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The Indispensability of the Holy Scriptures

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THE INDISPENSABILITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

by

Clarence E. Knoepfle

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Importance of the Study

Man has always and everywhere sought to know about God. Though his mind has been corrupted and blurred by sin, he has, never-the-less recognized that his eternal destiny is in the hands of his Creator. This recognition has at the same time brought with it a heart-craving for some assurance that God is pleased with his life and is determined to provide for his eternal well-being. Evangelical Christendom has always maintained that such an assurance may be realized by a prayerful study of the Bible. Furthermore, Protestantism has traditionally claimed the Bible as the unique depository of Revealed Truth concerning God's revelation of Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Luther, in his defense before the Diet of Worms in 1521, made a heroic appeal to the Scriptures which has always characterized the most virile Protestantism.

. . . Your Imperial Majesty and Your Lordships demand a simple answer. Here it is, plain and unvarnished. Unless I am convicted of error by the testimony of Scripture or (since I put no trust in the unsupported authority of Pope or of councils, since it is plain that they have often erred and often contradicted themselves) by manifest reasoning I stand convicted by the Scriptures to which I have appealed, and my conscience is taken captive by God's word, I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us.

On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen. 1

1. Henry Bettenson, editor, Documents of the Christian Church (New York, Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 285.

It was an implicit faith in the authority of the Scriptures such as this that was responsible for the revolt against the established authority of the Roman Church.

A century later the Westminster Confession was formulated. This important document assigned the same unique position of authority to the Scriptures. "The authority of the Holy Scriptures . . . dependeth not on the testimony of any man or Church; but wholly upon God² (who is truth itself) the author thereof. . . ."

Arminianism at its inception did not make man autonomous, as some would suggest, but grounded its revolt against Calvinism in the Scriptures. Thus we find expressions such as "according to the word of the Gospel" and "according to the word of God" frequently occurring throughout the Five Articles which Jacobus Arminius penned in 1603.³

B. Statement of the Problem and Thesis

The Problem. Any investigation will bear out the fact of traditional Protestantism's implicit confidence in the authority of Holy Scriptures. Protestantism has from the beginning been vigorous and productive almost in exact proportion to the degree that it has regarded the Bible with due respect. At the same time, whenever the Bible has lost its paramount position in the Protestant faith, the vitality of the Reformers' faith has deteriorated into an empty and cold formalism which has nothing to offer hungry souls.

2. Ibid., p. 347.

3. Ibid., pp. 374, 375.

It is quite evident that a great deal of thinking today, passing under the name of Protestantism, is hostile to the idea of an authoritative, infallible Bible. In fact, from time to time various attempts have been made to show that the Reformers did not regard the Scriptures as authoritative, at least not to the extent that Evangelicals today respect them as authoritative. At the same time there have been men such as Tillich and Bultman who insist that they recognize the authority of the Scriptures, but the real message of the Scriptures, they contend, can only be grasped after the Bible has been "demythologized".⁴ The practice of modern theology to clothe its system of thought with orthodox terminology, makes it important to define terms discriminately.

Whatever may be said, it is certainly not to be disputed that for a large share of contemporary Protestantism the Bible does not hold the same unique position it did a century ago. The Holy Scriptures are repeatedly subordinated to human theory. Much of the preaching, which comes from our modern pulpit, is anchored in no higher authority than human reason or experience.⁵ Never before has there been such a need for Protestantism once again to ground its life and vision in the Inspired Record.

The problem which confronted us in this study was this: Is an infallible and authoritative Bible to be regarded as an indispensable element in the Christian faith? Just how important are the Scriptures

4. D. D. Williams, What Present Day Theologians are Thinking (New York, Harper and Bros., 1952), p. 51.

5. Theodore Wedel, "The Lost Authority of the Pulpit", Theology Today, vol. IX, pp. 166-169, July, 1952.

to man's knowledge of God and His designs for men? The first part of this study was therefore primarily a problem of epistemology. It dealt with the role of the Scriptures in relation to man's necessary religious knowledge. The second part of this study was primarily one of authority, though it was still vitally related to the first part of this study.

The Thesis. The great volume of thought, which today in the name of scholarship is constantly being thrown against the Evangelical position, demands an answer. No conscientious minister of the gospel can lightly dismiss this onslaught against what is the very life of Protestantism--a Bible-centered faith. It is maintained that the Scriptures are indeed the authoritative Word of God and that there is no evidence whatsoever, which justifies any concessions to a theology which does not honor the authoritative Scriptures. It is further held that the Bible is in fact an indispensable Source Book for the Christian faith and an authority which must be respected as God Himself ought to be. Therefore, by careful and prayerful investigation of the various problems which have been raised by liberal theologians, the writer hoped to strengthen his own conviction that the Bible is the Word of God and that it is indispensable to a Christian faith and philosophy.

C. Objectives

The purpose of this study was to show the indispensable character of the Scriptures in man's knowledge of God and in his relationship to Him. As has been previously suggested, in nearly all of the present day theological systems which call themselves Christian, there is some

manner and degree of authority assigned to the Holy Scriptures. Most of them, however, assign to them an authority conditioned by reason or experience. Many professors of the Christian faith would dispense altogether with the Bible as being absolutely necessary and holding a unique position in the Christian faith. In the same class are those who would consider this an unfair criticism, but at the same time, the full implications of their own theology definitely dismiss the necessity of an authoritative Scriptures.

From a negative point of view, it was the writer's purpose to show how many of these theological systems fail because they do not regard the Bible as a necessary revelation from God. If the Scriptures are to be regarded as inspired of God, the fact is inescapable that God has definitely assigned to them an indispensable role which men are not permitted to dismiss lightly from their thinking, and if they do, they transgress seriously against the method by which God has chosen to reveal Himself.

D. Limitations

In a study such as this there are certain limitations which must be kept in mind. The matter of the Scriptures' inspiration is certainly pertinent to the treatment but it has not been dealt with extensively, except as it had direct and pertinent bearing on the particular point under discussion. Furthermore, this has not been an attempt to explain the internal and external evidences which affirm and commend the Bible as the Word of God. That itself would require a lengthy treatment. Pertinent as these matters may be, this study was confined to a dis-

cussion of the Bible in its indispensable role. It is recognized that each of these chapters touch on respective fields of thought each of which could be expanded to voluminous proportions. For that reason this has been no attempt whatsoever to give a complete treatment of each subject which was introduced. For example when the subject of the reason's relationship to the Scriptures was considered, only those matters which have a more immediate bearing upon the general purpose of this study were treated. Furthermore, only those views which are most representative were dealt with in the course of this study.

E. Method of Procedure and Definition of Terms

Method of Procedure. In each chapter the method of procedure was to present the most representative views relative to the subject under consideration in that particular chapter. These views have been critically evaluated as to their attitude to the Scriptures. Contemporary trends of thought were given special attention. Research included a study of works which were especially pertinent to the subject and which find popular acceptance either in the conservative, or in the liberal camp.

Definition of Terms. The word "Scriptures" was used throughout this study and needs to be carefully defined. By it was meant "... those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, which the Church has at all times indubiously received as such". Furthermore, it meant

6. The Discipline of the Evangelical United Brethren Church,
1947 edition, p. 45.

the canonical books of the Bible in toto.

The word "evangelical" was used in defining that position which holds the Bible to be authoritative and infallible. It designates that position which stands a direct opposite to that theology which questions the supernatural origin of the Bible. In certain instances this position was denoted as "traditional Protestantism" by which is to be understood that main stream of Bible-honoring Protestantism which issued out of the Reformation.

F. Organisation

As has been mentioned previously, this study resolved itself into two problems, that of man's religious knowledge, and that pertaining to man's authority in matters of the Christian faith. In the case of the first problem, the Bible was examined primarily as an indispensable Source Book of vital religious knowledge. In the second problem, the Bible was examined primarily as an indispensable authority in religious matters.

In the second chapter it was explained why reason alone is insufficient to lead man to a personal, saving relationship with his Creator, and why the Scriptures are an indispensable authority to which reason must bow in order for it to fulfill its highest purpose--that of attaining unto saving truth. The third chapter dealt with the shortcomings of religious thinking which ultimately is grounded in experience rather than in revelation. Here too reasons were given why it is wrong for any theology to insist that Christianity is finally grounded in Christian experience. The fourth chapter defined the relationship which the

Scriptures have to the church. The error of certain Protestant trends in ecclesiology were pointed out as well as that of Roman Catholicism. The fifth chapter was an attempt to point out some of the false conclusions, especially of present-day thought, which come out of a theology that seeks to dispense with the Bible as the authoritative and reliable word of God. This chapter was an effort to show the natural consequences of a theology which is shaded by a falsely proportioned epistemology such as was discussed in the preceding chapters. This was confined to the field of Christology which is so vital to the Christian faith. The sixth chapter was an evaluation of the Bible in its role as an indispensable authority and norm of truth. This chapter presented reasons why the Scriptures must be regarded as inspired and infallible.

Finally, it may be mentioned, each phase of this study represented a problem which has at some time or other posed itself to the mind of the writer. The question of the Bible's relationship to reason has been very real. Just what authority, if any, do the Scriptures have over reason? Then there was a time when a lack of emphasis upon the place of the Scriptures in the Christian faith caused a shift of conviction. When the Scriptures were subjected to a biased higher criticism and it seemed that after all, maybe the Bible was not to be trusted in every detail, the writer sought to find ultimate refuge in an appeal to his own personal Christian experience. It did not occur to him that such a concession was undermining the very experience which he assumed to be impregnable. The problem of the church and its relationship to the Bible has come to the fore mainly because of the present-day emphasis

on ecumenicity. The matter of authority is one which has bearing on all of the problems related to the Scriptures which were dealt with in this work.

CHAPTER II

THE SCRIPTURES--INDISPENSABLE TO THE PROPER FUNCTION OF REASON

The most tragic chapter in the history of the human race was written when man used his reason to revolt against his Maker rather than to glorify Him. Ever since that time man has been more inclined to use his God-given faculty of perception to rebel against the truth rather than to embrace it. No matter how plain the evidences have been with which God has accompanied His revelation, men have been prone to reject it and many times apparently have regarded any suggestion of revelation as an insult to their reasoning capacity.

It would seem that in the field of Christian Theology there should be no such rebellion to revelation but quite the contrary is found. Supernatural revelation as found in the Bible is often regarded with utmost suspicion and is subjected to biased criticism.

In this chapter some of the theological systems which have more or less elevated reason to a position above that of revelation have been evaluated. First it has been shown just how far along the path of Truth general revelation apart from the Scriptures can lead man. Then the shortcomings of a finite reason were illustrated. Next, the corruption of the reason by sin was discussed and finally the proper role of reason in its relationship to revelation was defined.

A. General Revelation--Insufficient Evidence

The question which this chapter posed is: "Can reason, without the

aid of the Revelation of the Scriptures, make moral deductions which are valid and sufficient for man in his total experience of relationships with God and with other men?" It is difficult to deny that there is a revelation apart from the Scriptures. Whenever and wherever God creates, He in a measure also reveals something of Himself. This revelation of God through His creation has been called natural revelation. It is self-evident that Reason has more than an a priori function. It is also the faculty whereby man reflects upon the world which lies about him. By admitting natural revelation it is admitted that there is a God. But the question is: Has God left sufficient evidence of Himself in His creation from which reason may come to an adequate concept of His nature and of man's relationship to Him?

First of all, the term "General Revelation" as it will be used in this study needs to be defined. Revelation has usually been classified into two main divisions. Different theologians have attached different terms to these divisions. Some have called them General and Special Revelation. Others have called them Natural and Supernatural Revelation. Still others have termed them External and Internal Revelation. By General Revelation is meant "that disclosure of Himself which God makes to all men--in nature, in the constitution of the mind, and in the progress of human history".¹ In this study General Revelation has been thought of as that revelation which God makes of Himself to man, apart from that which comes to us in the Holy Scriptures. In other

1. H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Mo., Beacon Hill Press, 1949), I, 126.

words, remembering the purpose of this paper, this investigation has been an attempt to show how General Revelation in itself is not sufficient for man's proper knowledge of God, His Will, and His Purpose, and that this state of insufficiency can only be brought to completion through the great agency of Special Revelation such as is found in the Scriptures.

But how much reliable information does General Revelation furnish, if any? Francis Patton, president of Princeton Theological Seminary during the first part of this century, wrote: "It is to be regretted that contemporary thought has so generally abandoned the old theistic proofs, and that the impression has gone abroad that Kant has destroyed natural theology."² This impression led to the notion that Kant, therefore, strengthened the position of the Bible as an indispensable source of revealed knowledge. But this overlooked the fact that "the Bible presupposes belief in God and that the Bible supports natural theology."³ The testimony from the Scriptures themselves supports the fact that a recognition of nature as a valid source of truth does not diminish the need for a Special Revelation. (Ps. 19:1; Isa. 40:26; Acts 14:17; 17:24-29; Rom. 1:19,20)

Furthermore, the Scriptures assert a common moral responsibility under the light of nature. (Rom. 1:19,20) There is indisputable evidence that men are held morally responsible for the light which comes from this source. But certainly this source is woefully inadequate.

2. Francis Patton, Fundamental Christianity (New York, Macmillan Co., 1926), p. 90.

3. Ibid., p. 92.

It would be a deliberate disregard of Scriptural Testimony to deny that General Revelation yields any knowledge of God. At the same time, any attempt to regard General Revelation as a wholly adequate source for man's knowledge of God would be outright defiance of what both the Scriptures and experience show to be otherwise. The issue then very plainly is this: either God has actually revealed through nature all that man needs to know of God or else man has exalted reason to a place it cannot rightfully occupy. For necessarily, revelation which comes through nature, can only be apprehended by the faculty of reason. Just how much truth concerning God and His purpose is reason capable of deducing by a mere observation of facts which are evident in general revelation?

The Scriptural interpretation of natural theology needs to be considered. The Psalmist declared that "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handiwork". (Ps. 19:1, A.V.) Dr. Adam Clarke commented:

Literally, "The heavens number out the glory of the strong God". A first view of the starry heavens strikes every beholder with astonishment at the power by which they were made and by which they are supported. To find out the wisdom and skill displayed in their contrivance requires a measure of science: but when the vast magnitude of the celestial bodies is considered we feel increasing astonishment at these works of the strong God.⁴

St. Paul, in speaking to the men of Lystra (Acts 14:15-17), and to the men at Athens (Acts 17:24-29), very definitely appealed to general rev-

4. Adam Clarke's Commentary (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury, n.d.),
 III, 280.

elation and sought thus to approach his audience with the Gospel. His argument is that even these evidences ought to lead men to a much more intelligent conception of God. In Paul's letter to the Romans he made a strong appeal to extra-scriptural evidence of God and even declared that man is held morally responsible for honoring this elementary truth. (Rom. 1:20) Thus it is evident that from the manifestations of God in His works man is rationally capable of discerning "his everlasting power and divinity". It may be assumed from Paul's line of reasoning in this passage, that if men would honor even this elementary truth concerning God, they would eventually be led to higher truth respecting the character of God. Whether or not such a one would finally be led to saving Truth is a matter of conjecture. However, the tenure of Scripture, particularly in the first chapter of Romans, seems to support the idea that God will lead a man who truly walks in all the light he has to a saving relationship through His Son. But one need not dwell at length debating the pros and cons of this matter. The important fact to remember is the testimony of Paul which clearly indicated that men universally reject this elementary revelation which God gives to them. There is no Scriptural support which allows any exception to this observation of the Apostle. Sin has so warped and alienated the reason of man that a much stronger and more direct appeal is required to bring man to a proper relationship with His Creator.

B. The Reason Finite

Various arguments have been set forth from time to time in which

the attempt was made to prove the existence of God apart from the Scriptures. A. H. Strong examined these various arguments in his ⁵ Systematic Theology and shows their respective weaknesses. The Cosmological argument or the argument from Efficient Cause was shown to be defective in that through it, it is impossible to show that the universe had a beginning. He pointed out other glaring shortcomings of this argument. The Teleological argument cannot prove the personality of God, neither can it show His eternity. He went on then to show the weaknesses of the Anthropological or Moral argument which he insisted does not identify the Creator of the material universe nor does it reveal the infinitude and mercy of God.

But even if these various arguments would give a fairly clear concept of God, the great question still haunts the soul, "What must I do to be saved?" How can man know that God loves us and has provided for our well-being? Edward Carnell pointed out that even those who claim that man can with his pure reason establish the fact that God is good find little ground to stand on, for how may one know what constitutes "good" in the sight of God? He went on to tell of the philosopher's chicken. ⁶ The chicken presumed from the corn it was receiving from the farmer that the farmer was a good man. But the day came when the farmer chopped off the chicken's head in spite of all the rational protests which the chicken made. Just because God sends rain to the

5. Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia, The Judson Press, 1907), p. 73 ff.

6. E. J. Carnell, An Introduction to Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), p. 177.

earth does not mean that He will save the souls of men. Without the information which is given in the Scriptures man is no better off in his concept of God than the chicken in the barnyard.

It may further be inquired: "What valid deductions can the reason make from the laws which are in operation in this world?" There are those who would agree that the reason cannot of itself form a satisfactory concept of God but who would insist that one may rationally deduce by observation of the laws in operation in this universe a moral standard adequate for man's well-being.

The Theological Institutes of Richard Watson include a very excellent treatment dealing with the inadequacy of the unaided reason to deduce from general revelation a reliable moral standard which would assure man of present and eternal happiness. In regard to temperance it is claimed that "nothing appears in the constitution of nature to give us direction in this". The element of justice finds only vague description in natural revelation. Neither is benevolence properly defined. Summing it all up they form a rule too vague in itself, and too liable to different interpretations to place the conduct of men under adequate regulation". Furthermore:

If then we are offenders against the majesty of so dread a Being, as the actual administration of the world shows its governor to be, it is in the highest degree necessary, if there be in him a disposition to forgive our offenses, that we should be made acquainted

7. Richard Watson, Theological Institutes (London, Wesleyan Conference Office, 1870), I, 9 ff.

8. Ibid., p. 9.

9. Ibid., p. 15.

with it, and with the means and conditions upon which his placability can become available to us.¹⁰

C. The Reason Corrupt

The great fact which far too many modern theologians ignore is that the reason of man is twisted and warped by sin. Consequently, reason is assigned a lofty perch in the realm of epistemology, which it is not qualified to occupy. When sinful man refuses to yield to an authoritative revelation, it is only natural that he should exalt the office of reason and refuse to recognize its corruption and liability to serious error. The obvious fact which the Scriptures bring out is that had man not yielded to sin in the first place, revelation, as it is known in the Scriptures, would not have been necessary. In his state of Edenic bliss prior to the fall, Adam had a reason which could be trusted in matters of Truth relating to his knowledge of God and his proper conduct before God.

Because of the Fall, man is naturally inclined to resist even the elementary shafts of light which God in His mercy directs to the apprehending faculty of man. The Apostle Paul very vividly portrayed this tragic rejection in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans. Scriptural testimony on the sinful bent of man's unsanctified reason is unmistakably clear.

There is, however, overwhelming evidence apart from the Scriptures, as well, which illustrates the weakness and corruption of human reason. Even one who would reject the testimony of the Scriptures must be con-

10. Ibid., p. 15.

vinced of this. Here again, Dr. Watson's treatment is superb. "It is equally a matter of undoubted fact, that, in all questions of morals which restrain the vices, passions, and immediate interests of men, conviction is generally resisted, and the rule is brought down to the practice rather than the practice raised to the rule."¹¹

The Roman philosopher Cicero recognized that even the wisest of men are so much corrupted in their thinking that they could not even live up to the moral standards which they themselves propounded.

Do you think that these things had any influence upon the men (a very few excepted) who thought, and wrote, and disputed about them? Who is there of all the philosophers whose mind, life, and manners were conformable to right reason? Who ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not a mere show of his wit and parts? Who observed his own instruction, and lived in obedience to his own precepts? On the contrary, many of them are slaves to filthy lusts, many to pride, many to covetousness, . . .¹²

In view of this woeful shortcoming of corrupt reason, Dr. Watson skillfully presented the case for Special Revelation:

Such a system of moral direction and control, then, could it be found, would bear no comparison to that which is provided by direct and external revelation, of which the doctrine, though delivered by different men, in different ages, is consensual throughout; which is rendered authoritative by divine attestation; which consists in clear and legislative enunciation, and not in human speculation and laborious inference; of which the teachers were so holy as their doctrine was sublime; and which, in all ages, has exerted a powerful moral influence upon the conduct of men.¹³

11. Ibid., p. 18.

12. Ibid., p. 20.

13. Ibid., p. 21.

The faulty conceptions of God and the world which the philosophical mind of the ancient Greeks propounded certainly show that even the most brilliant mind is inadequate when it does not have access to Revealed Truth. Plato cautioned his disciples "not to expect anything beyond a likely conjecture concerning these things".¹⁴ How keenly Cicero recognized the limitations of human reason when he said:

If we had come into the world in such circumstances as that we could clearly and distinctly have discerned nature herself, and have been able in the course of our lives to follow her true and uncorrupted directions, this alone might have been sufficient, and there would have been little need of teaching and instruction; but now nature has given us only some small sparks of right reason, which we so quickly extinguish with corrupt opinions and evil practices, that the true light of nature nowhere appears . . .¹⁵

Their concepts of future rewards and punishments were very erroneous. Pantheism was almost universal among these ancient philosophers.

The state of morals among the heathen is added evidence of unaided reason's inadequacy to arrive at a satisfactory moral standard. Dr. Watson pointed out the moral conditions which were prevalent in civilizations even as advanced as that of the Roman Empire where gladiatorial contests were staged to satisfy the blood-thirsty whims of the Roman populace. The practice of killing deformed infants was common among a great number of early civilizations. Truth was known to be the proper thing but the much respected Plato said: "He may lie who knows

14. Ibid., p. 62.

15. Ibid., p. 62.

how to do it in a fit season". A study of ancient civilizations shows that

. . . All the leading doctrines on which religion rests had either been corrupted by a grovelling and immoral superstition, among heathen nations, or the philosophic speculations of their wisest men had introduced principles destructive of man's accountability, and present and future hope . . . so that in every heathen state of ancient times, the description of the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans is supported by the evidence of their own historians and poets.¹⁷

When all of this evidence bearing out the shortcomings of the human reason has been examined, how comforting it is to know that the reason need not be subjected to its own vain speculations. Plato advised: "Take the best and most irrefragible of human theories and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life . . . not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of God which will more surely and safely carry him." Such is to be found in the Holy Scriptures which have never disappointed seeking men when they have duly respected their authority for providing a safe and sure way to a satisfying peace and joy of heart and soul.

D. Proper Office of Reason

It has been shown why and how pure reason is inadequate to attain a proper knowledge of God and of His will and purpose. Investigation has revealed that so far as reason alone is concerned, the Scriptures are to be regarded as indispensable to a man who earnestly desires to

16. Ibid., p. 83.

17. Ibid., p. 86.

know God in a soul-satisfying way. The Scriptures are an indispensable complement of truth to that which general revelation has already yielded to the apprehension of man. For a man who is earnestly seeking to know his Creator, reason by its mere a priori and a posteriori reflection falls far short of answering the most urgent question which stands out in bold relief against the dark, guilty conscience of his soul.

. . . But the ray that comes to unaided reason from nature upon this point is so dim, and in some aspects so utterly absent, that reason finds herself bewildered . . . Impelled by a desire to know, and a moral consciousness of need, she interrogates external nature, she interrogates her own nature, she interrogates history and experience, but finds the problem too deep and obscure for her. There is a dim light on some parts of the problem--she "sees men as trees walking," but it is wholly inadequate to her wants.¹⁸

Unless God in His infinite mercy has revealed Himself in a more definite and unmistakeable way man must go to the grave in despair of ever having truly known his Maker.

However, such a revelation was made in God's only begotten Son. The message concerning this divine transaction, evangelicals believe, was inspired and is in the Holy Scriptures which are God's word. The next question dealt with is: "How are we to know that the Bible is the authentic record of God?" It is precisely at this point that reason assumes its most legitimate function. Thus far this study has dealt with the shortcomings and misuse of reason, but there are also very legitimate functions which reason is to fulfill in its relationship to the inspired literature of Special Revelation.

18. Randolph Foster, Prolegomena (New York, Hunt and Eaton, 1889), p. 250.

Dr. Hodge defined the proper function of reason very clearly:

"Reason is necessarily presupposed in every revelation. Only a rational mind can receive. The first and indispensable office of reason therefore, in matters of faith, is the cognition, or intelligent apprehension of the truths proposed for our reception."¹⁹

Were there no rational capacity to receive truth, revelation would be impossible. In the second place, it is recognized that "reason must judge of the credibility of Revelation".²⁰ That which is impossible cannot be believed. The contradictory cannot be believed. At this point one must avoid confusing that which man cannot believe because of its contradictory character and that which man will not believe simply because the truth presented is beyond his comprehension. It is naive for a man to insist that he cannot believe that which he does not fully understand. Such a one is quite ready to accept what scientists say about electronics or bacteriology but balks at the mysteries of salvation and the Trinity which are revealed in the Scriptures. This deals in the realm of authority which has been discussed in a later chapter.

Leibnitz commented that "Revelation is the viceroy who first presents his credentials to the provincial assembly (the reason) and then himself presides".²¹ One must, however, ever be cautious lest he give

19. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), I, 49.

20. Ibid., p. 50.

21. A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia, The Judson Press, 1907), p. 29.

reason an authority which is actually above that of Revelation. Thomas

Chalmers very wisely advises:

. . . But one of the most useful exercises of reason is to ascertain its limits, and to keep within them. After we have established Christianity to be an authentic message from God upon those historical and experimental grounds on which the reason and experience of man entitle him to form his conclusions, nothing remains for us but an unconditional surrender of the mind to the subject of the message. We have a right to sit in judgment over the credentials of heaven's ambassador, but we have no right to sit in judgment over the information he gives us. ²²

It is at this point that Bishop Foster's thought can be brought into question. It seems that while he positively supported the authority of revelation, he was too persistent in making that authority valid only as reason allows. There is always that "but" in his statements on Scriptural authority. ". . . but all this depends on the answer which reason makes to the proof furnished, so that reason is ultimate umpire in the whole case." ²³ "But it (revelation) acquires, and must acquire its authority wholly upon the antecedent verdict of reason." ²⁴ There is a definite lack of qualifying the capacity of reason. He has taken Dr. Hodge to task for claiming conscience and reason to be in conflict. ²⁵ Obviously, Hodge was using reason in the sense of being corrupt. Properly interpreted he presented a legitimate argument. In all of his reasoning it seems that Bishop Foster failed to make adequate reservations for a reason that is subject to error, even if

22. Thomas Chalmers, Christian Revelation (New York, Robert Carter, 1845), II, 444.

23. Randolph Foster, op. cit., p. 247.

24. Loc. cit.

25. Ibid., p. 253.

that be a sanctified reason.

Once the reason is convinced of the Bible's authority there still remains the important task of interpretation. Here, too, one must be cautious lest reason is given too much free rein. Reason, in order to function properly in this realm, must always be ready to bow in recognition of the truth. Here again Bishop Foster gave reason an exaggerated assignment. "The book must be interpreted in harmony with other sources of knowledge, or it cannot stand in reason and if not in reason, not in intelligent faith." He commented further: "As the authority of the book must be accredited to the faculties, so must its contents".²⁶ Furthermore, "In every case the mind is factor of its own conclusions--²⁷ final and supreme arbiter". Such statements although they may have been uttered within the framework of what is otherwise a sound theological system, never-the-less by their frequent occurrence inevitably tend to diminish the authority of the Scriptures. When he went so far as to say that "if there seems to be contradiction, the interpretation of the passage itself would have to be changed or the passage itself would inevitably have to be surrendered as inspired,"²⁸ (italics my own)--he gave reason a sovereignty above that of the Scriptures.²⁹

It must never be forgotten that even sanctified reason is subject to faulty judgment and that the scope of reason is definitely limited. The shortcomings of reason have already been pointed out. "We cannot

26. Ibid., p. 258.

27. Loc. cit.

28. Loc. cit.

29. Loc. cit.

therefore regard our judgments as certainly true unless they are in perfect agreement with the revealed Word of God.³⁰ Also: "Should reason offer conclusions which are disagreeable to revelation it must be inferred that reason is wrong since it has no infallible guide apart from revelation."³¹ Statements such as this have a truer evangelical ring to them.

But what is the proper function of reason in interpreting the contents of Scripture? Dr. Watson suggested that the reason approaches the Scriptures with the same purpose it would approach any other document.³² Reason needs to determine the purpose and circumstances of the author,--which is allegorical and which is not, the proper context, etc.

The fundamentalist has been accused of being guided in his interpretation of the Scriptures by an "unwritten tradition".³³ Such a charge is not entirely without ground but to make a generalization such as this is unfair. Certainly it is impossible to approach the Scriptures without any assumptions, but one can still be honest in his attempt to learn the meaning which the inspired writer sought to convey. The same author who makes this charge proposes as a standard of interpretation the "mind of Christ".³⁴ This, he contends, allows for development. One

30. Lewis S. Chafer, "Biblical Theism", Bibliotheca Sacra, 95:390, Oct.-Dec., 1938.

31. Loc. cit.

32. Richard Watson, Theological Institutes (London, Wesleyan Conference Office, 1870), I, 140.

33. Randolph C. Miller, "Authority, Scripture and Tradition", Religion in Life, 21:558, Autumn, 1952.

34. Ibid., p. 560.

might add that at the same time the principle of interpretation is rendered flexible enough to adjust to any pet theory which is in vogue. Such theories of interpretation abound--most of which in the last analysis are nothing more or less than a super-imposition of reason over the Sacred Record. It is only reasonable that if one can devise a principle of interpretation which is vague, one may interpret Scriptures much to his own tastes, whether they be righteous or carnal.

Finally may it be said, when reason has examined the credentials of the proposed revelation and found them overwhelmingly convincing evidence that it is indeed a God-breathed Scriptures, it will proceed, with due reverence, to interpret--ready to surrender any preconceived notions which are contrary to plainly revealed truth. Reason in order to function properly in its interpreting capacity must have due respect for the sacred contents and regard them as indispensable in its search for God's way. Unless reason is willing to ascend on the ladder of revelation which God extends in his mercy, it will sink into a hopeless despair and will by its own rejection have frustrated its highest prerogative.

E. Summary

It is recognized that with the evidences of General Revelation alone, reason cannot form clear and satisfactory judgments in regard to God and His will and purpose for man. But not only is there a definite lack in the objective evidence which presents itself to reason, but reason itself is finite so that the great truths which are most important to man's well-being lie far beyond the reasoning capacity of

man. Only supernatural revelation can furnish that important data. Furthermore, reason is so corrupted by sin that even in the more elementary moral judgments it cannot be trusted. The proper role of reason is to examine the credentials of a proposed revelation and when these bear the unmistakeable marks of Divine Authorship, reason's duty is to bow in humble recognition of revealed truth. By accepting the truth which God has revealed in the Scriptures reason fulfills its most noble prerogative.

CHAPTER III

THE SCRIPTURES--INDISPENSABLE TO THE PROPER FUNCTION OF EXPERIENCE

A great deal of present day religious thinking would insist that the certainty of the Christian faith is ultimately grounded in Christian experience and not in the precepts of an ancient book. The Scriptures are in the last analysis, made to be merely an inspirational literature which must be qualified and examined in the light of religious experience. Consequently, it is inferred, the Scriptures may be dispensed with since Christian experience, after all, is the vital link which man has with his Creator.

In this chapter this fallacious line of reasoning has been considered. First, the relationship of experience to reason in the realm of epistemology was discussed. Next, the validity of a theology which is empirically grounded and divorced from Scriptural authority was investigated. Finally, the proper function of experience in its relationship to the Scriptures was defined.

A. Experience and Reason

The "function of experience" has reference to the role of experience in man's quest for truth in the religious realm. Actually it is impossible to separate experience completely from reason as a source of insight into truth. Reason is the faculty which is necessary to apprehend and interpret experience. At the same time, experience furnishes evidence upon which reason may reflect and make judgments. The two are vitally and almost inseparably related to each other in the area

of epistemology. In the realm of insight into religious truth, there is no exception.

The mistake of considering experience itself as cognizant must not be made. William James, a self-styled "radical empiricist", laid the case of the Christian faith almost entirely upon the merits of the mystical experience and considered it "windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world"¹. James, of course, attempted to explain religious experience strictly from a psychological standpoint, but even by such a method, reason cannot be pushed aside as of little import. Josiah Royce took James to task for claiming that religious experience is inarticulate and that reason cannot add anything novel to it.² The author cannot agree with Royce's ultimate position, but at this point he is sound, that is, by his insisting that reason and experience are interdependent in religious epistemology.

R. Foster insisted emphatically on the fact of reason being after all the only cognizing faculty and vigorously refused to give conscience a role apart from that of reason.³ He proposed that conscience is simply a feeling which after all becomes consciously known only after reason has acted. As usual, he made a strong case for reason. One may admit that reason is the only faculty which can perceive truth, but it must ever be recognized that there is something within human personality

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1. William James, Varieties of Religious Experience (New York, Random House, 1902), p. 419.
 2. Josiah Royce, Sources of Religious Insight (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), p. 55 ff.
 3. Randolph Foster, Prolegomena (New York, Hung and Eaton, 1889), p. 251 ff.

which in a religious crisis experience responds to truth in an entirely different fashion than the normal rational procedure.

A. C. Knudson has listed three types of empirical theology. One lays stress on history, another type emphasizes value judgments and a third puts the stress on the perceptual character of religious experience.⁴ It is the third type mentioned which has been the concern of this study. This chapter, therefore, has not dealt primarily with the important part of the Scriptures in the development of Christian experience, but rather with the importance of the Scriptures in leading a man into a proper religious experience. In other words, the question confronted in this study is: "Is it possible for a man to have a religious experience whereby he may attain unto a measure of truth which assures him a present happy life and gives him an unshakable confidence in the future--all without the aid of revealed truth?"

It has been shown that reason cannot be completely divorced from experience. The preceding chapter dealt with a great number of issues which could also be related to the subject of experience. The chief concern, however, was to investigate the ability of reason as a faculty to attain to truths by its own powers purely by a priori speculation and by reflection on the evidences which natural revelation yields. In this chapter the endeavor has been to determine the limitations of a mystical experience which is divorced from revealed Truth.

4. Albert C. Knudson, The Doctrine of God (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1930), p. 194.

B. The Scriptures--Indispensable to a Proper Religious Experience

Experience Alone Inadequate. A. C. Knudson recognized the fact that the mystical experience is dependent on faith. "Faith produces mystical experience, and mystical experience in turn vitalizes faith."⁵ In a real Christian experience faith does not "produce" the experience but it is only instrumental in making the experience possible. Nevertheless, Knudson's argument concerning the relationship of experience and faith is still valid. He has gone on to point out that mystics in church history have from time to time departed from the traditional faith and at such times they have:

. . . blurred the positive outlines of Christian belief rather than substituting anything definite in its stead. Mystics as a rule have been agreed in saying that God is, but what he is they did not know. From them we would not, therefore, naturally expect any positive additions to the content of the Christian faith. It is not particular or new truths that they have sought to impart to us.⁶

It is however open to question whether mystics have always been so ready to concede to this proposition. If one is to understand by the word "mystic" anyone who professes to a religious experience, certainly every generation has produced individuals who claimed a new revelation and thereby successfully claimed their disciples. Consider for example the beginnings of Mormonism, Russelism, Seventh Day Adventism and many others.

But in spite of the flagrant claims of self-styled recipients of

5. Ibid., p. 100.

6. Ibid., p. 101.

"new truth", the fact remains, that experience has by itself made no contribution of moral and spiritual truth to supplement that which comes to us in the Scriptures.

There is a definite need for a reliable objective norm which can make experience wholesome and religiously practical. Those empiricists who have refused to believe that such a norm exists at the same time confess that in our whole human experience man cannot after all attain unto any certainty, only probability.

Experience Given a False Assignment. Just as reason is often given an assignment which it is incapable of fulfilling, so experience is also exalted to an improper stature in the problem of knowing God and His Will. Hegel kept experience properly related to an objective norm when he insisted that ". . . the absolute perfection of Christianity was derived from and authenticated by the universal idea of perfection".⁷ But in the last analysis, it is hard to see anything in Hegel's philosophy which is beyond the purely subjective. Schleiermacher, on the other hand, placing the emphasis on Christian experience, claimed that the absolute perfection of Christianity was inherent in itself and hence, to a large extent, at least, self-verifying.⁸ A great host of modern theologians follow in the groove of Schleiermacher's empiricism.

The trend of much contemporary theology has been summed up by D. D. Williams in his work on What Present Day Theologians are Thinking.⁹

7. Ibid., p. 114.

8. Loc. cit.

9. Daniel D. Williams, What Present Day Theologians are Thinking (New York, Harper and Bros., 1952).

. . . What has happened is that revelation as the self disclosure of God is understood is the actual and personal meeting of man and God on the plane of history. Out of that meeting we develop our formulations of Christian truth in literal propositions. This means that revelation is interpreted in such a way as to reject the legalistic and dogmatic absolutizing of verbal formulas.¹⁰

Williams recognised that such a concept does violence to the distinction which orthodoxy has made between special and general revelation and to
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question the authoritative character of the Scriptures. Orthodoxy is ready to recognize that in a certain sense all of revealed truth is One and related, but this does not mean that it is impossible for a fragment of the truth to be revealed. Furthermore, how may one distinguish between the very elementary evidence which the heathen mind has to reflect upon, and that great body of revealed truth which comes to us in the Scriptures?

The modern pragmatic philosophy has crept into theological systems which delegate an unwarranted authority to experience. F. R. Tennant in his Philosophical Theology blasted the attempt which is made by many
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moderns to ground the ultimate case of Christianity in experience. He has pointed out the fallacious presuppositions of any effort to base Christian theology upon Christian experience.

. . . Christian theology is often said to be the outcome, as an afterthought, of Christian experience . . . but the religious experience of Saint Paul the Christian Apostle, differed from that of Paul the Rabbi, in virtue of his new theological convictions as to the Person of Christ: relatively undeveloped or indefinite

10. Ibid., p. 64.

11. Ibid., p. 66.

12. F. R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology (London, Cambridge University Press, 1935), I.

as these may have been at the moment of his conversion
 . . . There is little reason to doubt that mankind
 believed in the unseen and had some sense of the myster-
 ious, before they possessed religion in any definable
 sense.¹³

Even an accompanying feeling of certainty is no sure indication
 that the experience was truly a Christian experience. "A belief is
 rendered true, not by its occurrence accompanied by certitude, but by
 its accord with Actuality or Reality."¹⁴ At the same time it must be
 recognized that all religious experience has an objective, but the
 question is whether that objective is real or imaginary. An imaginary
 object can, when believed to be real, "envoke emotional response that
 issues in heroic action, moral earnestness . . ."¹⁵ Finally, it has
 been pointed out, that "Extraction of theological doctrine out of
 religious experience, supposed to be devoid of any dogmatic ingredi-
 ent or to presuppose no theological concept of any kind, is an endeavor
 that has taken various forms . . ."¹⁶ which ". . . must be in vain."¹⁶
 Therefore, a proper Christian experience must be preceded by at least
 an elementary grasp of Christian doctrine which after all is grounded
 in and defined by the Scriptures.

The extremes to which an unbridled mysticism can lead are obvious.
 The tendency is on the one hand, to a reckless fanaticism such as has
 produced a conglomeration of extremist sects which have claimed a direct
 revelation from God of some sort. Many of these groups of extremists

13. Ibid., p. 327.

14. Ibid., p. 329.

15. Ibid., p. 330.

16. Ibid., p. 331.

have dissipated themselves in immoral excesses. On the other hand, an over-balanced mysticism has led to extreme quietism in which the mystics have become so engrossed in otherworldly contemplations that they have been quite indifferent and even hostile to the moral demands of the world about them.

Therefore, one is led to the conclusion that it is not possible to gain new truth by mystical experience alone and that Christian experience is wholesome and valid only as it is properly related to objective Reality. Clear knowledge concerning such a proper relationship can only be found in Holy Scriptures.

C. The Proper Function of Experience

The shortcomings of a theology which supposes that its ultimate claims rest upon Christian experience have been laid bare. In doing this the author has attempted to show just why experience needs a norm that is not intrinsic to it. But in spite of the apparent shortcomings of an exclusive empiricism, there is a proper role which experience fulfills under the objective norm of the Scriptures. The purpose of this study has been primarily to show the indispensable role which the Scriptures fulfill in the God-man relationships. The inadequacy of experience has been discussed, all of which appeals for an authoritative standard beyond experience which the Scriptures have been shown to fulfill. Briefly now, if experience of itself is woefully inadequate, in what way are the Scriptures indispensable in leading to a proper and stable Christian experience?

John 16:13 reads: "The Spirit of truth . . . shall guide you in all truth". (A.V.) Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ". . . unto us God

revealed them through the Spirit". (I Cor. 2:10, A.V.) In these and other passages Christian experience is vitally associated with the work of the Holy Spirit. But it is these very verses which mystics use to defend their case and here too, many modern theologians find refuge for their emphasis upon Christian experience to the disparagement of Christian doctrine. Along this line of thought Alan Richardson rested his case: "The conclusion which we have reached is none other than the classical Christian view since the days of the Apostles, namely, that the authority of the Bible is in the last resort the authority of the Holy Spirit in the Church."¹⁷ Evangelical Christians go along in such an affirmation. Elsewhere, however, he described the Spirit as supreme authority above the Scriptures because through Him the Scriptures are interpreted. Such a position, although expressing a fundamental truth and appearing very orthodox, at the same time can be stretched to fit into almost any theological scheme. An extreme liberal may justify his evolutionary bias in his hermeneutical procedure on the claim that the Spirit is after all the final authority. Too frequently one discovers moderns very ambitiously endeavoring to drive a theological wedge between the Person of the Spirit and His work. The Scriptures themselves claim to be Spirit inspired (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21) and their indisputable integrity and influence since their origin vindicate their divine authorship. When one thus recognizes the Scriptures as a work of the Holy Spirit they are approached with due reverence. Only this type of an attitude will be honored by the Spirit. The relationship between the

17. Alan Richardson, Christian Apologetics (New York, Harper and Bros., 1947), p. 219.

Spirit and the Holy Scriptures has been well stated by A. H. Strong.

. . . There is an internal work of the divine Spirit by which the outer work is made an inner work. Its truth and power are manifested to the heart. Scripture represents this work of the Spirit, not as a giving of new truth but as an illumination of the mind to perceive the fullness of meaning which lay wrapped up in the truth already revealed . . . Christ is the Truth (John 14:6; Col. 2:3), the Holy Spirit reveals. (John 16:14)¹⁸

Furthermore, because the Scriptures are the record of the redemptive plan and its interpretation--all of which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is reasonable to expect that the Holy Spirit will operate upon and/or within the whole tenor of the truth as it is contained in the Scriptures, never in a way that is inconsistent with them. For that reason the Scriptures are termed "the sword of the Spirit". (Eph. 6:17, A.V.) Man is certainly never justified in approaching the Scriptures with a suspicious attitude in regard to their authorship. The Holy Spirit uses them to convict men of their sinful condition. Once they turn in repentance to God, the Spirit regenerates and bears witness to the heart that sin has been forgiven. The Third Person of the Trinity continues to enrich a man's experience by illuminating his mind and quickening the words of Scripture to his heart.

The Scriptures hold an indispensable position in the function of Christian experience. "Christian experience is rightly used when it confirms the documentary evidence."¹⁹ Without the objective content of the Christian message as given in the Scriptures, faith would be im-

18. A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia, The Judson Press, 1907), p. 27.

19. J. Gresham Machen, Christianity and Liberalism (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1916), p. 70.

possible and where faith is impossible, a saving experience of Divine Grace is also impossible. But when faith appropriated the provisions of Calvary, as elaborated in the Scriptures, there is a new creation. Thereafter the Scriptures continue to be an indispensable, regulative norm to shield that new life and by the Spirit, to foster continued growth in Grace.

D. Summary

It is therefore recognized that experience by itself will lead to error unless it is preceded and qualified in its expression by the truth of the revelation in the Scriptures. When the Scriptures are respected as the source and norm of Christian faith, only then can Christian experience become wholesome and properly related. The Holy Spirit has chosen to work within the confines of the truth which He has inspired men to write and never irrespective to that truth. The Scriptures are indeed indispensable to a proper religious experience.

CHAPTER IV

THE SCRIPTURES---INDISPENSABLE TO THE CHURCH

The first consideration of this chapter has been the relationship of the Scriptures to the life of the church. In connection with this, the position of Roman Catholicism in this matter and the question of the church and its relationship to the canon were also considered. Some of the modern theological trends within the Protestant movement have also been evaluated. Since it would have been impossible to go into every phase of the work of the church this study has been confined to the missionary phase. Summing it all up, this chapter has dealt with the question: "Are the Scriptures indispensable to the life and work of the church?"

A. The Scriptures--Indispensable to the Life of the Church

Error of Roman Catholicism. The Council of Trent declared that the tradition of the Church is on an equal par with the Scriptures. This act certainly implies that the Scriptures are incomplete. The fallacy of Roman Catholicism in its appeal to tradition has been well stated by Hodge:

1. It involves a natural impossibility. Human agency is untrustworthy to convey truth through many generations.
2. There is no promise in the Scriptures of such a provision.
3. There is no criterion to test the validity of tradition; common consent is not trustworthy. The writings of the early Fathers are untrustworthy--often contradictory, vague and often corrupted.
4. They are not available to the common people in

in concise form--. . .¹

According to the papal or transmontane theory, the Pope is the organ through which the infallible judgment of the church is pronounced. To insure a proper and eternally secure relationship with God, all that is necessary to do is submit to the Church, which is the divinely appointed visible institution for pardoning sins and imparting Grace. Thus Cyprian was prompted to say, "He who has not the Church for his mother, has not God for his Father"². The Scriptures become completely subservient to the authority of the Church.

The moral laxity, inherent corruption and spirit of intolerance which this philosophy has manifested consistently through the Roman Catholic Church is ample proof of its fallacious character. But its false assumptions should be likewise evident to even a casual observer. F. Patton recognized the significant fact that: "The Roman Catholic cannot get away from the Bible as the ultimate authority so long as he appeals to the Bible in support of the infallibility of the Church"³. Ultimately Roman Catholicism must appeal to the Scriptures to establish its case. However, it is difficult for even the most ardent Romanist to deny honestly the fact that many extra-Biblical features characterize their Hierarchy. Furthermore, the obvious persistence of the hierarchy to keep the Scriptures from the masses certainly does not indicate

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1. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 112 ff.
 2. A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia, The Judson Press, 1907), p. 334.
 3. Francis Patton, Fundamental Christianity (New York, MacMillan Co., 1926), p. 134.

a due and reverent regard for the Scriptures. The sacramental veil which is hung between the common people and God, certainly is entirely out of harmony with the whole tenor of Scriptural teaching. It seems rather unconvincing for Romanism first to appeal her case for authority to the Bible and then at the same time be very little concerned that her teaching and program is out of harmony with the Scriptures. A. H. Strong suggested that when a Romanist asks: "Where was your Church before Luther?" a Protestant may answer: "Where yours⁴ is not now--in the Word of God!"

The Church and the Canon. One of the arguments which many modern protestant leaders as well as Roman Catholics have employed is that relating to the formation of the canon. The gist of their reasoning runs something like this: "After all, we must remember that the Church was really in existence before the Bible and it was the Church which was responsible for selecting the books which comprise the canon of our Scriptures." The purpose of such logic is either to claim a superior authority resident in the Church or it may merely be designed to attack the position of those who insist on an infallible and authoritative Bible. In either case, the indispensable character of the Scriptures is actually repudiated in more or less degree.

H. Orton Wiley has observed that the canonicity of any book in the Bible "was not settled by the authority of the primitive Church, but by its testimony"⁵. Furthermore, ". . . the tests which the early Christians

4. Op. cit., p. 335.

5. H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1949), p. 186.

applied to the books circulated among the churches were simple, being limited generally to apostolic origin or authorization.⁶ Then too, one must always bear in mind that the Scriptures of the Old Testament were already generally accepted by the Jews in the time of Jesus and before the time of an organized and visible church. Furthermore, the apostles were responsible for the New Testament writings. The Church was instrumental in the adoption of these writings into the canon of the Scriptures. Any attempt to place an inherent authority of the Church above the authority of Scriptures by an appeal to the argument about the canon is a failure to recognize the true spirit of the Church in its selection of the canonical books.

Modern Protestant Concepts. The present-day trend to ecumenicity has been accompanied by a very noticeable emphasis upon the authority of the Church. D. D. Williams has cited Schleiermacher's definition of Catholicism as making the individual's relationship to Christ dependent on his relationship to the Church and Protestantism as making the individual's relationship to the Church dependent upon his relationship to Christ. Williams went on to say:

. . . . Some individualistic Protestant and sectarian spiritism has looked on the matter this way. But most Protestant theology today says that Schleiermacher makes a distinction which the Christian faith cannot allow. To be in Christ is to be in the Church . . . God's Word in Christ saves us just by bringing us within such a body where life is shared, sustained and renewed in a loving relationship to others.⁷

6. Ibid., p. 187.

7. Daniel Day Williams, What Present Day Theologians are Thinking (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1952), p. 129.

He said further that the passage in Matthew 16:17-19 is today considered in a somewhat different light by protestant scholars. "They are Jesus' assertion that preparation for the new age of the reign of God involves entry into the community which was to come into being through the preaching of Peter and the other disciples." That all of this type of thinking has been moving toward a philosophy which is much more akin to Roman Catholicism than to traditional Protestantism he has freely admitted. In fact he pointed to the revival of liturgy and the divided chancels in church architecture as evidence of the theological trend. "This trend is sometimes regarded as an aesthetic fashion lacking the support of theological understanding. There is something in the judgment, but it appears to me superficial." He also maintained that the sacraments are acquiring a new significance. With a hint of optimism in his writing, he proceeded to point out recent trends within Romanism away from original concepts of the mass and the sacraments. Thus the hope is to be cherished that by a surrender of certain traditional Protestant tenets and a charitable concession to Roman Catholicism one universal church will some day become a visible reality. Suffice it to say that the evidence of Roman Catholicism surrendering any of her dogmas is certainly not sufficiently apparent to warrant any such vain optimism.

8. Ibid., p. 131.

9. Ibid., pp. 132, 133.

10. Ibid., pp. 133, 134.

11. Ibid., pp. 136-139.

The reason for having brought these modern trends in the concept of the Church into this study was to illustrate but another attempt to dispense with an authoritative and infallible Bible. History seems to show that man is disposed to depend on some authority and when he retreats from his trust in one authority, he will invest just that much more of his trust in another. It is apparent that a great deal of the confidence which many protestant scholars have surrendered in the Sacred Record, they have heaped upon the Church. D. Williams, the writer quoted from previously has proposed that:

. . . Under the Protestant principle a critical understanding of the Bible is essential if the church is to be kept free from serving a new idol in the literal word of a book rather than in the truth which it expresses through human and limited means.¹²

Another popular writer of our day has attributed the state of the Church to "individualism". "It may be that some churches have become quite empty because protestant leaders gave men the impression that all that really mattered was the individual's relationship to God. The Church in that case is ignored or neglected."¹³ If he meant by the "Church" the invisible body of believers in Christ, we have reason to question his analysis. When professing Protestants forsake the very authority which has been responsible for its vitality and its courage, the reason for the church's condition ought not to be so perplexing.

The Scriptures are an indispensable element to the life of the Church. Martin Luther said:

12. Ibid., p. 135.

13. Elmer Honrighausen, Let the Church be the Church (New York, The Abingdon Press, 1940), p. 129.

. . . But since we are not favored with daily oracles from heaven, and since it is only in the Scriptures that the Lord hath been pleased to preserve this truth in perpetual remembrance, it obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers when they are satisfied of its divine origin as if they heard the very words pronounced by God Himself.¹¹

It was this type of conviction which grounded the courage of the Reformers and helped them to resist the corrupt Roman Church which had departed from the true faith. When Martin Luther dared to pit the authority of the Scriptures against the powerful, secular Church, God honored Luther. Thus the Protestant movement was launched by men who were firmly convinced that they confided in an authority which was God-ordained and not man-made. It is therefore not exaggeration to say that the Scriptures were indispensable to the revival of New Testament Christianity as it unfolded in the Protestant Reformation. They have been indispensable to the very life of Protestantism and New Testament Christianity. This is not Bibliolatry, but simply recognizing that the Bible is that unique medium of truth which God has chosen to preserve in order that men might be pointed to the Saviour and might know His will for their lives.

The Scriptures are indispensable to the very life of the Church but by this it is not meant that if all the Bibles in the world were destroyed that the Church would also be destroyed. The Scriptures are not written on paper pages alone, but they have been indelibly recorded in the hearts of countless believers. Surely, "Heaven and

11. Henry Bettenson, editor, Documents of the Christian Church (New York, Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 290.

earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away". (Mark 13:31)

Whenever and where-ever men have chosen to honor the Sacred Book the Church has prospered under God and been a vital, dynamic force to the glory of her Bridegroom. The tragedy of our times is that men have attempted to enhance the position of the Church and at the same time they claim to exalt her.

Christian faith is faith in the Bible That which holds together all the churches of the world from Roman Catholicism to Quakers, from Luther to Cardinal Newman, that which throughout all historical changes of the Church has remained the same, the source from which Christianity has again and again drawn the power of renewal, is the Bible. During the 1900 years of its history the Church has been more than once sick unto death; 200 years ago Voltaire prophesied its end as certain in the near future. In the very house in which he made that prophecy there is at present an office of the British Bible Society which annually sends out millions of Bibles in all languages into the world. It is the Bible which has again and again made the Church young and sound . . . Christianity without the Bible would long ago have degenerated into an unrecognizable caricature.¹⁵

B. The Scriptures--Indispensable to the Work of the Church

If the Scriptures are indispensable to the very life of the Church, it follows that they must be regarded in a similar way as pertains to the work of the Church. If the Church looks to the Scriptures for life-sustaining strength, she must be expected to look to the same source for direction in Her work. If the truth as it is found recorded in

15. Samuel G. Craig, Christianity Rightly So Called (Philadelphia, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1946), pp. 194, 195.

the Scriptures is used by the Holy Spirit to convict man of his sin and point him to a Saviour, is it not to be expected that if others are to be redeemed from sin they will need to be confronted by the same Truth? Furthermore, if the Scriptures are the "sword of the Spirit" in turning a man from sin to God, is it not reasonable to expect them to hold a continuing authoritative function in providing the new convert with a standard and norm whereby he may know his duties in his new and living relationship to God?

A great deal could be said along this line. We cannot hope to deal with the whole area of the Church's work in a study such as this. Therefore, in the attempt to illustrate the fact that the Scriptures are indispensable to the work of the Church, the author has dealt only with the missionary phase since this is the most vital area of the Church's work.

At the close of the last century, C. A. Briggs, a professor at Union Seminary wrote that the popular theology which condemns masses of adults "even in America" to hell is unscriptural and that the great
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motive for missions is loyalty to Christ. He still appealed to the Scriptures even though some of his conclusions hinted of being more grounded in wishful rationalism than in true respect for the Scriptural message.

Others have been less cautious in their regard for plain Scriptural teaching.

16. Charles A. Briggs, The Bible, The Church and The Reason (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), pp. 45-57.

The traditional Christian supernaturalism with its stories of miraculous intervention in the natural order has made the acceptance of Christianity very difficult, especially for the educated Japanese and Chinese; . . . the traditional Christian evangelicalism with its doctrine of substitutionary punishment as an atonement for sin has made our religion very difficult for the ethical-metaphysical mind of India . . . our traditional Christian orthodoxy with its mysteries of the Trinity and the God-man has put a great stumbling block in the way of Christian faith throughout the modern world. So much so is all this that it may be contended that if we are to take seriously the ideal of not only evangelizing the non-Christian World . . . but of Christianizing the world as far as may be, we must as W. N. Clarke insisted as long ago as 1900, "simplify the Christian message by distinguishing what is central from what is not".¹⁷

One wonders what would be left of the Christian message after they "simplified" it. That this is a deliberate attack on the Scriptural message can hardly be denied. It is this type of flagrant abuse of the Scriptures that has cut into the very nerve of Protestant missionary endeavor.

After World War I the social gospel gained new momentum within most of the large Protestant denominations. An ever increasing tempo of optimism colored theological thinking. People were told that they were standing on the threshold of the millennial age.

. . . Included was the wholehearted acceptance of the theory of evolution, the assurance of the inevitability of progress, and the idea of the inherent goodness of man . . . the inherent goodness of man which ran counter to the revelational doctrine of inherent badness, so God was retained but He was divorced from His revelation, which was scrapped.¹⁸

17. Douglas Clyde MacIntosh, Personal Religion (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 164.

18. Harry Lindsell, A Christian Philosophy of Missions (Wheaton, Illinois, VanKampen Press, 1949), p. 69.

The missionary program was saturated with this philosophy. What it lacked in dynamic so far as the Holy Spirit is concerned, it tried to make up in money, techniques and specialized personnel.

The zenith of this man-centered optimism was reached in the International Missionary Conference in Jerusalem in 1928. The fruit of this meeting found expression in the book, Rethinking Missions by William E.

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Hocking, Chairman of the Commission of Appraisal. This is called "A Laymen's Inquiry after 100 years". In this work the author has done an excellent job of neatly divorcing the mission motive from the Scriptures. He concluded that the aim of missions is: "To seek with people of other lands a true knowledge and love of God, expressing in life and word what we have learned through Jesus Christ and endeavoring to give effect to his spirit in the life of the world". Throughout his evaluation there was no appeal whatsoever to the Scriptures nor was there any reference to the Holy Spirit.

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Another recognized Protestant leader soon after wrote: "All of these teachings, (Confucius, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and even Animism) to be sure are in Christianity and we treasure them as a part of the message of our Christian Gospel" and that authority of missions does not rest on any "detached verses of Scripture . . . " but "fundamentally

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19. William E. Hocking, Re-Thinking Missions (New York, Harper and Bros., 1932).

20. Ibid., p. 326.

21. Stacy R. Warburton, The Making of Modern Missions (New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1931), p. 185.

it rests upon the imperative demand of truth for universal proclamation.²² The Scriptural truth pertaining to the depravity of man appears to be very repulsive to this humanistically disposed thinking. Again and again we are reminded that the "missionary enterprise is not after all, based upon any of the conditions of the non-Christian world".²³

In the Madras meeting of the same group, a decade after the Jerusalem conclave, the optimism of the former meeting was no longer in evidence. The world crisis and depression seemed to have dampened the spirits of those who had only a few years before harped long and loud on the inevitable progress of man toward an Utopian society. The key-note of this meeting was sounded in The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World by Kraemer in which he declared that the ideas of inevitable progress and essential goodness of man were no longer valid.²⁴ He pled for a return to "Biblical realism". Just exactly what he meant by this terminology is hard to fathom but obviously included in it is the fact of sin in the world. Although his views were slanted along the neo-orthodox lines, they still constituted a violent antithesis to Hocking's Re-Thinking Missions. Kraemer recognized the crisis of missions as a crisis of faith and that the Bible alone is unique and divinely revealed, and true while all other religions are but the natural

22. Ibid., p. 189.

23. Godfrey Phillips, The Gospel in the World (Nashville, Cokesbury Press, 1938), p. 50.

24. A. Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (London, The Edinburg House Press, 1938).

strivings of man to find God, a striving doomed to failure. His terminology, however, suggested very strongly that his argument did not stem from an evangelical concept of the Bible. "The only valid motive and purpose of missions is to call men and peoples to confront themselves with God's acts and revelation and salvation . . ." E. D. Soper²⁶ located far to the left from Kraemer's position. The idea of condemning a "good man" to hell, was very repulsive to him. He with so many others, completely ignored the Scriptural fact, confirmed by historical evidence, that man by nature is inclined to revolt against any light which he may have. Any appeal to the Scriptures is frequently regarded as an appeal to "proof texts", which to the mind of many moderns is unthinkable.

All of this should give us some indication of how men have regarded the Scriptural concepts which bear upon the missionary motive. Lindsell has given an excellent picture of this in his book, A Christian Philosophy of Missions.²⁷ His position is regarded "fundamentalistic"²⁸ as opposed to the "prevailing conservative viewpoint on missions". Never-the-less, if one is a "fundamentalist" because he duly respects the authority and the message of the Scriptures, then one may rightly prefer to be just that.

25. Ibid., p. 353.

26. E. D. Soper, The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 141.

27. Harry Lindsell, A Christian Philosophy of Missions (Wheaton, Illinois, Van Kampen Press, 1949).

28. R. Pierce Beaver, "North American Thought on the Fundamental Principles of Missions During the Twentieth Century", Church History, XXI: 359, Dec., 1952.

It all boils down to the fact that: "The acceptance of the Bible as the fully revealed Word of God, adequate and infallible in all of its component parts, is the battle ground."²⁹ Vigorous missionary activity has always been grounded in such a conviction.

The Christian case has never been so strong as when it rested its case flatly on the revelational assumption. . . . For a time the work of the church may continue on the momentum generated from an earlier appreciation of the foundation, but when the foundation is lost sight of the eventual outcome is the warping of the superstructure which no longer reflects the true foundation but the false one which has been substituted in place of the true.³⁰

Certainly the missionary motive rests upon the positive side as well as on the negative. It is necessary to be loyal to Christ and there ought to be concern on the part of every true Christian that others come to know the abundant life in Christ. But this must be accompanied by the negative as well. The fact of sin is so real that no healthy missionary motive can afford to ignore it. The Church is commissioned to proclaim a saving message, one that will rescue men from their sins. Certainly the thought of condemning a sincere man to hell is repulsive, but sin in the heart of man is not inclined to make him sincere. Paul made this very clear in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans. Men who have lamented the terrible thought of a "sincere" man going to hell, seem to be little disposed to regard with equal repugnance the hideous nature of sin which sent our Saviour to the cross.

The writer maintains, therefore, that the work of the Church in its

29. Lindsell, op. cit., p. 45.

30. Ibid., p. 46.

missionary outreach must ever be firmly and exclusively anchored in the Scriptural message. Only the Scriptures can present an appeal powerful enough to turn a man from darkness to light. If the missionary motive is grounded in a relative standard, it is doomed to failure. But when the Scriptures are honored and obeyed by the Church as that depository of Revealed Truth which is necessary unto salvation, history has borne unmistakeable evidence that God will honor that Church and the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit will perform a work to His glory. The Scriptures are absolutely essential to the life and work of the Church!

B. Summary

The foregoing has shown that the Scriptures are indispensable to the life of the church. The Roman Catholic dogma respecting tradition in reality has diminished regard for the authority of the Scriptures and elevated the authority of the Church to an unwarranted proportion. The Scriptures were not made canonical by the Church. They have the inherent qualities of divine authenticity and have always stood in their own right. The Church only recognizes their canonicity. Any theology which would subordinate the Scriptures to the church must be considered in error. The Scriptures are indispensable to the work of the Church. The missionary endeavor of the church has been honored of God when it has been consistent with the Scriptural pattern and permeated with the message and passion of the Scriptures.

CHAPTER V

THE SCRIPTURES---INDISPENSABLE TO A PROPER CHRISTOLOGY

Thus far this study has dealt respectively with reason, experience and the Church. As has been indicated, each one of these has from time to time been set up as an ultimate authority and source of truth even above the Scriptures. The reason why such efforts to subordinate Revealed Truth are wrong have been explained. At the same time the proper relation which each of these holds to the Scriptures and the reasons for regarding the Scriptures as indispensable complement of truth lying beyond the domains of each of these have been defined. A number of the fallacies which arise out of these various extra-Biblical emphases, have been pointed out. However, there has been no extensive treatment to illustrate the theological fallacies that an erroneously grounded system of thought produces. It would take a work many times the size of this, to go into the ramifications of these systems. For example, one might explain how a theology that is empirically top-heavy is led into an inadequate and false concept of the Trinity, the attributes of God, the nature of sin, etc. One might do the same with those theologies which ground their thought ultimately and primarily in Reason or in the Church. Following out such a procedure it is easy to see how a study of this type could be expanded to almost unlimited proportions.

Since all this is impossible, it would never-the-less be valuable to describe at least some of the tragic consequences that follow in the wake of a theology that refuses to regard the Scriptures as indispensable authority. One phase of systematic theology which is as

representative as any other is that which deals with Christology. At the same time this is a phase which is in sharp focus in contemporary theological circles. An honest answer to the question: "What think ye of Christ?" will invariably bring out the particular hue of a man's theology.

In this chapter the consequences of a theology which refuses to regard the Scriptures in toto as the Word of God have been shown. Another vital issue in the field of Christology which is pertinent to this study is the relationship which the Scriptures sustain to the living Word. By the discussion of these issues and an evaluation of them, the author has sought to show why the Scriptures are indispensable to a proper and a sound Christology.

A. The Christologies Divorced from the Scriptures

In reading the great variety of Christological concepts which modern theological systems built into their theological framework, one wonders how the average man, searching earnestly for the truth, would react as he faces this conglomeration of human speculations. In the first place he may ask: "Which Christ?" Then he might be caused to wonder: "Why then a Christ?" Finally he would still be haunted in his soul by the question: "Who then is Christ?" and "How may I really know Him?" These questions remain unanswered in a great share of contemporary theological concepts. Indeed, some will go much farther in answering them than others, but not one of those which lack respect for the Scriptures as the final and indispensable and authoritative source of Christology, can present to the soul that

satisfying fulfillment of Truth as it is in Jesus.

The exalted way in which many contemporary theologians speak of Christ, is by no means evidence of orthodoxy. The modern trend of Christological thought is well summed up by Carl Henry.

The striking fact about contemporary theologians is that, with remarkably few exceptions, their statements of the person and work of Christ are so many ways of saying that Christ is unique without affirming a genuine uniqueness. In countless patterns, declaring that Christ is "the son of God", they declare actually that Christ is not "the Son of God". They afford Jesus a triumphal entry into their discussions, but if one lingers long enough, he can hear them testify to the Sanhedrin that "he spake blasphemy" or mutter at the tomb that "the disciples must have stolen his body". They marshall a glittering vocabulary of spangled adjectives, but if one looks through the heavenly words and beyond the starry clusters, he will find concealed in the inter-stellar spaces an obscure caveat, a submerged denial, a series of question marks which retracts what apparently has been affirmed. ¹

Which Christ? A. C. McGiffert observed that within the Christian movement the name of Jesus has been used with reference to at least ² seven different figures. It goes without saying that this would cause the average man to wonder "Which Jesus?" is the true one. The reason for this confusion is explained when one considers the modern approach to Christology as defined by a present-day theologian who is highly respected in his field. "The meaning of Jesus Christ cannot be stated in Biblical terms alone. It must be stated as the answer to questions

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1. Carl F. H. Henry, The Protestant Dilemma (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1949), p. 173.
 2. A. C. McGiffert, Contemporary Thinking About Jesus (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1944), p. 31.

raised by human philosophical and religious searching."³ In the trail of this type of reasoning follows a great part of contemporary Protestant thought. A simple and unreserved confidence in the Bible as an infallible source Book pointing to the Lamb of God, is considered untenable in the light of modern demands. The wholesome effect of such a confidence is recognized by Knudson but at the same time he has insisted that this is not possible for thinking people.

. . . If Christian believers would accept Christ as He is presented in the New Testament without theorizing about him, it might be better both for the church and for religion in general. But this they seem unable to do. Their minds demand some sort of an explanation of Jesus' uniqueness. Then, too, in self-defense they need a theory of their own with which to meet the purely humanitarian views of unbelievers . . . The various developments in modern thought make inevitable a revision of the traditional Christology.⁴

This suggested forsaking of traditional Christianity implies, of course, also a forsaking of the traditional Protestant concept of the Scriptures. Thus one is reminded that ". . . modern thought is turning away from the two-nature doctrine (of the incarnation) and is substituting for it the idea of Jesus unique dependence upon God".⁵ Furthermore, the divinity of our Lord is not to be regarded as something which He thought of Himself but rather ". . . the church's conception of what he was or

3. D. D. Williams, What Present Day Theologians are Thinking, (New York, Harper and Bros., 1952), p. 54.

4. A. C. Knudson, "The New Christology", Contemporary Thinking About Jesus, edited by Thomas Kepler (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1944), p. 223.

5. Ibid., p. 224.

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should be to his followers and the world". Then too, the doctrines of the Virgin Birth and the bodily resurrection are not considered essential to the new Christology.⁷

In this manner Knudson proceeded to construct the Christ whom he considered adequate for his day, choosing what he desired from the Sacred Record to help him in his construction, filling any gaps with his own speculations.

Even the much lauded Georgia Harkness felt at liberty to overrule those portions of the Scriptures which do not fit into her Christology.

. . . Much of what is recorded as the resurrection story is poetry and high mythology not mere legend, but legend with a sacred meaning like the song of the angels on the first Christmas eve. To literalize it is to flatten it out and to raise unanswerable questions.⁸

One wonders what questions are answered by the use of her reasoning.

The more intense the suspicion of the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, the more dim becomes the view of Christ. One wonders how it is that some men like C. J. Cadoux even dared to call their manufactured apparitions "Christ". Cadoux purposed to show "The Way to the Real Jesus".⁹ With cool calculation he proceeded to cast doubt on every vital claim which the Scriptures make for Christ. It is no wonder that those caught in the aftermath of such a cold and skeptical rationalism are caused to wonder whether Jesus Christ was actually the founder of Chris-

6. Ibid., p. 225.

7. Loc. cit.

8. Georgia Harkness, "Jesus is Lord", Contemporary Thinking About Jesus, op. cit., p. 353.

9. C. J. Cadoux, "The Way to the Real Jesus", Ibid., p. 195 ff.

tianity. Such a thought seems to border on the preposterous, but it was still considered of enough importance that John Baillie actually contributed a chapter for the work Contemporary Thinking About Jesus entitled "Was He Really the Founder".¹⁰

It is, however, not the extreme liberals who are to be reckoned with alone. Men regarded as conservatives are the most subtle in their assault upon the Scriptural picture of Christ. Rufus M. Jones called Christ "... a very good man, perhaps the best man who ever lived".¹¹ C. E. M. Joad described Christ as the "... leading exponent of prophetic literature".¹² While they appear to pay high tribute to Christ, they in reality diminish His status in their theological framework to that which is less than Very God and Very Man.

Faced with all of these pictures of Christ, one is led to wonder "Which Christ?" Much as men peddle wares, many modern theologians peddle their "christs". But their wares have the tell-tale marks of the counterfeit. The fact of their variety casts strong suspicion upon their genuineness. The true Christ of the Scriptures is not to be mistaken for these cheap, makeshift concoctions of men.

Why A Christ? Another question which comes to the mind of one who studies much of modern Christological thought is, "Why then a Christ?" When the matter of sin in the human race is deliberately ignored there is little need for a Saviour. The extreme optimism for a millennial age

10. John Baillie, Ibid., pp. 33-43.

11. Carl F. H. Henry, op. cit., p. 170.

12. Ibid., p. 171.

which followed in the wake of the first World War, politely dismissed the need for the Lamb of God who died for the sins of the world. Suddenly man felt quite capable in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth without the King. But the loud huzzas of the Kingdom campaigners suddenly hushed when news of impending world wide crisis were noised in an ever increasing crescendo. Red-faced theologians were suddenly compelled to make some re-adjustments in their systems and make room for that vexatious word "sin" which somehow always demands attention.

No doubt the theology which has been most popular in recent years is the crisis theology of Barth and Brunner which takes real account of the sin problem. But one is caused to wonder when reading men such as Reinhold Niebuhr whether their contemporary Christ is sufficient for the sin problem which they admit.

. . . All definitions of Christ which affirm both His divinity and humanity in the sense that they ascribe both infinite and historically conditioned and eternal and unconditioned qualities to His nature must verge on logical nonsense.¹³

When all has been said, one always comes back to the inescapable fact that either Christ was all that the Scriptures claim Him to be or else many men are still hopelessly disillusioned and lost in their sins.

Who Then is Christ? Another question which harasses the mind of one who is exposed to modern Christological speculations is: "Who then is Christ?" If the Scriptures are to be regarded with suspicion as to their trustworthiness, where may one get a reliable picture of Christ? If the Scriptures give a faulty description of Jesus Christ, how may we

13. Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), II, 74.

know the real Christ? Considering further what Edwin Lewis reported concerning extra-Biblical sources referring to Christ, it makes the problem even more acute. "There are less than a dozen references to Jesus in first-century literature outside of Christian circles, and every one of those references is under critical suspicion."¹⁴ Thus, logically one is led to recognize the irrefutable fact that only from the Scriptures may any valid deductions concerning the Christ be made. So, inevitably a man's concept of Christ is determined in a large measure by his attitude to the Scriptures.

The trend of modern Christological development following the Barth and Brunner theologies has definitely been closer to the Scriptural presentation of Christ than was the humanistic Jesus of half-century ago. But one must always be hesitant in applauding a Christology which develops around a faulty view of the Scriptures. It is always necessary to keep in mind that ". . . they have only a fallible revelation, and hence their God-man must always be, to some extent, a revelation obscured as well as a revelation revealed."¹⁵

There are those who have insisted that, after all, the historical Jesus is not important. The classical representative of this group is Albert Schweitzer who has made the following claim.

The abiding and eternal in Jesus is absolutely independent of historical knowledge and can only be under-

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14. Edwin Lewis, "The Gospel Figure", Contemporary Thinking About Jesus, edited by Thomas Kepler (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1944), p. 347.
 15. Carl F. H. Henry, Protestant Dilemma (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1949), pp. 207, 208.

stood by contact with His spirit which is still at work in the world. In proportion as we have the Spirit of Jesus we have the true knowledge of Jesus.¹⁶

In this type of Christology the Person of Christ disappears in the mist of an ineffable something which is experienced. In a mysticism which is as divorced from objective Truth as this appears to be one wonders whether faith is expected to thrive on wishful thinking.

Then there are those moderns who have professed to champion the historical Christ, but quite apart from the Sacred Writ. D. T. Rowling-
son of Boston University School of Theology appealed for a return to the historical Jesus but at the same time made little attempt to honor the full message of the Scriptures concerning Jesus. He stated that the first Christians recognized the importance of the historical Jesus and that He appeared to them in "resurrected vision".¹⁷ He insisted further that theology must go beyond the forms of thought and the forms of ex-
pression which belonged to Jesus' thought world.¹⁸

Another writer claimed that the Deity of Christ does not enter the sphere of history at all.¹⁹ All of this deliberate disregard of scriptural truth causes one to wonder--

. . . how the view of the essential deity of Christ can itself be sustained, while the trustworthiness of the Biblical records is jeopardized, or is accepted only where it suits the predilections of the theologian for constructive or destructive

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16. A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York, A & C Black, 1945), p. 399.
 17. D. T. Rowlingson, "On the Neglect of the Jesus of History", Religion in Life, IX:547, Autumn, 1951.
 18. Ibid., p. 550.
 19. D. D. Williams, What Present Day Theologians are Thinking (New York, Harper and Bros., 1952), p. 106.

purposes, is hardly apparent. Why Brunner, for example, should be permitted to champion the deity of Christ while maintaining a reserve about His Virgin birth, and yet protest that others champion the sinlessness of Christ while maintaining a reserve about His essential deity is not quite clear.²⁰

A. Z. Conrad in viewing the parade of Christological developments after the first World War remarked: "This is the Jesus of Modernism! Whence came He? There is absolutely no record whatsoever of such a
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Jesus." Such a comment is still very much in order today. Furthermore,

Until the Jesus of modernism is effective in leading at least one soul to say, "I have found salvation, hope and eternal life through the un-historic creation of human theory and human philosophy," he can lay no great claim to humanity's acceptance and faith.²²

This will always remain a valid criterion of any Christology which is in vogue. Only the Christ of the Scriptures can meet with such a confirmation in human experience.

B. Christ and the Scriptures

Finally, it is necessary to define briefly the relationship which the Scriptures bear to Christ. A. A. Strong observed that:

. . . the only ultimate authority is God, for he is truth, justice and love, but he can impose beliefs and command obedience only as he is known. Authority belongs therefore only to God revealed, and because Christ is God revealed he can say, "All

20. Carl F. H. Henry, op. cit., p. 223.

21. A. Z. Conrad, Jesus Christ at the Crossroads (New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1924), p. 40.

22. Ibid., p. 48.

authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth". (Matt. 28:18) The final authority in religion is Jesus Christ.²³

No professing Christian could repudiate this. Final authority certainly rests with God. However, Strong made some dangerous concessions when he claimed: "The Scripture is the imperfect mirror of Christ. It is defective yet it reflects him and leads to him."²⁴ When men otherwise conservative in their theology raise the white flag in this vital area of the faith, they undermine their very moorings. Liberals must delight in such serious concessions. If the Bible presents a faulty picture of Christ, how is one to correct that picture? Such a dangerous opinion grants license for any individual to build his own Christology with those elements of Scriptural teaching which suit him, rejecting those which are contrary to his own concepts. Such a Christ is in the end nothing more than a golden calf built in the name of the Christian faith with elements which have the tell-tale marks of sinful human judgment rather than the authoritative marks of a holy God.

Much of present day theology has insisted that revelation is a personal encounter with God. One may as a believer become as contemporary with Christ as was Peter. Furthermore, being face to face with Christ as his contemporary also means having the true content of revelation. Therefore, they reason, why insist on the trustworthiness of Biblical writers when we may ourselves know Christ? Our authority is Christ,

23. A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia, The Judson Press, 1907), p. 218.

24. Ibid., p. 219.

not a set of antique records which are unreliable. This type of reasoning has characterized the crisis theology. The attempt to by-pass the Scriptures is obvious. Experience becomes the final point of reference for the crisis theologians.

C. Summary

Jesus is the Word of God and the Revelation of God to man. The letter of the Scriptures should never be regarded as having in itself any merit or authority whatsoever. But any attempt to separate the Living Word from the written word is utter folly. The Lord Himself confessed that the Scriptures bear witness to His person. (John 5:39) The more the Scriptures are revered the more honor is bestowed upon the Person with whom they are concerned. Also, the less they are honored the less the Living Word is exalted. The Truth concerning our Saviour is found in the Scriptures and it is quickened to hearts by the Spirit. All of saving Truth through Christ which has been appropriated to human hearts by faith finds its ultimate ground in the Bible. The Bible should indeed be regarded as sacred because it speaks of the living Saviour. So long as the Bible is properly regarded Christology will be on a sound basis. The Scriptures are without question, indispensable to a proper concept of Christ.

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25. Emil Brunner, Reason and Revelation (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1947), p. 168 ff.
 26. Benjamin Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1948) p. 67.

CHAPTER VI

THE SCRIPTURES--INDISPENSABLE AUTHORITY

In spite of the modern aversion for "authoritarianism", the fact remains that civilization and culture alike proceed fundamentally upon the principle of authority. Any man who refuses to rely upon authority refuses what is basic to human progress. If science had no authoritative standards and norms to lead and regulate its investigations, it would never have advanced beyond a mere speculative philosophy. If this is apparently true in the realm of the **physical** why should it be denied in the realm of the spiritual? It is utter folly to reject the importance of the principle of authority in religious matters.

The point of contention, however, within religion has not been so much the necessity of authority as it has been the question of where that authority finally resides. This question has been discussed to some extent in the previous chapters. It has been shown why neither reason, nor experience, nor the Church have an authority more ultimate than that of the Scriptures. The treatment in this chapter has been confined to a more specific explanation of why the Scriptures in toto are an indispensable authority.

A. The Need for Authority

James Martineau, writing at the close of the last century, vigorously attacked the traditional Protestant appeal to Scriptural authority. ¹

1. James Martineau, Seat of Authority in Religion (New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1890).

With reckless abandon he charged Protestantism with confiding in a stereotyped and lifeless authority.² He evaluated the Romanistic claim to authority in the Church as being above that of the Protestants in the Scriptures.

Itself the sacred enclosure of whatever is divine and supernatural on earth, it has no problems to solve, no legitimacy to make out, no doctrine to prove, but simply to live on and witness the grace it bears.³

He ruthlessly assailed the authenticity of the Bible books and illustrated a typical liberal misinterpretation of Scriptural content that borders on naivete. He went so far as to claim that it would have been better if the Apostles had remained silent instead of propagating their own ideas why Christ lived--ideas upon which was built myth and superstition. He observed, however, with apparent satisfaction an " . . . immense and widening mass of Christian mythology, from the first unstable and now at last apparently swerving to its fall, and let it fall; for it has corrupted the religion of Christ into an apocalyptic fiction."⁴ In the aftermath of such a deliberate assault upon the most vital truths of Revelation, man is left to wander either in hopeless skepticism or else he may assume that the seat of authority is inherent within his own reason. Modern higher criticism has been much more tactful in its approach and for that reason, more subtle and dangerous. Martineau's sentiment finds varied degrees of sympathy in the destructive higher-criticism of our day. Currently, most of the

2. Ibid., p. 129.

3. Ibid., p. 171.

4. Ibid., p. 325.

popular theologians would shrink back from the extremes of Martineau's position, but their own systems bear within them the same germ of method, which if carried to its ultimate conclusion would allow the same extreme.

When that which is basic and fundamental to Protestantism has been repeatedly assaulted, the consequence is inevitable. T. O. Wedel, writing on "The Lost Authority of the Pulpit", made this observation:

. . . Years of listening to contemporary sermons in an institution devoted to homiletical disciples, have convinced me at least that such weakness as the pulpit suffers today consists in its shaky theological anchorage.⁵

He went on to comment that the ". . . modern pulpit has seen a torrent of 'ought' sermons--appealing to moral striving".⁶ He continued by making a strong appeal for a return to a Biblical theology. This is an accurate commentary of a great deal of modern preaching. In light of this, the complacency and indifference which prevails among those who occupy the pews is not difficult to understand. When the message from the pulpit is nothing more than a moral "pep-talk", it can hardly be expected to deal with the grave issues of sin which are very real among the life of the average congregation. These issues can find their solution only in the authoritative Word of God.

B. The Case for the Authoritative Scriptures

Inspiration. In light of the investigation which the writer has made, he is convinced that this is one of the most vital areas pertain-

5. Theodore, O. Wedel, "The Lost Authority of the Pulpit" Theology Today, IX: 167, July, 1952.

6. Ibid., p. 169.

ing to an apologetic which deals with the authority of the Scriptures. Hodge described the Old Testament and New Testament as "... written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, therefore infallible and ⁷ divine authority in all things pertaining to faith and practice".

(Italics my own) The reasonable conclusion may therefore be: if the Scriptures are inspired they must be infallible and if they are infallible they must be authoritative. No matter how conservative a man may be theologically, and no matter how much authority he assigns to the Scriptures, if he yields ground at the point of inspiration he is undermining his whole position. The writer was surprised in reading the writings of recognized conservative scholars to find unnecessary concessions at the vital point of inspiration.

Bishop Foster contended that all parts of the Bible are true but they are not all necessarily inspired. His whole argument centered around the idea that inspiration was not necessary for certain parts of the Bible (such as reporting historical events) but that it was necessary in the revelation of certain doctrines which could not be ⁸ otherwise known. He defined his position with the proposition that ⁹ authority is grounded in truth, not in inspiration. His position may be evaluated at this point as due to holding a seriously restricted concept of inspiration. Inspiration is not only that element whereby

7. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), I, 152.

8. Randolph Foster, Prolegomena (New York, Hunt and Eaton, 1889), p. 279 ff.

9. Ibid., p. 283.

the authors of our Bible received supernatural insight into the mysteries of God and His eternal plan of redemption which could not have been known otherwise. It was also that element of divine direction which protected the writers from inaccurate reporting of that which they observed. This complete view of inspiration is consistent with a theology that insists upon an infallible Bible. Anyone who holds to a theory of inspiration such as Bishop Foster propounded, is faced with the very perplexing question: "Just exactly what part of the Bible is then inspired? Is it for man to determine this?" Thus the door is left wide open for the rodent of biased humanism to enter and nip at the very vitals of the Christian faith.

A. H. Strong's view of inspiration made even more pronounced concessions to liberalism. He maintained that inspiration did not guarantee inerrancy in things not essential to the main purpose of the Scrip-
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tures. This undoubtedly suggests an authoritative element within the Scriptures--which is not identical in any sense to the Scriptures in toto. This type of definition finds ready acceptance in much of contemporary theology. It is much in accord with views of men such as Bultman who insists that the real problem is not whether or not the Bible is the supreme authority for the Christian faith but rather centers around the question: "How can we have the authoritative content of the Biblical message today when we must read the Bible with minds
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shaped by our modern understanding of the world?"

10. A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia, The Judson Press, 1917), p. 215

11. D. D. Williams, What Present Day Theologians are Thinking (New York, Harper and Bros., 1952), p. 52.

An affirmation of Scriptural inspiration certainly is not a guarantee of orthodoxy. Every theologian who believes anything about the Christian faith is ready to assign some degree of inspiration to the Scriptures. The question is, exactly what kind of inspiration do they attribute to the writers of the Biblical books.

Alan Richardson, an Anglican theologian who has been regarded as a conservative, had this to say about inspiration: "The experience of the Biblical writers does not seem to have been different in kind from that of Christian prophets and teachers in subsequent ages, including that of many Christians in our times."¹² Furthermore, one is not to regard the writings of the Canon as Holy Scriptures because they were "more inspired", but rather because they concern themselves with the historical events dealing with occurrences which find their culmination¹³ in Jesus Christ and His Church. In other words, the Scriptures are authoritative only because they deal with the redemptive events. There is no indication in this view how one is to know whether these writings are accurate. The mere fact that these writings deal with holy events, does not give any assurance that they can be trusted as reporting the truth faithfully.

It seems only logical to assume that after God had fulfilled His redemptive plan through the giving of His Son, He would provide for an absolutely infallible report of this to be given and preserved. This He accomplished by a unique inspiration of those who reported the re-

12. Alan Richardson, Christian Apologetics (New York, Harper and Bros., 1947), p. 207.

13. Ibid., p. 208.

demptive procedure--an inspiration which protected from error and which at the same time gave an infallible insight into the true meaning of these events.

The present-day aversion to the traditional Protestant view of inspiration certainly is not new. S. Harris in the last century insisted that "The Bible is not a collection of truths formulated in propositions which God from time to time whispered in the ear to be communicated to the world as the unchanging formula of thought and life for all time".¹⁴

C. A. Briggs argued that there are errors in the Scriptures, but they are all in circumstances, not in essentials.¹⁵ However, after there is admission of error in circumstances, on what basis is it to be assumed that there is no error in essentials? Furthermore, is man at liberty to determine what is essential and what is not? It would appear that a great deal of modern theology takes that liberty and manufactures a garb of theology which is tailor-made to fit very neatly the evolutionistic and humanistic frame of modern philosophy.

Many of the charges brought against the evangelical view of inspiration are apparently designed to make it appear ridiculous.

. . . It would be tragedy indeed if we would distort our ethical perspectives by putting on the same level of insight "hewing Agag in pieces before Yahweh" (I Sam. 15:33) and the great Christian principles of "overcoming evil with good." (Rom. 12:21)¹⁶

14. Samuel Harris, The Self-Revelation of God (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), p. 458

15. Charles A. Briggs, The Bible, The Church and The Reason, (New York, Charles Scribner's Son, 1892), p. 87.

16. Mary Ely Lyman, "The True and Lively Word", Religion in Life, XX: 511, Autumn, 1951.

A reading of this and the context from which it was taken makes the inference very obvious. The answer to the inferred charge is to say that the report of the incident in the Old Testament is the truth--it is a necessary part to the whole account of Revelation. The question is not whether or not every part of the Bible is of equal inspirational value, but rather it is whether every part is true or not. Just because one believes that every part of the Bible was truly inspired does not mean that one would insist that every part of the Bible is of equal inspirational value. A great number of the assaults which modern theologians make against the evangelical position are along this line, and often smack of a deliberate mis-interpretation of the evangelical position.

Before passing from the important subject of inspiration, a representative view from the crisis theologians should be considered. Brunner contended that higher criticism has made a doctrine of an infallible Bible impossible. He claimed that only an ignorant or insincere person can produce a complete Gospel harmony or reconcile all contradictions in the reports of Luke and Paul. He questioned the authenticity even of the New Testament books. This attitude undoubtedly classifies him with those liberal views of inspiration which have already been discussed.

The Scriptures Own Claim to Inspiration. The Sacred writers themselves claimed to be divinely inspired. "The Jewish law giver often

17. Emil Brunner, Reason and Revelation (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1947), p. 129.

18. Ibid., p. 129.

reminded those whom he addressed of the divine authority of his communications by the well known declaration 'the Lord spake unto Moses'

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... " Isaiah introduced many of his prophetic messages by the positive declaration, "thus saith the Lord".

Christ Himself recognized the divine authorship of the Old Testament: "... have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Matt. 22:31, 32, A.S.V.).

Peter maintained the inspiration of the Scriptures in Acts 1:16. "Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas ... " (A.S.V.) In the epistles Peter further declared his conviction that the prophets spoke "... as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (I Pet. 1:11, A.S.V.)

St. Paul had the same attitude to the writings of the Jewish prophets. "Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers." (Acts 28:25) In his second letter to Timothy he wrote: "Every Scripture is inspired of God ... " (marginal reading of A.S.V.)

But the writers of the New Testament also claimed the same kind of inspiration for themselves. Wakefield gave three very convincing points to prove this. The fact of their convictions regarding their own inspiration was evident first of all "in the general tone of confidence and

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19. Samuel Wakefield, Christian Theology (New York, Phillips and Hunt, 1869), p. 74.

20. Ibid., p. 75 ff.

authority with which they delivered their discourses." It is interesting to note the difference in the character of the disciples before and after Pentecost. They became men who spoke ". . . with great power". (Acts 4:33)

Next, it has been noted, that the apostles claimed their own teachings with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as being of equal authority with them. Paul declared the believers to be ". . . built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets". (Eph. 2:20, A.S.V.) Peter expressed the same attitude in this regard when he urged: ". . . That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles". (II Pet. 3:2, A.S.V.) He assigned the writings of Paul to the same level as the Old Testament Scriptures when he said: ". . . even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (II Pet. 3:15,16, A.S.V.)

Another proof of the Apostle's claim to inspiration is apparent ". . . by their own positive and express declarations". The "thus saith the Lord" positiveness is as evident in their writings as in those of the Old Testament prophets. There is further evidence in the salutation of Paul in his first letter to Timothy: "Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour and Christ Jesus our

21. Ibid., p. 75.

22. Loc. cit.

23. Ibid., p. 76.

hope." (1:1, A.S.V.) In the first Epistle to the Corinthians Paul definitely affirmed his authority as resting on the fact that he had the testimony of God. (1 Cor. 2:1) This note of God-given authority and divine insight into truth carried through the rest of Paul's writings as well.

There is, therefore, abundant reason to affirm the Scripture's own testimony to inspiration. On the basis of this it may be concluded that "therefore, either the sacred writers spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, or that they were imposters".²⁴

In this chapter the writer has sought to establish the Scriptures as an indispensable authority. This space has been devoted to a treatment of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The reason for this should be obvious. The doctrine of inspiration is basic in any attempt to assign the Scriptures an authoritative role. A sound view on inspiration will go a long way to a proper concept of Scriptural authority.

. . . For, however fully we might be convinced of the honesty of the sacred writers, and of the general truthfulness of our religion, when we should proceed to examine its nature and to investigate its doctrines, its precepts, its promises, and its institutions, we could not have perfect confidence in the detailed account, unless we had reason to believe that its authors had been so assisted by supernatural influence as to be infallibly preserved from all error.²⁵

Other Views of Scriptural Authority. Thomas Chalmers writing in the middle of the last century expressed his contempt for those of his

24. Ibid., p. 72.

25. Ibid., p. 73.

time who propagated their own philosophies quite irrespective of Revealed Truth.

. . . Now this might be all very fair, were there no Bible and no revelation in existence. But it is not fair, that all this looseness, and all this variety should be still floating in the world, in the face of an authoritative communication from God Himself. Had no message come to us from the fountain head of truth, it were natural enough for every individual mind to betake itself to its own speculation. But a message has come to us, bearing in its forehead every character of authenticity.²⁶

Such reproof is much in order for a great deal of present-day sentiment. As much as ever before, men live morally and think philosophically as if no positive moral standard existed and theorize as if truth were an elusive abstraction quite impossible to attain. The most tragic part of it all is the fact that this type of sentiment has colored the thinking of even those who are respected as religious leaders standing in the Protestant heritage. Indeed, certain claim to truth is swiftly stamped with the magic word "intolerance". Those who claim any such degree of certainty because they believe in an infallible Bible are contemptuously branded "Fundamentalist". The much recognized Tillich remarks that ". . . no one, not even one who believes, and not even a church can boast of the truth, just as no one can boast of love. Orthodoxy is intellectual Pharisaism."²⁷

However, every theologian who claims the Christian heritage, assigns some measure of authority to the Scriptures. But it is no longer popular to hold to the traditional Protestant concept of an authorita-

26. Thomas Chalmers, Christian Revelation (New York, Robert Carter, 1845), II, 434.

27. Alan Richardson, Christian Apologetics (New York, Harper and Bros., 1947), p. 247.

tive, infallible Scriptures. The practice of regarding the Scriptures as ultimate in their authority has been considered old-fashioned and completely repudiated by the modern critique. A. C. Knudson explained that: "It crumbled, however, before the advance of Biblical criticism, of natural science, and of modern philosophy of the divine immanence²⁸ and today represents an 'overcome standpoint'". It would be tragic indeed if Mr. Knudson's evaluation were correct. But there is still a very healthy and virile Protestantism which has refused to make concessions to a humanistically inclined theology and certainly is a long ways from "overcome".

Knudson gave an accurate interpretation of the popular crisis theologian's view of Scriptural authority.

. . .Karl Barth and Emil Brunner are at present emphasizing the miracle of revelation as the basis thing in theology, but the content of revelation they determine is quite subjective, rejecting altogether the doctrine of Biblical infallibility. These different schools have all sought to establish the absoluteness of Christianity by some sort of more or less miraculous isolation, but the older supernaturalistic authoritarianism they all repudiate. They recognize no purely miraculous authentication of truth before which the human reason must bow. Revelation for them is self-evidencing; it justifies itself.²⁹

This describes a popular attitude to Revelation and to the Bible. The Bible is not to be regarded as an authority before which reason bows. Much of this attitude is simply nothing more than an aversion for the claim of the supernatural and the miracle. But the position of the

28. Albert C. Knudson, The Doctrine of God (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1930), p. 110.

29. Ibid., pp. 110, 111.

crisis theologians who seem to confess some belief in the supernatural is not explained that easily. They have insisted that revelation event³⁰ is never to be equated with revealed doctrine. Furthermore, Brunner has insisted that "Redemption is always a revelation, and revelation is always redemptive".³¹

However, the redemptive activity of God also requires a divine disclosure of the meaning of that event. Even if one should concede that a soul could possibly have a personal salvation experience without knowing that a Revelation literature existed, that experience would be meaningless unless its interpretation and significance were made known to the subject. Brunner insisted that revelation is an event, not a doctrine. But what comfort or hope for salvation assurance could a man receive by merely reading that Jesus Christ died 2000 years ago and rose again from the dead? However, when he reads that Jesus Christ died for his sins and was raised for his justification, that brings hope to his heart and encourages him by faith to seize the promise of God for his own heart. The Bible has been and will continue to be the indispensable source book by which man may come to know the true meaning of that which God has accomplished for him and offers to him.

It is difficult to understand why there should be such an aversion for a belief in revealed truth and doctrine. Barth followed the same line of thought when he insisted:

30. Emil Brunner, Reason and Revelation (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1947), p. 7.

31. Ibid., p. 8.

. . . It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the content of the Bible, but the right divine thoughts about men. Not how we find the way to him, but how he has sought and found the way to us. The Word of God is within the Bible.³²

But just what may man know about God? Barth goes on:

. . . My friend, you must understand that if you ask about God and if I am really to tell you about him dialectic is all that can be expected from me. I have done what I could to make you see that neither my affirmation nor my denial lays claim to being God's truth. Neither one is more than a witness to that truth, which stands in the center, between every yes and no.³³

This type of theism might well be expected from one who claims the Bible does not reveal propositional truth, only event. It illustrates what one scholar observed: "It is our conviction that unless there is a reasonable, credible, communication of doctrinal truth in revelation, then revelation is plagued with subjectivism and solipsism."³⁴ Barth seems to have delighted in calling himself and those who believe like he does, "space-landers" and those who hold to the traditional orthodox view of revelation as "flatlanders".³⁵ If he called himself a "space-lander" because his system is suggestive of a man who finds himself mysteriously suspended in an undefinable theological atmosphere in which there is no point of reference, he had a good reason for the name.

One thing is sure. A minister who embraces Barth's view of revelation has nothing but a hopeless task to face--for what is there to

32. Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, (translated by Douglas Horton, USA, The Pilgrim Press, 1928), p. 43.

33. Ibid., p. 58.

34. Bernard Ramm, Problems in Christian Apologetics (Portland, Western Baptist Theological Seminary, 1949), p. 45.

35. Barth, op. cit., p. 209.

tell about God? What inspiration may a man receive for his faith when he learns from a preacher tainted with this skepticism, that there is nothing one may positively affirm about God except that the truth about Him exists somewhere between the dialectic of yes and no? What is the task of the minister then according to Barth: ". . . the word of God is at once the necessary and the impossible task of the minister. This is my ultimate conclusion."³⁶ This type of frustration is undoubtedly the consequence of any minister who fails to regard the Bible as a divine communication of certain truth about God and His purpose for man. Unless there is confidence in the Bible as indeed the Word of God, the authority of the pulpit disintegrates in the mists of unbelief and biased reservations. The Scriptures are indeed the indispensable authority of the Protestant pulpit.

H. A. Bosley evaluated the authority of the Bible as ". . . that of a long time experience which validated certain moral and spiritual principles".³⁷ If the Bible's authority is valid only because of its span of experience, there is no particular reason to regard it as an indispensable authority. One might by the reading of other books become acquainted with human experience. The explanation for such a view is revealed by a further statement from the same author:

. . . No greater task confronts the minister of Jesus Christ today than that of rebuilding man's shattered confidence in himself and in his fellows as potential colleagues in the achievement of a world in which justice and law undergird international life and dealings.³⁸

36. Ibid., p. 212.

37. H. A. Bosley, On Final Ground (New York, Harper and Bros., 1946), p. 23 ff.

38. Ibid., pp. 256, 257.

If man seeks only to regain his confidence in himself he might very well regard the Bible as an authority only by virtue of its span of experience. Such humanistic thinking would refuse to believe the Bible to be authoritative because it is a revelation from God. But only when a man recognized his true sinful state and has come to recognize that he has no ability to redeem himself, he finds in the Bible a message that rings with authority which is beyond man and more than experience,--it is God speaking.

D. The Scriptures--Indispensable Authority

For the Man Seeking to Know God. The writer has previously pointed out that a proper view of man will alone establish a good reason for the absolute necessity of a revelation from God. Any theology which pretends to explain away the fact of universal sin that is in the human race, finds it a simple matter to explain away the necessity of Revealed Truth. When they go above the Scriptures to maintain that the Christian faith teaches that ". . . life in all its struggle is good at the core"³⁹ they have laid down a false proposition upon which they build their superstructure of thought quite irrespective of an authoritative Scriptures. This has not been an attempt to present an elaborate answer showing why their concept of man is false. Suffice it to say that such a false anthropology is held in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary from human experience, personal and historical.

But when we accept the Scriptural interpretation of man which is

39. D. D. Williams, What Present Day Theologians are Thinking (New York, Harper and Bros., 1952), p. 149.

confirmed in the whole realm of experience, man is seen as he really is, born with a sinful propensity that distorts his judgment and makes his reason unreliable in moral matters and certainly completely paralyzes him in his efforts to redeem himself by his own efforts. Modern theology has been too inclined to forget that the will is of a primary importance in the life of man in his moral relationships. When the mind of man is poisoned by sin, his will is self-centered and self-seeking. Only that authority which has the evidence of being of God, can possibly shake man from this condition. The Scriptures are that authority which the Spirit of God constantly places in the path of man and it is by the Spirit that man may by yielding his will, come to recognize the authority of the Scriptures. Man in his condition needs a powerful and tangible authority, the counsels of which are unmistakeably clear and absolutely true. An authority of a lesser kind will only feed the sinful pride which is in man and set his will even more firmly in a man-centered philosophy. This will finally cause him to question the very counsels of God--"yea hath God said?" (Gen. 3:3) Any authority which is not ultimately centered in God is centered in man. The deliberate attempts to reject such truth of the Scriptures which does not fit into the biased schemes of men, is akin to the Edenic sin of which God said: "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." (Gen. 3:22 A.S.V.)

As a Norm of Christian Experience and Theology. The Bible has not always been called the norm of Christian theology. Most modern theologians have claimed the norm of the Christian faith as something apart from the Scriptures. Therefore, this norm is not only to be considered

useful in judging human experience, but it is employed as well in the interpretation of the Scriptures. It is that which is used as a point of reference in seeking "God's message within the Scriptures"--an adventure which so many moderns seem to delight in.

Tillich insisted that this norm is a product of the churches' encounter with the Christian message and that for that reason, this norm grows.⁴⁰ The closest he confessed to come to a definition of this norm is that it is: "the new Being in Jesus as the Christ".⁴¹

A. C. Knudson claimed that every Christian theologian has a norm apart from the Scriptures by which he interprets the Scriptural content. In fact he went so far as to make other religions a necessity in the full understanding of the Christian faith.⁴² Knudson with many other theologians insisted that the norm is found in Christ alone. It has been characteristic of much modern Protestant theology to make it appear that either man accepts the authority of Jesus Christ or he accepts the authority of the Scriptures. In the previous chapter the fallacy of separating Christ from the Scriptures was explained. Pitting the authority of Christ against that of the Scriptures is like pitting the authority of God Himself against His Revealed Truth. The respect which is shown for the Scriptures is at the same time respect for the authority of the Living Word.

40. Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1959), I, 48.

41. Ibid., p. 50.

42. Albert C. Knudson, The Doctrine of God (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1930), p. 174.

Reinhold Niebuhr proposed that the authority of the Scriptures lies in its presentation of the Heilsgeschichte. He suggested further:

. . . When the Bible becomes an authoritative compendium of social, economic, political and scientific knowledge it is used as a vehicle of the sinful sanctification of relative standards of knowledge and virtue which happen to be enshrined in religious canon.⁴³

One may be ready to admit that the Scriptures do not purpose to be an authority on these other fields, but true evangelicals refuse to believe that the Bible does not speak truthfully when it touches on these fields. It may further be allowed that the Scriptures frequently are misinterpreted to sanctify that which is inconsistent with the context of the Biblical message. But the misuse of Scriptures is no argument against the doctrine of an authoritative and infallible Scriptures.

Warfield built an excellent case for the traditional Protestant belief in an authoritative Scriptures. Writing in the Reformed tradition he made the claim that "In Reformed faith we have the most consistent defense of the Bible's infallibility."⁴⁴ His whole accusation against Arminianism apparently was directed against their synergistic interpretation of salvation. The gist of his argument is: "If man has freedom and ability intrinsic within himself whereby he may by his own choice come to experience salvation, why is there any need for an infallible Scriptures?" In the last analyses it constitutes a denial of

43. Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), II, 48.

44. Benjamin B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1948), pp. 25 ff.

45. Ibid., p. 29.

prevenient Grace. His strong monergism came to the surface when he claimed that general revelation (that is nature which speaks of God's majesty and power) is addressed to all intelligent creatures but Special Revelation which reveals His Will ". . . is addressed to a special class of sinner, to whom God would make known His salvation. But in the rigid system of predestination that such thinking ultimately culminates in, it is hard to see why God should need the agency of an inspired literature when He has already willed His elect to eternal bliss. But when every man is considered as a free moral agent who may choose either to love God or follow sin, the need for an authoritative Scriptures becomes very real. Granting man the ability to respond to the Truth as it is in the Word and as it is impressed upon his heart by the Holy Spirit, is in no wise diminishing the necessity of an authoritative and inspired Holy Scriptures.

E. The Scriptures--Indestructible Authority

The name "destructive criticism" can be misleading. No amount of criticism will ever be able to destroy a particle of Truth. Men who scheme to destroy the Word of God will ultimately come to realize that in reality the Word will destroy those who resist its counsels. What fools men make of themselves trying with their few molecules of brain matter to challenge the counsels of an Almighty God. Quite appropriately one might say:

. . . Nothing has been more futile than the Devil's dynamite. It has not been able to dislodge a single stone

46. Ibid., p. 19.

in God's Almighty splendid cathedral of truth.
 Detonation and smoke have deceived and misled
 many.⁴⁷

In spite of the smoke which is raised in the name of modern scholarship, the Word stands as an impregnable fortress. In a spirit akin to that from the words penned by Francis Scott Key in the national anthem, one may be confident that through all of the darkness and chaos which men by their own choice impose upon themselves and often seek to impose on others, the Bible will always be there with its message of the true Light. Until the door of Grace closes, it shall point sinful men to the Saviour and throughout eternity its blessed truth shall be a song of praise on the lips of the blood-washed throng.

F. Summary

This portion of the study has shown that in man's quest for religious certainty he must rely on some ultimate authority. Only the Holy Scriptures are absolutely reliable in this important quest. The writers of these Scriptures were uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit not only in the sense that they were given insight into the mysteries of the Godhead and the redemptive provisions, but they were also kept from error in reporting the events and circumstances recorded in the Scriptures. Therefore, this infallible Record has the stamp of divine authority upon it and men in order to know God must respect its directive precepts and in order to retain their Christian relationship to God they must accept it as the norm of their religious thought and experience.

⁴⁷. A. Z. Conrad, Jesus Christ at the Crossroads (New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1924), p. 54.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

A. Conclusions

In the light of this study the writer has come to the following conclusions:

(1) Although natural revelation furnished a reliable and necessary truth of elementary character which points in the direction of God, it is nevertheless, insufficient evidence for reason to deduce from it a satisfactory knowledge concerning God and His will for man. Reason itself is corrupt and finite so that natural revelation is much too vague for reason to make any reliable deductions concerning man's proper behaviour before God and man. Reason after it has reflected upon its own character and upon the evidence which natural revelation yields is still haunted by the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Only the Revealed Truth of the Holy Scriptures can supply the answer to this question. It is the proper office of Reason to examine the credentials of this Revelation and when its genuine character has been recognized to bow in its presence and respect this great Truth as indeed from God. The highest mission of reason has then been accomplished and its most important quest realized.

(2) This investigation has shown that a religious experience detached from objective and ultimate Reality is vain. Only that experience which is in vital relationship to Christ is a true Christian experience. But such an experience must be preceded by an active and intelligent faith in the Person and Work of Christ. The Scriptures

are the indispensable Source Book from which men learn about the Saviour and the way to know Him--Whom to know is life. After Christ has been received as personal Saviour, the Bible continues to be an indispensable norm to give the Christian inspiration and direction in his life and thought.

(3) The Church has been strong when She has lived close to the truth as it is revealed in the Scriptures. Her very life is linked to the saving truth which God has revealed and preserved in the Holy Scriptures. The work of the Church, if it is to be effective, must receive impulse and direction from the Scriptures.

(4) Only the Christ of the Scriptures is adequate for the need of our day. When men question the authenticity and integrity of the Scriptures they are undermining the only real source of Christological truth. The Scriptures are the indispensable and authoritative literature which point to the Lamb of God Who "taketh away the sins of the world".

(5) There is sufficient evidence to bear out the fact that the Scriptures are indeed inspired by the Holy Spirit. Not only were men by inspiration enabled to report accurately the historical events pertaining to redemption, but they were also given supernatural assistance to interpret these events and record them for posterity. Since God inspired the Scriptures, they are authoritative and absolutely reliable. Their authority is indispensable in the Holy Spirit's work of warning men in their sins and wooing them to the Saviour. They are, furthermore, an indispensable authority for the Christian in his life and thinking.

B. Problems for Further Study

There are a number of points in this study which could be developed a great deal more. Especially enlightening would be a thorough study of the relationship of the Scriptures to evangelism. This might include a statement, supported if possible by statistics, which would explain the effect that destructive criticism of the Bible had upon the growth of our leading Protestant denominations. It might also include a more thorough investigation of the necessity of the Scriptures in the missionary endeavor of the Church.

The relationship of the Scriptures to the ethical level of different cultures would also be most enlightening. It is always interesting to observe how the Scriptures are instrumental in elevating the moral standards of a people.

Although this study has been cursory in many respects, it has shown that the Scriptures are indispensable and that rejection of the Scriptures is indeed a rejection of God-given truth which is essential to man's salvation. It has also shown that this is not merely a presupposition but is borne out by experience. Through this study the writer has become more convinced than ever that the hope of the Church and, indeed, the hope of civilization, lies in a return to the Bible as the Word of God and an unreserved confidence in its precepts and teachings.

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