critique of fundamentalism, defined it as follows:

Fundamentalism is a rationalistic Protestant orthodoxy that is centered around the traditional Church doctrine of the inerrant inspiration of Scripture, as that doctrine was refined by Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield in retroaction to modern historical criticism of the Bible and to theological liberalism.¹²⁶

Fundamentalism was formed largely out of a working agreement between the theological conservatism of the Princetonians (hence the reference to Warfield in the above quotation) and the millenarian movement.¹²⁷ This informal alliance between the millenarians and the conservative Presbyterians was based on a co-belligerency against theological liberalism. Fundamentalism developed between 1890 and 1918 since liberalism was developing at that time. As noted above, both parties of this alliance were committed to an infallible Bible. Both groups opposed the New Theology which rejected infallibility. With an eye to sketching the broad outlines of the modernist and fundamentalist movements, we will examine events within the Presbyterian and Baptist denominations. Interwoven with this will be a discussion of certain developments outside of these denominations, especially the millenarian movement.

A high point in Presbyterian Church conflicts over the Bible was reached during the 1890s with the Briggs trial. The outcome was that the denomination committed itself to a conservative position on the Scriptures. The conservative tendency within the Church began to weaken, but did not disappear, in the early decades of the twentieth century. In the year 1900 Dr. Arthur Cushman McGiffert left the denomination under pressure from conservatives. McGiffert was a church historian who taught at Lane Seminary and then at Union Seminary. He had been a supporter of Henry P. Smith. In 1897 McGiffert published A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age which called into question the authorship, authority, and inerrancy of parts of the New Testament. The General Assembly of 1898 declared its disapproval of these elements in McGiffert's work and asked him to change his views or peaceably withdraw from its ministry. All concerned made sincere efforts to avoid heresy proceedings. Dr. McGiffert, however, would neither modify his stance (which he considered fully consistent with the essentials of the Presbyterian Standards) nor leave the ministry. He changed his mind about the latter when heresy charges were filed against him before the New York Presbytery in 1900. The Presbytery accepted McGiffert's withdrawal from its jurisdiction in that same year.¹²⁸

A second example of the Presbyterian Church's continued dedication to a conservative view of the Scriptures was its adoption in 1910 of a five-point doctrinal statement that eventually became known as the famous "five points of fundamentalism."¹²⁹ The statement was adopted to settle questions raised concerning the orthodoxy of three ordination candidates from Union Theological Seminary. The Assembly of 1910 named the following

doctrines as "essential and necessary:" (1) the Spirit so inspired the writers of Scripture "as to keep them from error," (2) the virgin birth of Christ, (3) his substitutionary atonement, (4) his bodily resurrection, and (5) the authenticity of miracles.¹³⁰ The first point was a reaffirmation of the doctrine of inerrancy. Except for the General Assembly's ending of formal relations with Union Seminary over doctrinal issues in 1915, the adoption of the five points seems to have been the last great victory of conservatives in the denomination. This statement proved to be the final rallying point of Presbyterian conservatives before the spectacular collapse of their party in the 1930s.¹³¹

Since Princeton Seminary was at the head of Presbyterian conservatism during these years, and since Benjamin B. Warfield was the theological leader of the Seminary (after the death of A. A. Hodge in 1886), the influence of Dr. Warfield seems representative of the conservatives as a whole. Warfield was deeply concerned about the lowering of the view of the Bible which he saw taking place among Presbyterians, and he wrote voluminously in support of the high view which he considered orthodox.¹³² William Hutchison considers the journals of Princeton Seminary (of which Warfield was frequently editor or contributor) one of "the most consistent or consolidated answers to liberalism" in the years under consideration.¹³³ Warfield increased in influence as one of American Protestantism's conservative champions, but within the Presbyterian Church his influence was declining.

Between 1900 and 1903 a second movement successfully brought about revision in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Warfield protested this, saying, "It is an inexpressible grief to me, to see [the Church] spending

its energies in a vain attempt to lower its testimony to suit the ever-changing sentiment of the world about it."¹³⁴ J. Schoneberg

Setzer comments upon the shifting influence of Warfield:

Although Warfield remained active at Princeton until his death in 1921, the course of events narrowed his influence to a decreasing academic and clerical minority in the Presbyterian Church. Simultaneously, however, his influence upon that increasingly self-conscious and militant cross section of American Protestant religious life, later to be designated "fundamentalism," greatly broadened.¹³⁵

From 1900 to 1918 conservatives like Warfield were apt to be called "ultra-conservatives" in favor of a "narrow" church. They increasingly lost influence in denominational affairs to those with inclusivist, "broader" conceptions of the Church who were more theologically lax on issues such as inerrancy. In 1913 J. Gresham Machen began to have a prominent influence in the Church with an article on "Christianity and Culture" in the Princeton Theological Review. In the twenties and thirties he was a leader in the conservative movement to preserve a "doctrinally true Presbyterian Church" which failed, and he ultimately withdrew from the denomination. Although these later events are outside the scope of the present essay, they further confirm the declining influence of the conservatives (and their high view of Scripture) after 1900 and more noticeably after 1910.¹³⁶

Conservative influence was felt outside the denomination. Conservative Presbyterians contributed notably after 1890 to the broad, anti-liberal movement in theology later called fundamentalism. In 1903 the Bible League of North America was founded. The League and its journal, The Bible Student and Teacher, were dedicated to a "semi-popular scholarly

defense of the faith."¹³⁷ Its leadership consisted predominantly of conservative Presbyterian seminary professors. It became a concrete example of the conservative-millenarian alliance when millenarian-dispensationalists became interested in the League and regular contributors to the journal. In 1913 the journal's name was changed to the Bible Champion, signifying its aggressive anti-modernist thrust. The League, its journal, and its coalition of support had as their primary objective "to maintain the historic faith of the Church in the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible as the Word of God."¹³⁸ The view of Scripture held by Presbyterian conservatives might have been losing sway after 1910 in their own denomination, but it was ever more firmly accepted by the growing fundamentalist movement.

Due to their greater local autonomy, there was a greater diversity of biblical views among the Baptists than among the Presbyterians. Yet differences divided Baptists largely into two camps. Liberal and conservative Baptists had largely isolated themselves from each other by 1918, as mentioned above. As the two groups became mutually isolated, this brought about unproductive tensions and a state of "schizophrenia" in the denomination. In the twentieth century, there seems to have been more dialogue between each of these Baptist parties and others outside the denomination than directly between the two groups. Because of this, we will first discuss the growing liberal movement and liberal Baptists' part in it. Then we will discuss the emerging fundamentalist movement and the role played by conservative Baptists.

A liberal view of the Bible was central to the growing modernist movement in America. Such a view of the Bible was centered negatively

around the rejection of verbal inspiration and inerrancy and positively around the acceptance of the higher criticism. Christian authority was to be sought elsewhere than in the external letter of Scripture alone. The higher criticism grew in influence during the 1890s. Historian Ira Brown called this decade "a landmark in the popularization of the Higher Criticism."¹³⁹ The two most effective popularizers of the liberal view were Washington Gladden and Lyman Abbott. Gladden, a Congregational clergyman, strove hard to present to the people the new view of the Bible unveiled by biblical criticism. Three of his most important works to this end were Who Wrote the Bible? A Book for the People (1891), Seven Puzzling Bible Books (1897), and How Much is Left of Old Doctrines? A Book for the People (1899). Lyman Abbott, the successor of Henry Ward Beecher as editor and pastor, argued for the developmental character of the Bible. Combining both evolutionary and higher-critical ideas, he presented a liberal view of the Bible to the hundreds of thousands of people whom he reached through his books and lectures.¹⁴⁰

Baptists as well had a strong hand in spreading a liberal conception of the Bible throughout American Protestantism. The prominent Baptist scholar William Rainey Harper entered into a debate in the pages of Hebraica from 1889 to 1892 with W. Henry Green (of Princeton) over pentateuchal criticism. Harper took the affirmative stance and provoked a hostile reaction from conservatives.¹⁴¹ Under his leadership the (Baptist) Divinity School at the University of Chicago became the leading center of theological liberalism in America after 1890. In addition to his editorship of Hebraica and his administration of the University of Chicago, Harper promoted a modern view of the Bible in other ways. The American Journal

of Theology was edited by the liberal faculty of the Divinity School on a trans-denominational basis. On a more popular level, the monthly Biblical World and hundreds of lessons for Sunday schools and Bible clubs communicated what Harper saw as a critical and reverent view of Scripture. The Divinity School proved a strong support of the liberal movement, including on its faculty such influential modernists as Shailer Mathews, George Burnham Foster, Gerald Birney Smith, and Shirley Jackson Case.¹⁴²

In addition to William R. Harper, whom Baptist historian Albert Newman called in 1906 "an elemental force of the first magnitude for the liberalizing [of] the Baptist denomination," other liberal forces were active in the denomination from 1890 to 1918.¹⁴³ Liberalism was particularly active in the seminaries. During these years a "liberal enthusiasm...swept over all of the Northern Baptist seminaries regardless of the degree of their earlier orthodox opposition."¹⁴⁴ Rochester Theological Seminary and Colgate Theological Seminary boasted impressive liberal scholars.

Ezekiel G. Robinson, for many years president at Rochester, was not insistent upon conformity to traditional views but rather tried to inspire his students to critical thinking on theological matters. Augustus H. Strong, also president at Rochester and a leading Baptist theologian, defended the inerrancy of the Scriptures early in his career, then abandoned that view, becoming open to the higher criticism. In his widely read Systematic Theology (1886) he omitted all language that might even suggest the inerrancy of Scripture. George W. Northrup, professor of church history at Rochester, was likewise hospitable to biblical criticism. The well-known Walter Rauschenbusch was another theologian at Rochester who accepted a liberal view of the Bible.¹⁴⁵

At Colgate Theological Seminary, William Newton Clarke had a deep impact on Baptist theology. Giving Christian experience a high place in theology, he explicitly denied the plenary, verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. His Outline of Christian Theology of 1898 is considered the first systematic liberal theology in America. Clarke helped spread and systematize liberal views through his writing and teaching.¹⁴⁶

In summary, a liberal view of Scripture was well-represented in all Baptist seminaries by 1918. Certain Baptist thinkers, like Clarke and Harper, were outstanding leaders of the liberal movement within American Protestantism.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, most Baptists retained a traditional biblical outlook. The denominational press was a vigorous supporter of such conservatism. Albert Newman noted in the early years of the twentieth century:

The strongest and most pervasive conservative influence among the Baptists of America at the present time is unquestionably the denominational press.... The great mass of Baptist people, even in the States that have come most under the influence of the new theology, are conservative, and they demand conservatism in the papers they support.¹⁴⁸

Though the majority of Baptists held a traditional conception of Scripture even at the beginning of the twentieth century, the leaders and thinkers of this denomination, as well as other Reformed denominations, were sharply divided over the biblical question. It was shown above that between 1890 and 1918 a forceful liberal movement developed in American Protestantism. An opposing movement, fundamentalism, also arose at this time. One must clearly distinguish between the Fundamentalist Controversy, which took place in the twenties and thirties, and the fundamentalist movement, which existed both before and after the controversy. Of course, fundamentalism

shared a common conservative biblical and theological outlook with the evangelical Protestantism dominant in America at 1865. But what set off fundamentalism as a movement was its "self-conscious, structured, long-lived, dynamic entity with recognized leadership, periodicals, and meetings."¹⁴⁹ Curtis Lee Laws, the Baptist editor of The Watchman Examiner who coined the term, defined fundamentalists as those prepared "to do battle royal for the fundamentals."¹⁵⁰ Militancy was associated with fundamentalism from the early days. The aggressive nature of the movement is captured in the definition of George W. Doller, church historian at Bob Jones University: "Historic Fundamentalism is the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-biblical affirmations and attitudes."¹⁵¹

Millenarianism gave impulse and form to the fundamentalist movement. It provided much of the self-conscious and aggressive spirit of fundamentalism. Sandeen argues persuasively that fundamentalism should be largely understood as one aspect of the history of millenarianism.¹⁵² As noted above, millenarians believed in a verbally-inspired and inerrant Bible during the 1860s, and when the movement became better organized with conferences and a cadre of informally-recognized leaders, this belief became more formalized.¹⁵³ Though the organized expressions of millenarianism (such as the Niagara conferences) were para-denominational, most of its converts and leadership came from the Baptist and Presbyterian churches.¹⁵⁴ This had interesting consequences for these two denominations. When the millenarians became militant against the liberal view of the Bible after 1880, they were strong conservative elements within the Baptist and Presbyterian churches as well as outside of them.

James H. Brookes, a Presbyterian, is an excellent example of this "dual influence." A graduate of Princeton Seminary, Brookes played a crucial role in General Assembly committees involved with the Briggs trial. He also wrote a number of books in defense of verbal inspiration and inerrancy that were reviewed in the Presbyterian and Reformed Review. Two of these were Chaff and Wheat (1892) and God Spoke All These Words (1894). However, the greatest influence of this Presbyterian pastor from St. Louis was felt outside his denomination. He was the controlling spirit behind the Niagara conferences from 1875 to his death in 1897. He contributed regularly to Waymarks in the Wilderness and published his own millenarian journal, Truth, for the last twenty-three years of his life. He was a proponent of biblical conservatism within and outside of his denomination.¹⁵⁵

In a similar manner, there were many Baptist millenarians who defended "rigorous views of Scripture" within the denomination as well as outside of it.¹⁵⁶ Albert Newman noted that the following men were noteworthy champions of a conservative conception of Scripture among Baptists: the Boston pastor Adoniram Judson Gordon (who edited the millenarian journal Watchword, was a frequent conference speaker, and founded a missionary training school); the evangelist Arthur Tappan Pierson (who was a close friend of A. J. Gordon, and a conference favorite); the pastor Amzi C. Dixon (who was the first editor of The Fundamentals); and finally William Bell Riley (who founded the Northwest Bible Training School and helped found the inter-denominational World Christian Fundamentals Association in 1919). Such millenarians as these spread a conservative vision of Scripture within and beyond their denomination. The works of other millenarians (often not

connected with any denomination) were popularizing the conservative position on the Bible as well. Among the most well-known were the Scofield Reference Bible, the new millenarian Bible schools (such as Moody Bible Institute and The Bible Institute of Los Angeles), and the Student Volunteer Movement for world missions.¹⁵⁷

A number of non-millenarian Baptist and Presbyterian thinkers championed conservative views within their denominations, and even spoke at millenarian conferences to further these views. In 1887, Howard Osgood, professor at (Baptist) Rochester Theological Seminary, along with Talbot W. Chambers, professor of New Testament literature at Princeton Seminary, spoke at a conference on inspiration held in Philadelphia. Neither of these scholars was a millenarian, although the conference was dominated by millenarian speakers. In 1893 at the Seaside Bible Conference, Osgood and Chambers again addressed a millenarian audience, and this time they were joined by William Henry Green, professor of Old Testament literature at Princeton.¹⁵⁸

What this amounted to was that non-millenarian conservatives and millenarians were making common cause in the defense and propagation of the traditional view of the Bible which they shared. Ernest Sandeen commented on this growing alliance:

There is a good deal of evidence...pointing to a developing cordiality and cooperation between millenarians and defenders of the Princeton type of conservatism within both the Baptist and the Presbyterian denominations. There is very little evidence of millenarian beliefs among the scholars who were drawn into this alliance and nothing like an amalgamation took place. But though not entirely compatible, a working agreement did seem to grow up between these very different kinds of Christians.¹⁵⁹

As mentioned above, the American Bible League, founded by Presbyterian

conservatives and supported by millenarians-dispensationalists, was an example of this "working agreement." The Fundamentals was another.¹⁶⁰ The Fundamentals was a series of twelve thin volumes published between 1910 and 1915 in defense of the Christian faith. The whole project was a tremendous collaboration. The idea started with Lyman Stewart, the sponsor of the venture, and A. C. Dixon, its original editor. Stewart was a wealthy layman concerned about the threat to orthodoxy from Protestant liberalism. A. C. Dixon was pastor of Moody Church in Chicago when he was hired as editor of the project. When Dixon left to take up the responsibilities of a pastorate in Britain, Louis Meyers, a Jewish Christian evangelist from Chicago, became editor. Reuben Torrey, the well-known evangelist and Dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, edited the final volumes in the series. All three editors were millenarians. This "Testimony to the Truth" was to be sent to "all English-speaking Protestant pastors, evangelists, missionaries, theological professors, theological students, Y. M. C. A. secretaries, Y. W. C. A. secretaries, Sunday School superintendents, religious lay workers, and editors of religious publications throughout the earth."¹⁶¹ In this respect, success was nearly achieved. Three million individual volumes were sent out.

A wide and impressive array of author's names graced the table of contents of these little books. Conservative churchmen from across the Atlantic contributed; the Anglican bishop J. C. Ryle, The Reverend Thomas Spurgeon, and Professor James Orr of the United Free Church College of Glasgow, Scotland, were but a few of the names. Seven contributors were Canadian. The bulk of the authors were Americans, both conservatives and millenarians. Printed and bound next to each other, Benjamin B. Warfield

and Oberlin archeologist George Frederick Wright proclaimed and defended the fundamentals of the faith alongside millenarians Torrey, Dixon, Arthur Pierson, and James Gray.

The contents of these pamphlets were varied, with discussions of Romanism, prophecy, missions, and personal testimonies. But the fundamentals of the faith were at the heart of the matter, and the doctrine of Scripture was the most central of these fundamentals. Many pages were spent defending the historicity and authorship of the Bible as traditionally construed. Five articles put forth the fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture; L. W. Marshall wrote on "Inspiration," James Gray on "The Inspiration of the Bible--Definition, Extent, and Proof." William Moorehead of Xenia Seminary drafted "The Moral Glory of Jesus Christ a Proof of Inspiration." "The Testimony of the Organic Unity of the Bible to its Inspiration" was written by Arthur T. Pierson. Lastly, George S. Bishop wrote "The Testimony of the Scriptures to Themselves." All five of these men defended the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Bible resulting in the inerrancy of the original autographs. The articles by Gray and Marshall referred often to the Princetonians. Together, these articles expressed the commitment of The Fundamentals to biblical inerrancy.

Although The Fundamentals received little immediate public recognition, and although they failed in their primary purpose--to halt the spread of modernism--they had the long-term effect of becoming a rallying point for the fundamentalist movement in the 1920s. Fundamentalists at that time looked on the publication of the pamphlets as the origin of their crusade and an example of a united front against modernism.¹⁶²

As the publication of The Fundamentals came to a close, the attention

of America became riveted on Europe in the throes of World War One. Most strife between theological liberals and conservatives temporarily ceased. But the years from 1890 to 1918 had seen the spread of two distinct views of Scripture and the emergence of two opposing theological movements. There were groups of self-conscious liberals and conservatives within the Reformed churches which were part of larger movements that transcended denominational lines. The stage was thus set for the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy of the inter-war years.

V. Conclusion

The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy was a fierce struggle from 1919 to 1935 between liberals and conservatives for control of the denominations. From 1919 to 1924 the fundamentalists seemed close to attaining their goal--to rid the churches of liberalism--but they failed. Liberals were increasingly influential in the seminaries and hierarchies. A division developed between militant and conciliatory fundamentalists, impeding united action. In addition, the "monkey trial" of 1925 stigmatized the movement as backward. By 1935 fundamentalism, along with its view of Scripture, had become a minority opinion in the Reformed denominations of the north.

The foundations for the liberal-conservative conflict, and ultimately the conservative defeat, were laid between 1865 and 1918. Although a traditional outlook on the Bible was dominant in Protestant thought immediately after the Civil War, a different outlook arose during these fifty-three years. Liberals refined and spread a new conception of Scripture, which was central to the blossoming modernist movement.

Conservatives rushed to the defense of the traditional view, refining and developing an apologetic for it. Conservative Christians from various traditions constructed an informal but active alliance against modernism which became the fundamentalist movement by 1918. The two movements were opposed to each other theologically; the Bible was a focal point of contention.

The theological climate of American Protestantism from 1865 to 1918 was similar in many respects to that of Europe during the Reformation. In both cases, Christians were passing through crises of authority. In the sixteenth century, the absolute authority of the Roman Church was challenged. Protestants rejected such authority but answered the question of authority with the principle of sola scriptura--the Bible alone as final rule. In late nineteenth-century America, the Protestant principle of the Bible as sole authority was challenged in a similar manner on various fronts. Often, people appealed to the authority of human knowledge (science) against Scripture.

This paper argues that fundamentalism was a theological movement whose view of the Bible was substantially the same as the conservative evangelical view which was dominant in American Protestantism at 1865. The fundamentalists might have narrowed and refined older perspectives, but they did not create a new view of the Bible. They were not innovators. This is an underlying thesis of this paper and an important point of contention between the author and Sandeen and Loetscher. 163

Finally, the debate over biblical inerrancy did not end in 1918 nor in 1935. In recent years the conflict has arisen again, this time among evangelical Christians. In 1976 Harold Lindell, Editor Emeritus of

Christianity Today, published the controversial Battle for the Bible, in which he rebuked his fellow evangelicals for having departed from inerrancy in their doctrine of Scripture.¹⁶⁴ Today editorials are exchanged on the subject; seminaries make pronouncements; even historians have entered into the fray--trying to prove whether or not the inerrantist position is the historic position of the Church.¹⁶⁵ Although it has not yet caused severe divisions within contemporary evangelicalism, the question "What is the nature and authority of the Bible?" has always been a potent one for Reformed Christians.

ENDNOTES

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31. Cited in Randall H. Balmer, "The Princetonians and Scripture: A Reconsideration," Westminster Theological Journal, 44 (Fall, 1982), 358.
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53. Ibid.

54. H. B. Smith, Introduction to Christian Theology, ed. by W. S. Kerr (New York, 1882), pp. 191, 194, 200, 204, cited in Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 26.

55. H. B. Smith, Inspiration, pp. 5-8, 19, and Introduction to Christian Theology, p. 204, cited in Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 27.

56. Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 27.

57. J. David Hoeveler, Jr., James McCosh and the Scottish Intellectual Traditions: From Glasgow to Princeton (Princeton, 1981), p. 227, as cited in Mark A. Noll, ed., The Princeton Theology 1812-1921 (Grand Rapids, 1983), p. 11.

58. See, for example, Hodge's article entitled "Inspiration," Biblical

Repertory and Princeton Review, 29 (October, 1857); C. Hodge, Systematic Theology (New York, 1895), pp. 150-188.

59. Hodge, Systematic Theology, p. 152.

60. Archibald Alexander, Canon of the Old and New Testament Ascertained or The Bible Complete Without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Traditions (New York, 1826), pp. 136, 141.

61. Hodge, Systematic Theology, p. 168.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

66. Sandeen, Roots, pp. 112, 113; Alexander Carson, The Inspiration of the Scripture (London, 1830); Robert Haldane, The Books of the Old and New Testaments Proved to be Canonical (London, 1830). These books were intended as a complementary set of arguments.

67. Sandeen, Roots, p. 113.

68. Louis Gaussen, Theopneustia: Or the Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures (New York, 1842), pp. 39, 70, 229.

69. Sandeen, Roots, p. 114.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

71. Cited in Balmer, "Princetonians," pp. 357-358.

72. Sandeen, Roots, p. 273.

73. Ibid., p. 111.

74. Ibid., p. 152.

Section III:

75. Loetscher, Broadening Church, pp. 9, 10.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid., p. 11.

78. Harvey, Handbook, p. 145; Hutchison, Modernist Impulse, pp. 5-6, 123-124.

79. Harvey, Handbook, pp. 144-145.

80. Ibid.; Hutchison, Modernist Impulse, pp. 2-4, 7, 9; Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 11.

81. Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 12. See also Daniel Day Williams, The Andover Liberals: A Study in American Theology (New York, 1941).

82. Maring. "Baptists, [Part II]," pp. 33-36.

83. Ibid., p. 57.

84. Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 27.

85. Charles Briggs, Biblical Study (New York, 1882), p. vii.

86. Charles Briggs, General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture (New York, 1899), pp. 286-287.
87. See A Committee of the Presbytery, ed., The Trial of Rev. David Swing Before the Presbytery of Chicago (Chicago, 1874) for a complete account of the trial.
88. Cited in Hutchison, Modernist Impulse, p. 41.
89. Ibid., pp. 48-53; Loetscher, Broadening Church, pp. 13, 14.
90. The Trial of the Rev. David Swing, p. 283.
91. Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 15, 16.
92. Ibid., p. 17.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., p. 28.
95. Briggs, General Introduction, p. 287.
96. Briggs, Biblical Study, p. vii.
97. Ibid., p. ix.
98. Ibid., pp ix, 144, 156. Whether he invented the doctrine is debatable, but Turretin certainly taught verbal inspiration. See Topic II, "The Sacred Scriptures," of his Theological Institutes (1688).
99. Ibid., pp. 160-161.

100. Ibid., pp. 162, 240.
101. Ibid., p. 242.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid., p. 243.
104. Briggs, General Introduction, p. 522. For example, Harry Emerson Fodsick denied the virgin birth of Jesus. See Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 171.
105. Archibald A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, "Inspiration," Presbyterian Review, 1 (April, 1881), 225-260.
106. Ibid., p. 227.
107. Ibid., p. 231.
108. Ibid., p. 235.
109. Ibid., p. 237.
110. Ibid., p. 241.
111. Ibid., p. 242.
112. Loetscher, Broadening Church, pp. 38, 39.
113. Ibid., pp. 39-48.
114. Ibid., p. 49.
115. Charles Briggs, The Authority of Holy Scriptures: An Inaugural

Address (New York, 1891), p. 28.

116. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

117. Ibid.

118. Cited in Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 56.

119. Cited in *ibid.*

120. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 61.

121. Ibid.

122. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 63.

123. Ibid., pp. 64, 65.

124. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 67. Note that the phraseology of the charge was markedly Princetonian.

Section IV:

125. Hutchison, Modernist Impulse, p. 113.

126. J. Schoneberg Setzer, "A Critique of the Fundamentalist Doctrine of the Inerrancy of the Biblical Autographs in Historical, Philosophical, Exegetical, and Hermeneutical Perspective," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1964, p. 2.

127. This is a central thesis of Ernest R. Sandeen in The Roots of Fundamentalism. George M. Marsden in Fundamentalism and American Culture modified Sandeen's thesis. He argued that fundamentalism was the product

of the conservative Protestant evangelicalism that dominated the nation at 1865 but which was under severe pressure after the Civil War. For Marsden, the roots of fundamentalism were broader than just the Princetonians and the millenarians. The American revivalistic heritage, represented at the time by Dwight L. Moody, was a root of fundamentalism, as was the holiness tradition. He thought that Sandeen overemphasized the Princetonian's influence in shaping the fundamentalist view of Scripture, which he considered as having been more widespread at an earlier date than does Sandeen. Finally, Marsden accepted the conservative-millenarian alliance concept, but saw it as continuing intact into the 1920s and 30s, while Sandeen saw The Fundamentals (1915) as "the last flowering of a millenarian-conservative alliance." The present thesis takes Marsden's position on all of the above points. See Marsden, Fundamentalism, pp. 6-8, 242, 246, 262.

128. Loetscher, The Broadening Church, pp. 71-74.

129. Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 117. The phrase "the five points of fundamentalism" has a history of its own. Ernest Sandeen in The Roots of Fundamentalism, pp. xiv-xv, shows how Stewart Cole, the early historian of fundamentalism, mistakenly identified the famous "five points" with the 1878 Niagara Bible Conference creed which actually had fourteen points. See The History of Fundamentalism (New York, 1931), p. 34.

130. Ibid., p. 117; Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 98.

131. Loetscher, Broadening Church, pp. 97-100.

132. See especially B. B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of

the Bible (Philadelphia, 1948) which is a reprinting of his most important writings on Scripture.

133. Hutchison, Modernist Impulse, p. 196.

134. Cited in Loetscher, Broadening Church, p. 83.

135. Setzer, "Critique," p. 20.

136. Loetscher, Broadening Church, pp. 90-108. See also Dallas M. Roark, "J. Gresham Machen: The Doctrinally True Presbyterian Church," Journal of Presbyterian History, 43 (June, 1965), 124-138, (September, 1965), 174-181.

137. Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 118.

138. Editorial, "The Bible League of North America," The Bible Champion, 16 (August, 1913), 35-36, cited in Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 118.

139. Cited in Hutchison, Modernist Impulse, p. 116.

140. Ibid., pp. 116-117.

141. Briggs, General Introduction, p. 287.

142. Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 105; Albert H. Newman, "Recent Changes in the Theology of Baptists," The American Journal of Theology, 10 (October, 1906), 600-601.

143. Newman, "Changes," p. 601.

144. Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 105.

145. Ibid., pp. 105, 107; Newman, "Changes," p. 596.
146. Newman, "Changes," p. 600; Weber, "Two-Edged Sword," p. 105.
147. Hutchison, Modernist Impulse, p. 114; Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 105.
148. Newman, "Changes," pp. 607-608.
149. Sandeen, Roots, p. xiii.
150. Cited in Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 159.
151. George W. Doller, A History of Fundamentalism in America (Greenville, 1973), p. xv.
152. Sandeen, Roots, p. xix.
153. James Brookes' Niagara creed was an example of this.
154. Sandeen, Roots, pp. 164, 166, 167.
155. Ibid., pp. 134, 168, 172, 304.
156. Newman, "Changes," p. 603.
157. Ibid.; Sandeen, Roots, pp. 142-144, 174, 175, 182, 183, 188, 243.
158. Sandeen, Roots, pp. 165, 169, 170.
159. Ibid., p. 172.
160. See Sandeen, Roots, pp. 188-207, for an excellent discussion of The Fundamentals.

161. Amzi C. Dixon, Louis Meyer, and Reuben A. Torrey, eds., The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth, 12 vols., (Chicago and Los Angeles, 1910-15) 7:128.

162. Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 119.

Section V:

163. Sandeen asserts openly that the Princetonians Hodges and Warfield were theological innovators, while Loetscher implies it. See Sandeen, Roots, pp. 114-130, and Loetscher, Broadening Church, pp. 67-68.

164. Harold Lindell, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids, 1976).

165. John Woodbridge and Jack Rodgers are notable in this regard.

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