"Well before the transdenominational convergence of what we now call the evangelical church, B. B. Warfield spent forty years as the Presbyterian Horatius, holding the bridge that leads into the citadel of the Westminster Standards against those he saw as spoilers from the wastelands of liberalism. A heavyweight academic and a complete player in the fields of systematic, exegetical, historical, and polemical theology, he scattered his wisdom in hundreds of articles, which this book surveys and integrates with great skill. Warfield can now be seen in his full stature as the godly giant that he was, thanks to Fred Zaspel's labor of love. Best thanks, and hallelujah!"

J. I. Packer, Board of Governors' Professor of Theology, Regent College

"B. B. Warfield's distinguished achievements as a systematic theologian have been obscured by the episodic, ad hoc publication of his major theological statements. But even if Warfield did not think it necessary that he write a single, connected systematic theology, it is nonetheless most welcome that Fred Zaspel has done the job for him! The result is a very useful compendium that gives both admirers and detractors of Warfield a full and coherent account of his theology. All who are in the least interested in Warfield or who care at all about vigorous Calvinist theology will find this a most valuable book."

Mark Noll, Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History, University of Notre Dame; author, America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln

"Serious Christians who have dipped into Warfield find his writings to be a wholly admirable mix of rigorous exegesis, mature theological synthesis, and frank devotion to Christ. Much of his work is known only to specialists, not least because when Warfield first published it, it was scattered over many journals and books. Indeed, a fair bit of it was never published. Zaspel's *Theology of B. B. Warfield* remedies the problem admirably. One hopes and prays that it will entice a new generation of readers to delve deeply into Warfield's contributions."

D. A. Carson, Research Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

"The 'Lion of Old Princeton' roars and purrs in this helpful survey. The author finely displays the passion and wit as well as intellectual credibility of Warfield's remarkable work." **Michael Horton,** J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California

"B. B. Warfield was the last towering figure in a long line of Old School Presbyterian intellectuals known for their unshakable faith in the truth of Scripture and their practical, experiential Calvinism. Both profound and prolific, Warfield produced an invaluable body of theological and polemical writings that remain deservedly influential today. Fred Zaspel's work is the first detailed, readable digest of Warfield's theology, and it is an immensely helpful volume. Dr. Zaspel puts Warfield's published writings in clear perspective against the theological issues that dominated that era. He also shows how those same issues—and Warfield's clear and persuasive teaching—remain relevant to us today. Dr. Zaspel writes with such clarity and simplicity that this volume will be a valuable help and encouragement to lay people and serious theologians as well—a highly recommended addition to anyone's library."

John MacArthur, Pastor, Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California; President, The Master's College and Seminary "B. B. Warfield was without doubt the greatest of the theological minds of Old Princeton, and he remains a towering influence within both his own confessional Presbyterian tradition and wider conservative evangelicalism. Nevertheless, while his writings are still in print, clearly written, and very accessible, their occasional nature means that there is no convenient way of gaining from them a good grasp of the overall shape of his theology. Until now, that is. In this volume, pastor-theologian and passionate Warfield aficionado Fred Zaspel has produced a work of historical and theological synthesis that sets Warfield's thought in context and offers a comprehensive account of his thought on the major loci of theology and the controverted points of his day. In this, Fred has left us all—the veteran Warfield fan and the neophyte—deeply in his debt."

Carl Trueman, Academic Dean and Vice President, Westminster Theological Seminary

"B. B. Warfield does not need an introduction for evangelical Christians. He is well known as a major conservative theologian at the close of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. His scholarship in biblical, historical, and doctrinal fields was often without a match. As a Professor in Didactic and Polemic Theology in Princeton Theological Seminary, he was content to use the three volumes of Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* as the textbook and to pour out the fruits of his labor in a flow of searching articles in a number of theological reviews. Many of these have been republished in book form, but they have not been systematically arranged in one text. That is what Dr. Zaspel has done in culling from the great mass of Warfield's writings his actual statements in the order they could have followed had Warfield written a one-volume Reformed theology. In this form Warfield may enjoy a renewed effectiveness for our age. With great enthusiasm I highly recommend this volume and hope it will receive a wide reception."

> Roger Nicole, Professor of Theology Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, Florida

"The great B. B. Warfield was essentially an occasional writer. His works are largely made up of learned articles, encyclopedia entries, and popular journalism. Fred Zaspel had the great idea of rendering this vast body of material into a compendium, a Warfield systematic theology. He clearly has what it takes to do the job superbly well: a love for his subject, care and attention to detail, and, above all, a thorough knowledge of Warfield's writing. The result is a book that does not replace the Warfield volumes, but provides an accurate, thematic entry into them. It will be of inestimable benefit to all students of this outstanding Reformed theologian. Well done!"

Paul Helm, Teaching Fellow, Regent College; author, Faith with Reason

"This work is long overdue. That a theologian of the stature of B. B. Warfield should not have had a comprehensive overview of his entire corpus, such as this one by Dr. Zaspel, says far more about the thinking of evangelicals and the ranks of the Reformed in the twentieth century than it does about Warfield. This truly excellent and eminently readable work will serve both as a primer to Warfield's thought and as an outline of the systematic theology he never wrote. Highly recommended."

> Michael G. Haykin, Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Director, The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies

THE THEOLOGY OF B. B. WARFIELD

THE THEOLOGY OF B. B. WARFIELD

A Systematic Summary

FRED G. ZASPEL

Foreword by Sinclair B. Ferguson

WHEATON, ILLINOIS

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To James and Connie Zaspel,

loving and beloved parents who faithfully pointed me to Christ, and through whom God first instilled in me a love for himself and his Word.

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FOREWORD

Sinclair B. Ferguson

It is a high privilege to write a few words of introduction and commendation to this important survey of the theology of B. B. Warfield. Many (I included) have expressed disappointment that, for a variety of reasons, Warfield never wrote a systematic theology of his own. One of these reasons was undoubtedly his deep sense of *pietas* toward Charles Hodge (of whom he said that he never made a major decision without asking himself, What would Dr. Hodge say about this?). But few who have read the work of both Hodge and Warfield doubt that the disciple would have produced a greater work than his teacher.

The result has been that, by and large, Warfield has been regarded as a theologian focused on expounding and defending one doctrine alone, that of the inspiration and authority of Scripture.

Dr. Fred G. Zaspel's work will put that misunderstanding to rest. Warfield's interests and acumen ranged much wider and deeper. He was prodigiously learned in a variety of areas of theology. Whereas lesser men become typecast by publication in a narrow field of interest, Warfield wrote at the highest scholarly level in the areas of biblical studies, Patristic theology, Reformation theologians, confessional history, and biblical and systematic theology proper.

Dr. Zaspel has quarried the ten volumes of Warfield's collected works, as well as the published *Selected Shorter Writings*, but has also mined his lecture notes (and notes of his students), as well as Warfield's other published works. Wisely, this has included his sermons, which, as one of his colleagues noted, were preached in his rich, educated Kentucky accent that made words come from his lips "as if they walked on velvet." These are often minor theological treatises on their own and well express Warfield's spiritual drive and pastoral sensitivity. In addition, we find here reference to materials published in places sufficiently obscure as to guarantee that Warfield's articles would share their fate of oblivion.

In contrast to the caricature of Warfield as a one-doctrine theologian, any student of his who has attempted to read widely in his work soon realizes that to some degree his thinking and writing covered the bases of the whole theo-

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logical system. Of course there are some *loci* to which he paid special attention. The mountain peaks are found not only in the doctrine of Scripture but also in his studies in the person and work of Christ, and soteriology. In addition are impressive mountains of learning in his studies in Calvin and the Westminster Assembly. And Dr. Zaspel has paid careful attention to Warfield's enduring concern, expressed in his critical reviews (born, perhaps from his early studies in Europe), to inform his fellow Americans of the latest theological thinking emerging from the continent—and in the process, along with characteristically generous comments where merited, to provide his own devastating critique.

Here then is spread before us the entire mountain range of *Warfieldiana* as we are given the privileged position of surveying the encyclopedia of Warfield's thought. *The Theology of B. B. Warfield* is, therefore, as its title suggests, a systematic summary of his thought; but it is also an ordnance survey map with copious notes directing the traveler in *Warfieldiana* to some of the best places to linger, find nourishment, or rest—or simply pause to admire.

These pages represent a labor of love of Herculean proportions. The Warfield corpus is substantial and wide ranging. Few writers today are capable of the breadth of interest that made Warfield a scholar of Renaissance-man proportions. Not only so, but Warfield's tendency was to write according to older principles—paragraphs extending to three pages are not uncommon in his writings—and so his work makes demands on the reader's powers of both concentration and perseverance.

Having known of Fred Zaspel's intentions from the commencement of this work, I am filled with admiration that he has successfully completed it—not least since Warfield has been a companion to me throughout most of my Christian life. I had just turned seventeen and recently arrived at university in Scotland when I first heard the name of B. B. Warfield spoken in reverential terms by an older student. It was clear that one could not afford to remain ignorant of the man or his writings. And so I obtained (from what was then the Craig Press) the abbreviated set of his works, the ten-volume Oxford edition (though now widely available) having been long out of print.

The patient scholarship of his essays in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* was, of course, immediately impressive. The scholarship represented in his studies in *Calvin and Augustine* were enormously informative to a relative novice only beginning to read in Calvin. The *Studies in Perfectionism* were sufficient to immunize me for life against all forms of "higher life" teaching! But the deepest impression was made by his *Biblical and Theological Studies* and *The Person and Work of Christ*—though perhaps the deepest impression of all, on me and many others, was made by Warfield's striking essay "The Emotional Life of Our Lord" (curiously absent from the Oxford ten-volume edition). Here, for a younger Chris-

FOREWORD

tian, was at last serious and stretching theology that enhanced understanding of Christ and enriched faith in him and love for him.

I felt then, as I feel now, that here was a theologian who understood what theology was *for*. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (who could ever think of him as "Ben" or "Benny"?) has been a mentor and friend ever since. Now that *The Theology of B. B. Warfield* is being published, hopefully many more in our generation and beyond will come to discover the same riches. Dr. Zaspel deserves our congratulations and our profound gratitude for producing this invaluable volume.

PREFACE

On more than one occasion historian Mark Noll, among others, has lamented that no one has yet produced a comprehensive account of the theology of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield.¹ This work is intended to fill that void and reintroduce Warfield to today's theological discussion. This Princetonian's writings are widely diverse, filling many thousands of pages spread over many hundreds of articles, books, pamphlets, and book reviews, and covering virtually the entire spectrum of Christian theology. Since his own day many have wished that he had produced a systematic theology of his own. Yet no one has attempted to bring his work together in such an order.

There may be several reasons for this, such as the sheer magnitude of the task. Warfield's literary output is staggering, and bringing it all together in condensed form is a monumental task indeed. Perhaps the task has been left undone simply because it is difficult to represent Warfield well without representing him completely. His theological arguments are extensive, precise, and detailed but not verbose or redundant. And so the task of condensing Warfield becomes frustrating: how can we reduce in size what is already so densely packed?

But as Noll's remark indicates, the need is real. If for no other reason, this work is necessary because few will ever have the luxury of reading all that Warfield had to say on a given subject, much less read all of Warfield! And so this book is born.

It is ironic that B. B. Warfield is both appreciated and neglected. He is appreciated in that he still speaks with commanding authority, and scholars today continue to reference him accordingly. But he is neglected in that he is seldom read fully. Of course there have been a few who have sought to provide holistic analysis of his doctrine of inspiration, and there has been some interest in his apologetic understanding and method. And here and there an article or essay has appeared touching this or that aspect of his theology. But to view Warfield's theology from a global perspective, students heretofore could only set themselves to the daunting task of reading many thousands of Warfield pages. It is to assist in that task that this book has been written. That is not to suggest—shudder to

¹E.g., his introduction to Gary L. W. Johnson, *B. B. Warfield: Essays on His Life and Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 4.

think!—that the larger task is no longer of value, but it is to reduce that task for those who need assistance and perhaps to introduce Warfield in such a way that will inspire others to go to the source themselves.

My own interest in Warfield began when I was an undergraduate student working my way through school in a Christian bookstore. That is when I first laid eyes—and hands!—on *The Lord of Glory, Faith and Life, The Plan of Salvation,* and the two volumes of his *Selected Shorter Writings*. What a feast it was. Immediately I was struck both with the breadth and depth of Warfield's learning and with the passion of his heart for Christ. Eventually I was given the ten volumes of his *Works* (Thank you, Neil and Ruth!), and for many years now I have sought to read every word Warfield published. As a result my initial impressions of him have become increasingly confirmed, and it has been a joy to study him "whole." As few others I had read, Warfield seemed to understand the Christian faith at its heart, with all its various teachings in proper relation. Along the way I came to see the value of reintroducing him to today's theological discussion, condensing his whole thinking on the various theological themes in ways that faithfully reflect his approach and method.

A few remarks by way of clarification are in order. You will notice at some points a certain inequality of treatment of given doctrines, but this reflects Warfield's own writing. Warfield was an "occasional" writer, addressing specific issues as the need and interest arose. Also, in digesting Warfield's various arguments, I needed at virtually every turn to bring together statements from various writings. Often a single sentence in this work reflects thoughts and statements that Warfield expressed in multiple places. This, in turn, made footnote referencing impossibly cumbersome. And so an editorial decision was made to group references together, usually at the end of the paragraph. I trust that those who wish to follow the references will find themselves only somewhat inconvenienced by this.

Of course it is to be expected that there will be areas of disagreement with Warfield—in questions of baptism and eschatology, for example, common areas of much dispute. But the goal here has been to present Warfield's arguments accurately on their own terms. There has been no attempt either to confirm or refute his views, his arguments, or even his understanding of other writers—an endeavor that would increase the length of this study exponentially. Nor have I entered discussion with others who have attempted to criticize Warfield's views. The purpose is not to critique or evaluate but to clarify the views Warfield actually held and the arguments he advanced in their support. And with this object kept in mind I have had to leave aside the arguments of others, rather, is restricted to those who in my judgment have misstated Warfield's position on a given issue.

PREFACE

In such cases I seek to clarify Warfield against such misunderstandings or misrepresentations of him.

There have been men in the past whose voices were needed, and, it would seem, God sent them for just the occasion and context in which they lived. Warfield was such a man. But he deserves a new hearing. I trust you will find it so.

I owe many thanks to Bram van de Beek and Michael Haykin for their helpful input throughout this project. Without them the book would be of much less value indeed. Many thanks to Ryan Kelly, as well, for encouraging me to undertake this work in the first place. Many thanks are due to Ken Henke for his invaluable assistance with the Warfield Archives in the Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Many thanks also to Reformed Baptist Church of Franconia, Pennsylvania, for their patient and even enthusiastic listening to so much of Warfield. And many thanks to my wonderful family, who have at least pretended so much interest as I have rattled on and on of Warfield on countless occasions upon returning to them from my study. Surely no writer has ever had a more supportive wife than mine. All throughout these years of research—beset though they were with so much suffering in our home—she has been a mainstay of constant loving encouragement to see the work to its completion. Thank you, Kim.

ABBREVIATIONS

| BBW | B. B. Warfield: Essays on His Life and Thought, ed. Johnson |
|--------|--|
| BSac | Bibliothecra Sacra |
| BT | The Banner of Truth |
| BTS | Biblical and Theological Studies, Warfield |
| BTSp | Biblical and Theological Studies, the faculty of Princeton Theological |
| | Seminary, ed. Warfield |
| CA | Calvin and Augustine, Warfield |
| СС | The Centennial Celebration of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian |
| | Church in the United States of America, ed. Warfield, Armstrong, and |
| | Robinson |
| CM | Counterfeit Miracles, Warfield |
| СР | The Cumberland Presbyterian |
| CT | Christian Thought |
| EQ | Evangelical Quarterly |
| ESS | Evolution, Science, and Scripture, Warfield |
| FL | Faith and Life, Warfield |
| HS | The Holy Spirit, Warfield |
| ITCNT | An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, Warfield |
| JETS | Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society |
| JGM | J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir, Stonehouse |
| JPH | The Journal of Presbyterian History |
| LG | The Lord of Glory, Warfield |
| NSHERK | The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge |
| Р | The Presbyterian |
| PB | The Presbyterian Banner |
| PCUSA | The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America |
| PGS | The Power of God unto Salvation, Warfield |
| PJ | The Presbyterian Journal |
| PQ | Presbyterian Quarterly |
| PR | The Presbyterian Review |
| PRR | The Presbyterian and Reformed Review |
| PrS | Princeton Sermons, Warfield |

ABBREVIATIONS

| PS | The Plan of Salvation, Warfield | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|--|--|
| PSB | The Princeton Seminary Bulletin | | | | |
| PTR | The Princeton Theological Review | | | | |
| PWC | The Person and Work of Christ, Warfield | | | | |
| SBET | Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology | | | | |
| SPR | Southern Presbyterian Review | | | | |
| SSW | Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield, 2 vols. | | | | |
| SW | The Savior of the World, Warfield | | | | |
| TBS | The Bible Student | | | | |
| TBST | The Bible Student and Teacher | | | | |
| W | The Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, 10 vols. | | | | |
| | W, 1 Revelation and Inspiration | | | | |
| | W, 2 Biblical Doctrines | | | | |
| | W, 3 Christology and Criticism | | | | |
| | W, 4 Studies in Tertullian and Augustine | | | | |
| | W, 5 Calvin and Calvinism | | | | |
| | W, 6 The Westminster Assembly and Its Work | | | | |
| | W, 7 Perfectionism, Part One | | | | |
| | W, 8 Perfectionism, Part Two | | | | |
| | W, 9 Studies in Theology | | | | |
| | W, 10 Critical Reviews | | | | |
| WTJ | Westminster Theological Journal | | | | |
| WCF | Westminster Confession of Faith | | | | |

Whence, then, arises the plaint which we hear about us, that the right of Criticism is impugned and the rights of Criticism denied? From the ineradicable tendency of man to confound the right of Criticism with the rightness of his own criticism. We may safely recognize this to be a common human tendency; for, as all of us doubtless know by this time, humanum est errare. But as soon as our attention is directed to it, the way seems to be opened to remind ourselves of a few distinctions, which it will be well for the Presbyterian Church to attend to in the crisis which is at present impending over her—a crisis the gravity of which cannot be over-estimated for a church of Christ, to which has been committed the function of being the pillar and ground of the truth.

SSW, 2:596; the Latin reads, "To err is human."

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (Nov. 5, 1851–Feb. 16, 1921) Princeton Theological Seminary Princeton, The Presbyterians, and Beyond "Christian Supernaturalism": Warfield in Summary

1

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (Nov. 5, 1851–Feb. 16, 1921)

The life of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield¹ is a story of theology, a story told in his own extensive writings. He wrote no autobiography and almost nothing about himself. Most of what we know of his life circumstances and experiences—which is relatively little for such a noted figure—comes from his correspondence and a few reports from others who knew him. To date, no Warfield biography has been written, although at least one is in the making. We do know that he did comparatively little other than teach, preach, and write in Princeton. But his literary output in this regard was enormous, and by anyone's measure, Warfield's writings are themselves his legacy. It is in these more than forty books and booklets, nearly seven hundred periodical articles, more than a thousand book reviews, hundreds of brief book notices, other lesser works, and unpublished manuscripts and lecture notes—all covering the entire spectrum of theological discussion—that we find who he was and how he spent his life.

B. B. Warfield is widely recognized as the leading Reformed theologian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When he was born in 1851,

^{&#}x27;The personal and biographical information about Warfield highlighted here comes from the following sources: the Warfield correspondence preserved in the Princeton Theological Seminary archives; newspaper archives from the time; Ethelbert D. Warfield, "Biographical Sketch of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield," in *W*, 1:v-ix; "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield: A Memorial Address," *PTR* 19, no. 2 (1921): 329–30; Francis L. Patton, "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield: A Memorial Address," *PTR* 19, no. 3 (1921): 369–91; Samuel G. Craig, "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield," in *BTS*, xi–xlviii; J. Ross Stevenson, "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield," *The Expository Times* 33, no. 4 (1922): 152–53; personal letter from Charles Brokenshire to John Meeter dated June 25, 1942; Hugh T. Kerr, "Warfield: The Person behind the Theology," *PSB*, new series, 25, no. 1 (1994): 80–93; David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, vol. 1, *Faith and Learning* 1812–1868; and *Princeton Seminary*, vol. 2, *The Majestic Testimony* 1869–1929 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994, 1996); John Meeter, "Foreword," in *SSW*, 2:vii-x; Bradley J. Gundlach, "'B' Is for Breckinridge: Benjamin B. Warfield, His Maternal Kin, and Princeton Seminary" and "'Wicked Caste': Warfield, Biblical Authority, and Jim Crow," in *BBW*, 13–53, 136–68; also private correspondence with Bradley Gundlach, whose biographical studies of Warfield are the most thorough to date, and whose forthcoming biography will be an invaluable contribution to Warfield studies.

just outside Lexington, Kentucky, the Warfield and Breckinridge family names (the latter, his mother's) were already rich with heritage. Behind him were military officers, educators, influential ecclesiastical leaders, and governmental and political figures, even a United States vice president. Warfield's father, William Warfield, was descended from English Puritan forebears who had fled to America to avoid persecution.² The atmosphere of the Warfield home was one of "vital piety." The Warfields were members of Lexington's Second Presbyterian Church, the only local Presbyterian church to affiliate with the Northern Presbyterians in the division between the North and South around the time of the Civil War, and it was here at age sixteen that Benjamin made public profession of faith. William was a successful cattle breeder, and Benjamin was reared in some degree of privilege. He received a private education and developed particular interest in mathematics and especially science, devouring with intense interest the newly published works of Charles Darwin. With a touch of humor, his brother Ethelbert (1861–1936) reports that Benjamin

was so certain that he was to follow a scientific career that he strenuously objected to studying Greek. But youthful objections had little effect in a household where the shorter catechism was ordinarily completed in the sixth year, followed at once by the proofs from the Scriptures, and then by the larger catechism, with an appropriate amount of Scripture memorized in regular course each Sabbath afternoon.³

Not quite aged seventeen, Warfield entered the sophomore class at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) in the fall of 1868. At Princeton his friends called him "Wo-field," imitating his southern drawl. School records indicate his involvement in a Sunday afternoon fistfight, of which it seems Warfield was the instigator! His maternal grandfather Robert Jefferson Breckinridge (1800–1871) had been suspended from the school for a similar incident many years before. This incident earned Warfield the nickname, "pugilist"—which some have found somewhat prophetic. But Warfield evidently applied himself well as a student, over all, attaining "foremost rank in every department of instruction" and, as Ethelbert reports, "perfect marks" in mathematics and science, graduating with highest honors, first in his class in 1871 at age nineteen.⁴ He also won awards for essays and debate in the American Whig Society and was an editor for the *Nassau Literary Magazine*, for which he wrote several poems and other pieces. Following Benjamin's graduation his father persuaded him to study in Europe, and in the

²It was for a distant cousin of Warfield's, Wallis Warfield Simpson, that King Edward VIII of England would abdicate in 1936.

³*W*, 1:vi.

⁴Stevenson, "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield," 152; W, 1:vi.

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spring of 1872 he began study in Edinburgh and then Heidelberg. Midsummer the family was surprised to receive word that he would enter Christian ministry, and in 1873, after a brief stint as editor of the *Farmer's Home Journal* in Lexington, he entered Princeton Seminary, where he received instruction from men whom he deeply admired—especially the famous and by then elderly Charles Hodge (1797–1878) and his son Caspar Wistar Hodge (1830–1891). The younger Hodge was professor of New Testament, and he became something of a personal mentor of Warfield, a relationship that developed into an intimate and lasting friendship. It would be C. W. Hodge who on behalf of the seminary would write to Warfield in late 1886, inviting him to consider joining their faculty. For his entire life Warfield maintained deep affection for both the college and the seminary in Princeton, appreciating both the illustrious history of each institution and what he had learned from them.

In May of 1875, Warfield was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Ebenezer, meeting at Lexington, Kentucky, and he served that summer as stated supply at Concord Church in Nicholas County, Kentucky. After graduating in 1876, Warfield was the stated supply of the First Presbyterian Church of Dayton, Ohio, from which he received a unanimous call to the pastorate. He declined the call, determining instead to pursue further studies again in Europe. Warfield was married on August 3 of that year to the brilliant, witty, and beautiful Annie Kinkead, and then very soon took up studies in Leipzig. He endured extended health problems that kept him from some studies while in Germany, but over the winter of 1876–1877 he took in lectures from such notables as New Testament scholar Ernst Luthardt (1823–1902), historical theologian Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930),⁵ and the famous Hebraist and Old Testament commentator Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890).

Warfield's new wife, Annie, was the daughter of a prominent Lexington attorney who in 1855 defended Abraham Lincoln. In the brief biographical sketches of Warfield that are commonly available, Annie is often reported to have been an invalid their entire married life, but it does not seem that this degree of debilitation came until perhaps 1893. A notice in the *New York Times* dated May I, 1892, notes that Mrs. Warfield, Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, and other prominent ladies of Princeton served as "Patronesses" at a lecture event sponsored by the American Whig Society in Princeton on April 30. Then in July of 1893, Warfield sent a paper to be read at an event in Staten Island, New York, which he was unable to attend

⁵Harnack was a German scholar at (in turn) Leipzig, Giessen, Marburg, and Berlin. His views cost him official ecclesiastical recognition. Harnack's primary area of study was Patristic thought, and his views, which he confessed were shaped by Ritschlian liberalism, later brought him into conflict with his former pupil Karl Barth (1886–1968). Harnack, whose brilliant scholarship Warfield firmly opposed yet held in high esteem, is widely regarded as the most influential German church historian and theologian prior to World War I.

"owing to illness in his family."⁶ It would seem that Annie's illness became severe during this period. There are reports of her ill health from others at Princeton at the time, and by all accounts Warfield was a devoted husband in a very happy marriage. The Warfields had no children, and for many years he left his home only for the classroom. He was otherwise nearly always in the company of his wife. In the providence of God, without doubt, this contributed to his time in writing so extensively on so many subjects.

While Warfield was studying in Europe, Western (now Pittsburgh) Theological Seminary in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, contacted him and offered him an appointment to teach Old Testament. Old Testament had been his earlier interest, but ironically, and perhaps due to the influence of C. W. Hodge, his interests had now turned to (previously eschewed!) Greek and New Testament studies. The young couple returned home in the late summer of 1877, and Warfield served again as stated supply, this time at the historic and prestigious First Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, Maryland. While in Baltimore he was contacted by Western Seminary once again, but this time with an appointment to teach New Testament, a work he took up with great interest in September 1878. Warfield was ordained as an evangelist by the Ebenezer Presbytery at their meeting in Frankfort, Kentucky, on April 26, 1879. And by the early 1880s he already had begun to gain international recognition as a force of conservative Reformed theological scholarship. His inaugural lecture, "Inspiration and Criticism" (1880), his "Syllabus on the Canon of the New Testament in the Second Century" (1881), his landmark "Inspiration" (1881) coauthored with Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886), and his "Canonicity of Second Peter" (1882) were especially noted, portending the brilliant career that quite obviously lay ahead for this young scholar.

In 1886 he became the first American to publish a textbook in New Testament textual criticism, a title that received accolades from all quarters and established him as a leading authority in the field. The Theological Seminary of the Northwest in Chicago offered Warfield their chair of theology in 1881, but he declined. It was otherwise highly unusual that a historic and prestigious chair such as that of didactic and polemic theology at Princeton should be offered to such a young man, Warfield being just thirty-five at the time. But in a letter dated November 30, 1886, C. W. Hodge wrote Warfield that he was the only man the board had in sight for the position. They were uncertain he would even consider, but they were hopeful, requesting only that he affirm that he would not dismiss the possibility out of hand. Warfield replied with tones of deepest affection and honor, affirming that he would be willing to consider the matter prayerfully. A. A. Hodge had

⁶Introductory note to Warfield, "The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration," Christian Thought 11 (1893–1894): 163.

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died unexpectedly, and the historic chair that had belonged to his father Charles, and to Archibald Alexander before him, now fell to Warfield, a position he would occupy with famous distinction for the next thirty-four years.

Decades before, Charles Hodge had also moved from New Testament to theology, and for both men the previous work would prove foundational to their new endeavors. But Warfield's move was not met with universal approval, for what the department of theology had gained, the world of New Testament studies had lost. Then and since, many have speculated that Warfield would have been one of the great New Testament commentators of the age. John Broadus, professor of New Testament and soon to be president at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, was one who had made such predictions in the classroom. In a letter dated January 31, 1897, Broadus wrote Warfield with a touch of humor, bemoaning that his move to systematic theology would now give Broadus's students proof that he was no true prophet! In a letter dated February 5, 1897, the British New Testament scholar William Robertson Nicoll (1851–1923) wrote to congratulate Warfield. The communication was very cordial but marked clearly by disappointment, even hinting of disapproval. Evidently Warfield had agreed to provide a commentary for the multivolume Expositor's Bible, which Nicoll edited.

Permit me first of all to congratulate you on your new position. I do not know whether I can do so with unmixed feelings. You will no doubt do a great work in Princeton for us all but I grudge very much that you should be taken away from the study of the New Testament. . . . I do not release you from the Expositors Bible though you be a professor of Dogmatic Theology now. You owe this debt to the . . . position⁷ you have forsaken.

But despite such reservations, expressions of support were unanimous, and congratulations were characterized by expectations of helpful contributions to theological studies.

Warfield was not the first in his family either to attend or to teach at Princeton. His grandfather Robert Breckinridge and Robert's brother (Warfield's great-uncle) John Breckinridge (1797–1841) had attended the seminary also, and John was professor of pastoral theology from 1836 to 1838 and the son-in-law of Samuel Miller, Princeton's renowned second professor.⁸ Robert Breckinridge was an influential leader of the Old School Presbyterians and in 1853 became founding

⁷Nicoll's handwriting here is difficult to decipher, but it seems "position" is the word used here, though immediately before it is an illegible word.

⁸Joseph H. Dulles, *Princeton Theological Seminary: Biographical Catalogue* (Trenton, NJ: MacCrellish & Quigley, 1909), 8, 17, 43, 102.

president of the new Presbyterian seminary in Danville, Kentucky. He had been well acquainted with the early Princetonians, but his relationship with Princeton had been strained since his fighting days at the college, and later with Charles Hodge in particular, due to significant disagreements and (at least perceived) betrayal. Indeed, that it was Breckinridge who became the president of the new seminary in Kentucky seemed to carry more implications than simply that a new seminary was needed in the West. Warfield's appointment to Princeton, therefore, was from the standpoint of the family somewhat ironic to say the least, as well as a prestigious honor of which they were proud. So in 1887 he assumed his appointment to the theological department at Princeton, and he did so with a deep and expressed sense of sobriety and responsibility.⁹ Quite appropriately he moved into the house next door to Alexander Hall that had been the home of his revered and beloved predecessor, Charles Hodge.

We know relatively little of Warfield personally other than what his writings reveal of his personality. J Gresham Machen (1881–1937) makes passing reference to Warfield's "glaring faults," but this is not what stood out in his mind in regard to his former teacher and senior colleague: "With all his glaring faults he was the greatest man I have known."¹⁰ This is the only remark we have in reference to Warfield's personal faults, and Machen does not elaborate. Overwhelmingly Warfield is described by those who knew him as a "model Christian gentleman," a man of grace, great personal charm, generosity, kindness, good humor, and wit. One of Warfield's acquaintances summarizes his impressions of Warfield memorably:

After a lapse of more than twenty years, Dr B. B. Warfield stands out as the most ideal Christian Character that I have ever known.... Dr Warfield possessed the most perfect combination of faculties of mind and heart that I have ever known in any person. His mind was keen and analytical in understanding facts and thoughts; and it was comprehensive in seeing all sides of a subject. He was so devoted to the truth as a man and teacher that his pupils could always trust his statements implicitly; and their confidence in him was never betrayed in any sense. He not only had the power of thought to comprehend a truth; but he also had a perfect command of language to give expression to his thoughts. His diction was precise and complete.

But if Dr Warfield was great in intellectuality, he was just as great in goodness. Over a long period of years this man stands out in my mind as the most Christ-like man that I have ever known. In spite of his brilliance of mind, there was no spirit of superciliousness, no purpose to offend the dullest pupil, no haughtiness of heart. With him there was never any sign of pretence [*sic*], or false front; for there was no

^{9"}Inaugural Address: The Idea of Systematic Theology" in *Inauguration of the Rev. Benjamin B. Warfield,* D.D., as Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1888), 40. ¹⁰JGM, 310.

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spirit of hypocrisy in his inner heart. Rather there was always the spirit of humility and meekness and the spirit of kindness and gentleness toward others.^{II}

Warfield was tall and erect, pleasant but dignified, rather heavy, something of an imposing figure, ruddy cheeks, hair parted in the middle, sparkling eyes, and a full graying beard. Former student Charles Brokenshire (1885–1954) recalled, "He walked with head erect and well thrown back, and his face beamed with intelligence and amiability." He was "somewhat deaf," which made classroom recitation to him frustratingly difficult, but he was known for this method of teaching nonetheless. Brokenshire continues:

His most interesting method of instruction appeared when he heard and answered some question in the classroom. Sometime he would use the Socratic method on a reciter and lead some student disposed to argue into a series of statements which drove the young liberal into the orthodox corner where "Benny" wanted him.¹²

"Benny" was the name used by his family—and by his students, but only behind his back, of course. He was always of good humor but also serious, somewhat reserved, and, as one former student reports, with a commanding air of authority. Thoroughly informed as he was, on the one hand he could appear aloof and indifferent to the theological opinions of others, but on the other hand he displayed an obvious love for others and especially children. And he was always demonstrative in his support of gospel endeavors both at home and abroad.

Warfield conducted wide correspondence with Christian leaders of the day from all quarters—Nicoll, Broadus, Charles A. Briggs (1841–1913), William G. T. Shedd (1820–1894), Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), J. Henry Thayer (1828–1901), Samuel H. Kellogg (1839–1899), George Frederick Wright (1838–1921), Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), to name only a few. He was held in highest admiration by his peers and was a recognized giant. Throughout his time at Princeton he also conducted continuous correspondence with his former students "with an interest and affection that never waned." His "marvelously retentive memory" enabled him to quote poetry at length and provide librarian-like references for any theme of biblical or theological inquiry. After it was known that Warfield had been offered the position at Princeton, a former seminary classmate wrote to congratulate him in a letter dated February 7, 1887, and remarked, no doubt reflecting Warfield's own sense of humor, "Ben you know you were a wayward kind of a boy in college [Warfield notes, "Seminary"]

[&]quot;Letter from F. T. McGill to John Meeter, in BT 89 (Fall 1971): 18.

¹²Charles Brokenshire letter to John Meeter, June 25, 1942, p. 2.

& would not take my advice then, but I know you will now, when I tell you by all means accept the chair offered you in Princeton Seminary." Warfield enjoyed good humor and would on occasion employ it in his most involved theological writings, sometimes as biting wit and even sarcasm. He was well spoken, with his pleasant southern accent. He preached in a conversational tone that was calm, deliberate, and unaffected but marked by deep spirituality and impassioned with the truth he expounded, yet without demonstrative oratory. Not his scholarship only but his Christlikeness also deeply impressed his students, and he was a man who was himself profoundly affected by the gospel he preached. It was written of him that he was a "devout and sweet-spirited Christian" and a "Christ-like man." He was recognized as a Christian and a scholar in the best senses of both.¹³

Long-time friend and colleague Francis Landey Patton (1843–1932), in his Warfield memorial address in Princeton, remarked that Warfield "was pre-eminently a scholar and lived among his books." He did not spend a great deal of time with social pleasantries such as after-dinner conversation. He was something of a recluse with his books and his pen, always diligent in his theological studies, well read in all other fields of literature also, especially science. The theological journal was to him much more than an available resource in the dissemination of the faith. It was a most highly valued resource, which he utilized to maximum potential. Throughout his career the bulk of his publishing was in the journalprimarily the Presbyterian Review, which he edited for a brief time, the Presbyterian and Reformed Review, which he planned and edited for twelve years, and then the Princeton Theological Review. His articles regularly appeared in these and other theological journals throughout his career, along with the many hundreds of book reviews that he understood as an important means of addressing contemporary theological issues. Some of these reviews, which he provided continuously of works published in English, German, Dutch, and French, were substantive monographs in their own right. His range of scholarly learning extended over every theological domain, and judging from his citations and footnotes, it seems he read more of his opponents than of his comrades. He was manifestly an independent thinker and a theologian of broadest scholarship, and his reputation attracted many students to Princeton from around the world.

Warfield received the honorary degrees Doctor of Divinity in 1880 and Doctor of Laws in 1892 from the College of New Jersey, his alma mater. He also received the Doctor of Laws from Davidson College in 1892, the Doctor of Letters from Lafayette College in 1911, and the *Sacrae Theologiae Doctor* from the University of Utrecht in 1913. A brief note in the December 5, 1913, *New York Times* mentions that this last

¹³BSac 78, no. 310 (1921): 124; Watchman, Boston, March 3, 1904, cited in SSW, 2:718.

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degree was a special honor, given as it was, without precedent, *in absentia*. Warfield had decided instead to remain with his wife in her illness and afterward responded to the Dutch institution with deep expressions of honor and gratitude.

One of Warfield's closest friends was Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949), whom Warfield had helped bring to Princeton for the new chair of biblical theology. It was their regular practice for many years to walk together for refreshment and fellowship. On December 24, 1920, Warfield was walking along the sidewalk to the Vos home, just a few hundred yards across campus from his own home, when suddenly he grasped his chest and collapsed.14 Warfield spent the next few weeks recovering until Wednesday, February 16, 1921, when he was finally ready to resume teaching. At the close of the class he returned home where that evening a heart attack took him, this time fatally. A former student remarked that Warfield had passed to his bright and happy reward where he can "continue his studies to all eternity." J. Ross Stevenson, president of the seminary, wrote of Warfield's death almost a year later, "The Reformed Theology and the cause of evangelical religion have lost one of the ablest interpreters and defenders which America has ever produced." Patton remarked in his memorial address that it was a loss that was unquestionably felt throughout the greater part of the Christian world. "Nothing but ignorance of his exact scholarship, wide learning, varied writings, and the masterly way in which he did his work," he surmised, could prevent anyone "from uniting with us today in the statement that a prince and a great man has fallen in Israel." Warfield's younger colleague J. Gresham Machen lamented in a letter to his mother after Warfield's funeral that as they carried him out, Old Princeton went with him and that he was certain there was not a man in the entire church who could fill one quarter of his place.15

Princeton Theological Seminary¹⁶

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Presbyterians in America began to sense the need for a theological seminary of their own to train and supply

¹⁴This personal report came from the elderly Johannes Vos, son of Geerhardus Vos, in private conversation with R. C. Sproul, as Sproul reports in *Tabletalk*, April 2005, 4. Sproul has some details wrong, however, when he reports this event as occurring in 1921 and as the event that took Warfield in death. The heart attack Vos describes would have been December 24, 1920. ¹⁵JGM, 309.

¹⁶See Calhoun, Princeton Seminary, vols. 1 and 2; Lefferts A. Loetscher, Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983); William K. Selden, Princeton Theological Seminary: A Narrative History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Samuel Miller, A Brief Account of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America at Princeton (Philadelphia: A. Finley, 1822); Mark A. Noll, "The Founding of Princeton Seminary," WTJ 42, no. 1 (1979): 72–110.

ministers for their churches. There was a shortage of ministers, and the choices for their adequate training were few and, from their perspective, inadequate. Harvard had drifted, appointing a Unitarian professor in 1805, and Congregationalists had responded with the founding of Andover Seminary, providing a model—and incentive—for the Presbyterians. There was no school of their own to prepare their ministers with a focus on their concerns of orthodox Reformed theology and fervent, practical piety. The College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), founded primarily for the purpose of training men for the Presbyterian ministry, had broadened its curriculum, giving less attention to ministerial concerns, and there were suspicions of the orthodoxy of its leadership also. The cry, "Give us ministers!" was growing, and the church increasingly felt the need for a seminary.

Several men in the church took up the cause, most prominently Ashbel Green (1762-1848), Samuel Miller (1769-1850), and Archibald Alexander (1772-1851)-men of learning, deep theological conviction, and pastoral concern. After much prayer, deliberation, and planning, "The Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States at Princeton" opened its doors in August of 1812 with three students and one professor (Alexander) to embark on a mission whose influence would prove greater and farther reaching than any could have imagined at the time. The seminary classes first met in the college's famous Nassau Hall, but this soon became inadequate. By spring of 1813 the seminary had nine students and had hired a second professor (Miller), and in 1814 the General Assembly (PCUSA) passed a resolution authorizing the purchase of new property for the seminary's own facilities nearby on Mercer Street, its present location. Of the two hundred and fifty-six men in the first ten graduating classes from Princeton, there came six moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), two bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church, fifteen college presidents of such noted institutions as Princeton and Yale, and missionaries and pastors in every part of the country, even to the Pacific Ocean; in but a few years Princeton would have graduates ministering around the world.¹⁷ Most notably, very soon into its life the seminary at Princeton became recognized at home and abroad as the bastion of the Reformed faith.

The seminary was founded to promote more than theological orthodoxy. Its official "Plan" described the school's purpose to supply the church with ministers who both understood and loved the gospel, men of high learning and deep piety, men who could expound and apply the Word of God pastorally as well as defend it against all heresies and infidelity. The "Plan" states that the seminary's aim was

¹⁷William L. McEwan in CC, 408–9; PSB 13, no. 3 (1919): 6–8; cf. PTR 17, no. 1 (1919): 98–117.

to form men for the Gospel Ministry, who shall truly believe, and cordially love, and therefore endeavor to propagate and defend, in its genuineness, simplicity, and fulness, that system of religious belief and practice which is set forth in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Plan of Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church; and thus to perpetuate and extend the influence of true evangelical piety, and gospel order. . . . It is to unite in those who shall sustain the ministerial office, religion and literature; that piety of the heart which is the fruit only of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God, with solid learning: believing that religion without learning, or learning without religion, in the ministers of the Gospel, must ultimately prove injurious to the Church. . . . It is to provide for the Church, men who shall be able to defend her faith against infidels, and her doctrines against heretics. It is to furnish our congregations with enlightened, humble, zealous, laborious pastors, who shall truly watch for the good of souls, and consider it as their highest honor and happiness to win them to the Saviour, and to build up their several charges in holiness and peace.¹⁸

The intent was that neither the academic nor the affective aspects of the faith would be neglected, but that both would be vigorously advanced and, insofar as humanly possible, instilled in the students. Samuel Miller described their goal as that of a "union of piety and learning." It was in many respects a combining of both the Old Side and the revivalistic New Side Presbyterian ideals. Archibald Alexander, the seminary's founding professor, had witnessed revivals firsthand, and from the founding of the seminary onward the Princetonians labored to see God's self-revelation shape both the theology and the lives of its faculty and graduates alike. Its conscious ideal was a union of the most rigorous academic studies with a cultivation of the deepest evangelical piety. Since its beginning, this goal had been achieved in recognizable degree. Warfield had witnessed it in his own student days, and he would come to embody this ideal himself.

Throughout its first century Princeton boasted a faculty of exemplary piety and unsurpassed erudition. Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller, and Charles Hodge were the first three professors, and after them came Joseph Addison Alexander (1809–1860), John Breckinridge, James Waddell Alexander (1804–1859), William Henry Green (1825–1900), Alexander Taggart McGill (1807–1889), Caspar Wistar Hodge, James Clement Moffat (1832–1861), Charles Augustus Aiken (1827–1892), Archibald Alexander Hodge, Francis Landey Patton, and William Miller Paxton (1824–1904). They all served as professors of eminent distinction before or with Warfield, equipping hundreds of men for gospel ministry and earning for the institution an international reputation of Christian learning, faithfulness, and grace.

¹⁸Miller, A Brief Account, 16–18.

Alongside and after Warfield came professors of similar renown, such as John D. Davis (1854–1926), George T. Purves (1852–1901), John DeWitt (1842–1923), William Brenton Greene (1854–1928), Geerhardus Vos, William Park Armstrong (1874–1944), Robert Dick Wilson (1856–1930), and Caspar Wistar Hodge Jr. (1870–1937), the last of whom worked alongside Warfield for twenty years in the department of theology, finally inheriting his chair. From these men came thousands of graduates heavily influenced by their tutelage and an endless literary output in books and theological journals to further the faith entrusted to them. For Princeton, sometimes dubbed "the Oxford of America,"¹⁹ it was a century of biblical and theological giants of international renown.

Paul Helseth observes correctly that "it has become something of an article of faith in the historiography of American Christianity that the theologians at Old Princeton Seminary were scholastic rationalists whose doctrine of Scripture was shaped by the Scottish Common Sense Realism of the 'Didactic Enlightenment' in America."20 But Helseth, 21 David Smith, 22 and Andrew Hoffecker23 have questioned the extent to which the Princetonians were influenced by the Scottish philosophy and have demonstrated at length that all the major Princetonians were marked equally by the academic rigor and the fervent piety idealized in the seminary's Plan. Men such as Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller, Charles Hodge, and J. W. Alexander in particular were known for their pastoral instincts. The sermons preached by Warfield and others at the Sabbath afternoon conferences in Miller Chapel demonstrate that while the Princetonians excelled in learning, they were men deeply affected by the gospel, with a keen sense of dependence upon God and consciously aware of the need of the supernatural influences of his Spirit in them. The seminary's centennial celebration (May 5-7, 1912) was an important milestone for the Princetonians and for the Presbyterian Church. Churchmen and scholars from around the world were invited to represent their respective

¹⁹Roland Bruce Lutz, "Keeping Out of the Rut," PSB 14, no. 5 (1921): 13.

²⁰Paul Kjoss Helseth, "'*Re*-Imagining' the Princeton Mind: Postconservative Evangelicalism, Old Princeton, and the Rise of Neo-Fundamentalism," *JETS* 45, no. 3 (2002): 427.

²¹Paul K. Helseth, "Right Reason and the Princeton Mind: The Moral Context," *JPH* 77, no. 1 (1999): 13–28; Helseth, "'*Re*-Imagining' the Princeton Mind," 427–50; Helseth, "B. B. Warfield's Apologetical Appeal to Right Reason: Evidence of a Rather Bald Rationalism?" *SBET* 16 (Autumn 1998): 156–77; republished as "A 'Rather Bald' Rationalist? The Appeal to 'Right Reason," in *BBW*, 54–75.

²²David P. Smith, "B. B. Warfield's Scientifically Constructive Theological Scholarship" (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 2009).

²³Andrew Hoffecker, "The Relation between the Objective and Subjective Aspects in Christian Religious Experience: A Study in the Systematic and Devotional Writings of Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield" (PhD diss., Brown University, 1970); later published under the title, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1981). See also Hoffecker, "The Devotional Life of Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield," WTJ 42, no. I (1979): 110–29; and Hoffecker, "Benjamin B. Warfield," in David F. Wells, ed., The Princeton Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 65–91; republished also in Wells, ed., *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development* (1985; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 65–91.

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institutions at the event, and in their letters sent ahead and their speeches during the celebration, seemingly endless expressions of "indebtedness" and praise were given to the seminary for the incalculable service it had rendered the cause of Christ via the "piety, scholarship, teaching power, and writings [that] have carried the name and fame of Princeton throughout the world." Much was made of its zeal for the truth and its stalwart defense and propagation of the sacred faith.²⁴ Those who knew the school well testified that the hearts of the Princetonians ran deeper than immense scholarship alone. For Warfield himself, as we will see in the next chapter, all theological learning had as its very practical goal the experiential knowledge of God.

Even so, the theological acumen for which the "Old Princetonians" were known served notably to advance their treasured Reformed orthodoxy, and more important to the Princetonians than their fame was their fidelity and influence for divine truth as they understood it. At the seminary's centennial celebration much praise and thanksgiving were offered to God on this score. Speakers and correspondents perceived it as no small measure of grace that throughout a century that was marked by rationalism and that in virtually every way conspired against such ideas as divine sovereignty and human depravity, the Reformed theology of "Old Princeton" remained powerfully influential.

Charles Hodge had remarked on several occasions that a new idea had never originated at Princeton,²⁵ and opponents have used his words against him to cast the Old Princeton as out of touch with the times. But of course the quote is capable of a much more sympathetic understanding. Certainly Hodge intended to affirm their conservative stance and the faithful continuation of Reformed theology. He-and they collectively-regarded their Reformed heritage as entrusted to them, and it was a matter of conscience and faithfulness for them not only to preserve it but to perpetuate it. At the 1912 centennial celebration, seminary president Francis Landey Patton made the point that they were bound to this by the school's founding charter and constitution.²⁶ But it should not be inferred that they merely rehashed theological sentiments centuries old. As with every new generation, theirs brought its own challenges, and in the process of meeting these challenges the Princetonians labored to bring the old faith to bear on the thinking of the new day and its changing culture. Patton affirmed on the one hand that the seminary's theological position was "exactly the same" in 1912 as it had been at the school's inception a century before. But he also clarified that this was to be understood only in terms of "the distinctive dogmatic content of

²⁴E.g., see CC, 92, 232; cf. 123, 221, 233, 266, 286, passim.

²⁵A. A. Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge, D.D., LL.D.* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881), 256, 430, 521, 594.

²⁶CC, 347; cf. Wells, Reformed Theology in America, 66.

the Reformed Theology." The Princetonians were "not content with a repetition of the old formulas" but were receptive to new learning on all fronts and eager to bring that learning to use in the defense and propagation of the old faith. Their teaching was "not novel in its essential features, but built up in full view of opposing systems, and with constant reference to the science and philosophy and criticism of the time."²⁷

In the end they constructed a traditional Reformed theology that was yet distinctively Princetonian. "Old Princeton" was a term used already before the end of the nineteenth century to describe their distinctive theology. The phrase "the Princeton theology" reflects the same, which historian Mark Noll defines as "a distinctly American and a distinctly nineteenth-century expression of classical Reformed faith."²⁸ In terms of their theology historically considered, the Princetonians taught nothing new. They labored conscientiously to perpetuate the historic faith, and they would not alter it, no matter the demands of the new age. Their theological anchor held firmly in place. But in terms of their methodology, organization of thought, and points of contemporary application, they labored just as vigorously to bring the old faith to bear on the modern world and the American culture. And this they did with distinguished success. From its inception in 1812 to its reorganization in 1929, Old Princeton was the recognized force in the contemporary defense and propagation of the historic Reformed faith.

Russell Cecil, pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Virginia, and moderator of the General Assembly, reported at the centennial that

in all these hundred years Princeton Seminary has been true to the ideals and standards of its first great organizers, and it has been loyal to the Word of God. No student has, by reason of any teaching from any professor, had his reverence for or belief in the Word of God, as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, weakened or destroyed. No student has here learned to question the essential deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, or has lost any of the passionate loyalty of his heart for Him as Saviour and Lord. No student passes through these halls without having it impressed upon his heart and mind and conscience that the only salvation for a lost world of sinful men is that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe. Men who have the spirit of this Seminary go forth to their solemn calling as preachers of the gospel, caring for the vital and essential truths of revelation, and putting these things above the temporal and the accidental.

From this Seminary have been graduated about six thousand men, the greater part of whom (a little over half) remain until this present day. From more than

²⁷CC, 349–50.

²⁸Noll in Wells, *Reformed Theology in America*, 15.

two thousand pulpits every Sabbath day they preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to multitudes of men and women. Year after year they stand in their places, the broken ranks being re-filled, proclaiming the everlasting righteousness and the infinite love of God. Who can estimate their influence upon the thought and life of this nation?²⁹

Of the stars that made up the Princeton constellation, Charles Hodge had shone most brightly. It was reported that a student from Princeton who had taken up study in Germany, upon asking his professor if he would receive credit for courses taken at Princeton under Hodge, was told he perhaps "should receive double!" Such was his international reputation. But for all his deserved acclaim, first place in learning among the Princetonians would later be given to Warfield. No less than Caspar Wistar Hodge Jr., the grandson of Charles Hodge and Warfield's assistant for twenty years and then successor at the seminary, remarked at his inauguration that in erudition Warfield excelled all the illustrious professors that held the chair of theology before him, and that he was "without an equal in the English speaking world."³⁰ Samuel Craig reports that

John DeWitt, long the professor of Church History in Princeton Seminary and himself a man of no mean scholarship, once told the writer that he had known intimately the three great Reformed theologians of America of the preceding generation—Charles Hodge, W. G. T. Shedd, and Henry B. Smith—and that he was not only certain that Warfield knew a great deal more than any one of them but that he was disposed to think that he knew more than all three of them put together.³¹

Both friends and foes acknowledge Warfield as "possibly the most intellectually gifted professor ever to teach on that [Princeton] faculty."³² The breadth and depth of his voluminous works have impressed Christian students and scholars of all theological persuasions. Warfield was by all accounts one of the most outstanding and influential orthodox theologians of the era. The congratulatory correspondence that poured into the school from church leaders and religious institutions from around the world for the centennial celebration, as well as speakers at the event, brought remarks of praise not only of past Princeton professors, which is to be expected, but also of Warfield, then in his prime, a leading "ornament" of

29CC, 416-17.

³⁰Calhoun, Princeton Seminary, 1:353; PTR 20, no. 1 (1922): 1.

³¹Samuel G. Craig, "Benjamin B. Warfield," in *BTSp*, xvii.

³²Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (1970; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 115.

the seminary and a scholar who had already become "a household name" both in America and abroad. Such was the esteem in which he was held in his own day.³³ Among Reformed orthodox theologians few have stood taller. This was the reputation he earned in his own lifetime, and the breadth and depth of his scholarship and exhaustive acquaintance with the theological, scientific, and philosophical literature and thought of his day constituted the high-water mark of Old Princeton.

Princeton, The Presbyterians, and Beyond

The late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century was a time marked by change. Political and philosophical upheavals and scientific and technological advances were dramatically transforming life and culture. Learning itself and new understandings grew at a record pace. In the academy new ways of thinking were advanced in virtually every discipline. It was a new and "enlightened" world, and this inevitably brought new pressures to the church. Theologians and church leaders of the day felt this pressure very keenly, and as responses varied, the Christian world and church denominations of the early twentieth century were shaped and reshaped accordingly.

At the heart of the Enlightenment ideal, eighteenth-century rationalism, was the optimistic contention that human reasoning-rationality-is the final arbiter of truth. This starting point, and its close sibling naturalism, resulted in a higher criticism of Scripture and an attack on virtually everything Christian. Then came Darwin's On the Origin of Species (1859), which demanded a new consideration of the early chapters of Genesis, raising questions regarding God and his involvement in the universe. These and other expressions of naturalism came against the historic Christian faith in force, and the rapid change of the world at large was reflected in no small measure in the world of Christian theology. Professing Christians were becoming ever less satisfied with traditional Christianity, its institutions, and its creeds. Change was demanded, and the church became increasingly divided between conservative and liberal patterns of thought. Change in one respect or another was unavoidable. Sizing it up well, Friedrich A. G. Tholuck (1799–1877) is reported to have remarked to Henry Boynton Smith (1815–1877) that "the controlling and central feature of the theological thought of the day" is "Ent-wick-el-ung" (emphasizing each syllable

³³CC, 123, 471, 525.

of *Entwicklung* emphatically)—"development."³⁴ Historic doctrines could no longer be assumed stable.

By the close of the nineteenth century, students of Scripture had come to recognize that century as one of unprecedented advance in biblical scholarship and learning. Warfield agreed with this assessment, but he was careful to nuance the observation with a larger contextual note, namely, that biblical students of the nineteenth century were standing on the shoulders of those of previous centuries. It was not the nineteenth century that invented or discovered the Bible. Its discovery was the great gift of the Reformation, and "the light that was then turned upon the Word of God has been shining steadily upon it ever since." Men such as Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522) and Erasmus (c. 1466–1536) gave us the Scriptures in their original languages, and these treasures also have been kept under close scrutiny. "The Reformation age grasped at the heart of Scripture; the age of systematization investigated its substance; the age of rationalism occupied itself with its shell. But each point of view and each age had its own contribution to make to the common store of ascertained fact, and still knowledge grew." It was this continuously advancing and "accumulated mass of learning," Warfield says, that "was laid at last in the lap of the nineteenth century" and enabled it to achieve its own progress.35

Biblical scholars of the nineteenth century, in turn, furthered the work of their predecessors in the study of the biblical text, the biblical languages, biblical history and archaeology, and of course biblical criticism. C. W. Hodge Jr. remarked in 1894 that "the state of philosophy all over the world to-day is one of criticism rather than construction," and this was no less the case in biblical and theological studies. This is not surprising, Warfield remarked, for an age of investigation and development in knowledge is by the nature of the case an age of criticism. By this growth of knowledge the total body of old knowledge is tested and tried. It is to be expected that the progress of knowledge should bring with it new challenges to the faith. Warfield was neither afraid of nor opposed to scientific criticism, even in reference to the Bible. Indeed, he championed the right of criticism and was confident that by it the historic faith of the church had been all the more vindicated. "An inspired statement which cannot stand the test of criticism is not foundation enough to build faith on," he remarked. But immediately he added, "A criticism which cannot be trusted to accord independently with inspired statements, cannot be trusted where we have no such divine authority to check its vagaries." That is, he insisted that criticism must be honest and objective and

³⁴Cited in George W. Richards, "The Mercersburg Theology: Its Purpose and Principles," *Church History* 20, no. 3 (1951): 45; cf. W, 9:25–31. ³⁵SSW, 2:3–4.

not driven merely by the unbelieving, negative, naturalistic spirit of the age. To disallow flawed criticism is not to deny criticism per se. The supposed findings of a criticism marred in its methodology or by its ill-founded presuppositions cannot be naively accepted simply because it is called criticism. And just as the "old facts" must be checked by the "new facts" criticism discovers, so also the old facts must check the new. Warfield's complaint was that the antisupernaturalistic criticism of the day had run too long unchecked. Its assaults on Scripture were grounded in a naturalistic presupposition and were driven by the goal of ridding Christianity of the supernatural. Its "findings" were not objectively obtained and were in the largest measure unjustified.³⁶

But an era of change it was, and "progressive orthodoxy" increasingly became the slogan of the day. Warfield was eager to affirm that the church ought to be progressive in its understanding of God's revelation in Scripture until in glory our understanding is made perfect. But the "strange connections" in which the phrase was most often used left the expression self-contradictory. Modern theology had taken its stand not first in Scripture but in other sources of ideas. For Warfield this is necessarily the makings of heresy, and he lamented that although so many in his day were in supposed "pursuit of truth," very few seemed to have found much of it.³⁷

Modern liberal theology is generally said to have its origin in the German preacher-theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who, reacting against philosophical skepticism, grounded theology in experience and feeling, specifically the feeling of God-consciousness and its corollary, a sense of absolute dependence. Schleiermacher led the way for the rejection of external authority, in favor of an anthropological point of reference, the religious consciousness. This grounding of theology in the experience and feelings of the inner life became a permanent fixture in Christian theology and opened a path for rationalism and mysticism alike. Indeed, resting on such an uncertain and shifting basis as the human psyche, "Christian doctrine" could have no certain meaning and no room for authoritative dogma. Christianity itself now could be considered but one of the world religions, and it could be weighed accordingly. Though Christianity could be viewed as superior, for whatever reasons, "comparative religions" rather than divine revelation became the point of reference, and "theology" rather than the study of God as he has revealed himself became the study of religious experience. Schleiermacher marks this turn in

³⁶PRR 7, no. 26 (1896): 211; SSW, 2:4–8, 124–31, 595–603; W, 9:25–31; "Dr. Briggs' Critical Method," *Interior* 14 (Feb. 4, 1882): 2.

³⁷W, 9:78; SSW, 2:672–79; "The Hibbert Journal," TBS, new series, 7, no. 1 (January 1903): 55.

Christian theology from a recognition of divine revelation to a confidence in the human psyche.³⁸

The ramifications of this new thinking played out in succeeding generations of theological endeavor. Despite the enormous stature of Schleiermacher, Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889) is recognized, by reason of influence more than originality, as the father of the later classic Protestant liberalism that prevailed in Warfield's day. The son of a Lutheran (Prussian) minister, Ritschl made his name as Germany's leading theologian at Göttingen, where he taught from 1864 until his death in 1889. The hallmark of Ritschlianism is its attempt "to clear theology of all 'metaphysical' elements. Otherwise expressed, this means that nothing will be admitted to belong to Christianity except facts of experience." Any elaboration of these "facts" into "dogmas" necessarily entails metaphysical elements and questions of ontology and is therefore ruled out of court. Heavily influenced by Schleiermacher's theology of religious experience and by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who emphasized the moral character of Christianity and taught that the human mind is incapable of investigating matters beyond the immediate experience of the human senses and the dictates of reason, Ritschl left theoretical speculations about such matters as the nature and being of God to "science." "Religious" investigation had to do only with religious experience, "value judgments," morals, and ethics. God may be known as love, for this is how we experience him. But beyond that is beyond experience and the realm of religion. Christ is Lord in that this is how we experience him as we bow to his example and teaching. There is nothing knowable about him apart from this. Ritschl never explicitly denied the future state, but for him religion had to do with life on earth. Life's highest goal is the pursuit of the kingdom of God, which for Ritschl is the Christian community that has collectively made this value judgment. Ritschl had no room for metaphysical or (its related) mystical theology, and doctrine itself came to be held in utmost disdain as obstructive of true religion and "essential Christianity." Warfield therefore often characterized Ritschlianism as a reduced Christianity and a mere system of ethics. As Paul Tillich later described it, "Ritschlianism was a withdrawal from the ontological to the moral." Indeed, in one of Ritschl's leading American disciples, Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918), Ritschlianism gave birth to the "social gospel," an understanding of the gospel in humanitar-

³⁸W, 9:657–60; R. A. Finlayson, *The Story of Theology* (London: Tyndale, 1969), 56; James C. Livingston, Modern Christian Thought: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 93–105; Louis Berkhof, Recent Trends in Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1944), 11–12, 16–17; Colin Brown, Philosophy and the Christian Faith: A Historical Sketch from the Middle Ages to the Present Day (London: Inter-Varsity, 1969), 110–16.

ian terms only. Ritschl was the most influential theologian of the time, and Ritschlianism dominated the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His enormous influence continued after his death until about 1925, when the eschatological nature of the kingdom of God became more widely recognized and the "new orthodoxy" of Karl Barth (1886–1968) began to erode the older liberal theology.³⁹

Warfield observes that this liberalism did not arise directly from unbelief but indirectly, in an attempt to rescue what was considered "essential Christianity" from the onslaught of philosophical and scientific materialism. Increasingly traditional Christian doctrines were deemed indefensible to modern criticism, and they were abandoned as needless accretions to the true faith of the historical Jesus. Early in the history of the church the religion *of* Jesus was corrupted into a religion *about* Jesus. All such "doctrines" now were to be abandoned. Virtually all metaphysical elements and the supernatural were yielded over in an attempt to preserve "essential Christianity." But what was surrendered in the process, Warfield contended, was precisely that which was distinctive to Christianity supernaturalism, and its attending notions of divine revelation and external authority.

Accommodation to unbelief had resulted in a Bible that was something other than the divine word and a Jesus who was something less than the divine Christ. In the hands of the liberals all the miraculous elements of Scripture came quickly under assault. The supernatural aspects of Christ's person and work were especially the object of criticism—his virgin birth, deity, transfiguration, vicarious atonement, resurrection, and miracles were all given naturalistic explanations, ranging from theories of fraud and prescientific naivety to lessons of moralistic instruction. Kenotic theories of Christ's incarnation multiplied with attempts to explain him as other than divine, and various fictitious lives of Jesus were published, all to explain Jesus in human terms. Stripped of metaphysical elements, the church's historic doctrines of sin, grace, and regeneration were also eliminated, as well as any meaningful doctrine of prayer and vital communion with the exalted Christ. "And," Warfield wryly quips with Acts 19:2 in mind, "like the disciples that Paul met at Ephesus, [Ritschlianism] 'did not so much as hear whether there is a Holy Ghost." Christianity was reduced to an ethic and a philosophy to which no naturalistic philosopher or unbelieving scientist could

³⁹SSW, 2:244–46, 448–51; W, 9:591–92, 657–60; Finlayson, *The Story*, 57–58; Brown, *Philosophy*, 154–55; Gary Dorrien, *The Word as True Myth: Interpreting Modern Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 52; Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 270–90; Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 514. Note that already in 1898 Warfield observed that the influence of Ritschlianism "seems distinctly on the wane in the land of its birth." SSW, 2:450.

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find objection. All that is distinctively Christian was lost, the term "Christian" itself was rendered meaningless, and "essential Christianity" was but another naturalistic religion. Warfield approvingly cites James Orr's characterization of Ritschlianism as simply "an attempt to show how much of positive Christianity can be retained compatibly with the acceptance of the modern non-miraculous theory of the world."⁴⁰

Harvard dean Willard Sperry (1882–1954) described liberalism as the "Yes, But" religion in a volume by that title (1931).

Yes, I believe in the deity of Christ, but the language of Chalcedon has become meaningless. We must redefine the doctrine so as to make it intelligible to us who live in the twentieth century. Yes, I believe in the Virgin Birth of Christ, but the important thing is not any biological fact but the value of Jesus for us.⁴¹

William Robertson Smith (1846–1894), a flashpoint of the new theology in the Free Church of Scotland, provides a clear example. When accused of denying the deity of Christ, he responded: "How can they accuse me of that? I've never denied the divinity of any man, let alone Jesus."⁴² Traditional terminology was used, but sharply different meanings were attached. Such was the theological world of Protestantism at the close of the nineteenth century. The Christian faith had come to mean many different things, and its resemblances to traditional orthodoxy were becoming increasingly distant. H. Richard Niebuhr (1894–1962) famously described early twentieth-century theology this way: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of Christ without a cross."⁴³

In his 1894 "Evading the Supernatural," Warfield severely exposes the dialectic of liberal theologians. They affirm that their destructive critical views nevertheless leave the doctrine of inspiration intact and serve only to enhance Scripture's profitability to God's people. Stripping Christianity of all its dogmas, they yet assure us that Christianity itself stands all the more firm. And having reduced Jesus to mere humanity, they assure us still that he is worthy of our adoration. Warfield understands all this as deceptive doublespeak and warns that no rightly guarded Christian will be taken by it. "A tendency to the minimizing of the importance of the high supernaturalism of the creeds of the Church has taken possession of the world." In such an atmosphere Christianity itself hangs in the balance, for "Chris-

⁴⁰W, 9:31, 588–91; W, 10:321–23; SSW, 2:242, 295–96, 448–51; Brown, Philosophy, 151–56; cf. W, 3:349–50; W, 10:1–25.

⁴¹Cited by Kenneth Kantzer, "Liberalism's Rise and Fall," Christianity Today, February 18, 1983, 10.

⁴²Cited in Millard Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 740.

⁴³The Kingdom of God in America (1937; repr., Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 193.

tianity, in its very essence, is supernaturalism."⁴⁴ These issues are nonnegotiable. "No one will doubt that Christians of to-day must state their Christian belief in terms of modern thought," Warfield acknowledges. "Every age has a language of its own and can speak no other." But he quickly cautions, "Mischief comes only when, instead of stating Christian belief in terms of modern thought, an effort is made, rather, to state modern thought in terms of Christian belief."⁴⁵ Warfield repeatedly insists that in this struggle Christianity itself is at stake. The Christianized language of unbelief masks an entirely different religion.⁴⁶ We might as well commit to fetishism, he argues: take away Christian doctrine, and no difference between Christianity and fetishism remains.

It is the gravest kind of self-deception to imagine—to bring the matter to its sharpest point—that we can discard the religious conceptions of Paul, or of Jesus, and remain of the same religion as Paul or Jesus, because forsooth we feel that we too, like them, are religious beings and function religiously. Christianity is not a distinctive interpretation of a religious experience common to all men, much less is it an indeterminate and constantly changing interpretation of a religious experience common to men; it is a distinctive religious experience begotten in men by a distinctive body of facts known only to or rightly apprehended only by Christians.⁴⁷

As an example, in 1906 the *American Journal of Theology* asked Warfield, among others, to respond to the question of whether the supernatural birth of Jesus is essential to Christianity. Much of what was called "Christianity" in his day, endeavoring to preserve the name, did not hold that Jesus' supernatural birth is at all essential, and this was the answer given by others in the article. For his part, before answering, Warfield sought to clarify just "what 'Christianity' it is we are talking about." Without the doctrines taught in Scripture and held by the church historically, Warfield insists, the very term "Christianity" has been evacuated of all meaning. "If everything that is called Christianity in these days is Christianity, then there is no such thing as Christianity. A name applied indiscriminately to everything, designates nothing."⁴⁸

One difficulty liberalism faced in all this is that while it formally dismisses all metaphysical aspects of theology, it could not define itself apart from meta-

⁴⁴*SSW*, 2:680-84.

⁴⁵W, 10:322.

⁴⁶E.g., W, 10:268, 404–5. Doubtless this emphasis in Warfield is at least in part where Warfield's famous student J. Gresham Machen received his inspiration for his celebrated exposé of liberalism, *Christianity and Liberalism*.

⁴⁷W, 10:325-26.

⁴⁸"The Supernatural Birth of Jesus," *The American Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (January 1906): 1–30; W, 3:447–58; W, 2:396; cf. W, 10:321–34.

physical references. To speak even of God requires the metaphysical elements that Ritschlianism disallowed. "It is a matter of metaphysical opinion whether we worship a fragment of bone or the God of heaven and earth; what separates the fetish-worshipper from the Christian here is a little matter of metaphysical opinion."49 But this was an inconsistency Ritschlianism was willing to live with. Ritschlianism also faced a problem with history. It gave itself to destroying the whole system of historical Christian dogma yet clung to the name Christian. The problem is that "Christianity" is not an empty word able to fit any given system of belief. It has a historical content and meaning, and history knows of no undogmatic or nontheological Christianity at all. Warfield scarcely overstated the matter when he wrote, "The history of Christianity is the history of doctrine." Thus Ritschlianism was left "to explain the origin and development of doctrinal Christianity in such a manner as to evince essential Christianity to be undogmatic." In other words, it must "explain doctrinal Christianity as corrupted Christianity" and the rise and development of theology as accretions from without, obscuring the original faith. This task fell chiefly to Ritschl's brilliant and most outstanding student, Adolf von Harnack, and to Harnack's foremost American student and America's foremost Ritschlian representative, Arthur C. McGiffert (1861–1933)⁵⁰ of Union Theological Seminary in New York. Both labored vigorously to demonstrate the influence of pagan Greek philosophy in the forming of Christian doctrine in the early centuries of the church and, in turn, to tear away this "husk" so as to restore the pure and original kernel of the gospel—"essential Christianity"—that lay hidden beneath it. The "kernel," of course, is subjective faith in God our Father taught us by a human and nonmiraculous but ethical Jesus who did not spread dogma but set the example of perfect love and taught us to love both God and man, thus proclaiming the kingdom of God.51

Beneath all this was, simply, rationalism—a rationalism that can admit no external authority. Liberalism by definition is "the idea that Christian theology can be genuinely Christian without being based upon external authority."⁵² Warfield describes this attitude toward the authority of Jesus and the apostles as "the fundamental evil" of Ritschlianism. He repeats this charge often, as in his "Recent

⁴⁹SSW, 1:365–66.

⁵⁰McGiffert was a Presbyterian and Congregational church historian and educator at Lane Theological Seminary and Union Theological Seminary. His *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (1897) led to heresy charges in the Presbyterian Church and resulted in his move to the Congregationalists in 1900.

⁵¹W, 9:591–94, 609–14; W, 10:115–18; SW, 201–2; SSW, 2:292; Tillich, A History of Christian Thought, 515–19; Livingston, Modern Christian Thought, 286–90; Earle E. Cairns, Christianity in America (Chicago: Moody, 1964), 151–52.

⁵²Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Revelation 1805–1900* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), xiii.

Reconstructions of Theology" (1898), where he characterizes the theological and religious scene of his day as, above all else, "a crisis of authority." It is not a new interpretation of Scripture so much as a new attitude toward Scripture itself. The "recent reconstructions of theology" have as their leading feature a refusal of all external authority, and the primitive church is represented as holding no "rule of faith" or "canon." "The only authority that was recognized was the Holy Spirit; and He was supposed to speak to every believer as truly as He spoke to an apostle." This is the significance of the new covenant as the age of the Spirit, according to Ritschlianism; primitive Christianity was individualistic and had no notion of apostolic authority. Scripture was denied any revelatory significance; instead, authority was found within the human spirit.

Warfield observes that not all liberals acknowledge this refusal of external authority with equal frankness. They may speak of a Christian consciousness or the witness of the Spirit, and they may cling to the fragments of Scripture that criticism has left and profess adherence to them. "But it is undeniable that 'recent theological reconstruction' holds at best but a crumbling Bible in its hands." The Ritschlian will not be made subject to biblical doctrines simply because those doctrines are biblical, for the Bible is denied that authority. Warfield cites McGiffert as an example, who not only "lays aside whole tracts of the New Testament as not in his judgment apostolic in origin, or trustworthy in narrative, or authoritative in teaching"; but "even to those parts the apostolic origin of which he can bring himself to allow," he will deny any peculiar authority above that which "belongs to the utterances of any Christian man who is led (as are all Christians) by the Holy Spirit."⁵³ This relocation of religious authority theology.

In the absence of external doctrinal authority and with human reason the supreme arbiter of truth, other traditional Christian doctrines came under suspicion. "The nineteenth-century liberals refused to accept religious teachings that offended their moral, intellectual, and spiritual sensibilities. They began with the Calvinist doctrines of human nature, atonement, and divine predestination, which for them failed the moral test."⁵⁴ Douglas Macintosh wrote in the *Harvard Review* that the traditional theory of redemption as represented by Warfield "is not only not essential to Christianity, because contrary to reason, but moreover essentially unchristian, because opposed to the principles of sound morality."⁵⁵

 $^{{}^{53}}SSW, 2{:}291-93, 448-51; W, 9{:}595-96, 619-28; W, 10{:}321-34; W, 3{:}323-24.$

⁵⁴Dorrien, The Making of American Liberal Theology, 399.

⁵⁵Douglas Clyde Macintosh, "What Is the Christian Religion?" *The Harvard Theological Review* 7, no. 1 (1914): 18.

Religious authority resided now in the human psyche, and teaching grounded in Scripture could be rejected if offensive to the modern mind. But in our rejection of external authority, Warfield observes, we have but naively assumed infallibility for ourselves.⁵⁶

But the rejection of the authority of Scripture carries further ramifications, even more fundamental, and Warfield presses the issue often: "Of course men cannot thus reject the Bible, to which Christ appealed as authoritative, without rejecting also the authority of Christ, which is thus committed to the Bible's authority." Questions of the nature and character of Scripture necessarily entail questions of christology, and for Warfield this is the deciding factor. We cannot have the Jesus of the Bible without also having the Bible of Jesus. But liberalism rejects all external authority, and by various arguments that limit the knowledge and/or teaching of Jesus, and by various kenotic theories, even Christ is divested of binding authority. Creative evasions do not change the reality of the case, however, and Warfield insists that it is all or nothing: "We may be theists without authority," he concedes, "but not Christians."⁵⁷

An era of change it was. Christianity was being offered a new set of beliefs. Prominent among these was a new understanding of man and his origin, as well as a higher estimate of human potential and worth. Not only had humanity itself advanced from lower forms, but with it civilization itself had advanced. Religion had advanced also, and it was needful for Christianity to shed its ancient relics in order to keep up with the times. Such an atmosphere, which breathes naturalism, inevitably affects the church. Just how much is God involved in this world? Did he really create it? And if so, just how are we to understand that? Does he govern the universe? Is he transcendent or immanent? And in what way does this make a difference? Did he speak to the apostles in such a way that their writings constitute his word? Of course in all this, questions quickly arise regarding providence, predestination, inspiration, incarnation, redemption, and so on. The very nature of the church is thrown into question. Just what is the church? Is it the pillar and ground of the truth? Or is it more a religious society, or a business? And by what rule are such questions decided? What is the source of authority? Change was the leading characteristic of the day, and virtually all that was distinctively Christian hung in the balance.

Now the age in which we live is anything but supernaturalistic: it is distinctly hostile to supernaturalism. Its most striking characteristic is precisely its deeply rooted

⁵⁶W, 10:322.

⁵⁷W, 9:590; Warfield, "'Sixty Years with the Bible': A Record of Drifting," *TBST* 12 (February 1910): 128; W, 10:125–26, 431; SSW, 2:127–28.

and wide-reaching rationalism of thought and sentiment.... It has invaded with its solvent every form of thought and every activity of life. It has given us a naturalistic philosophy (in which all "being" is evaporated into "becoming"), a naturalistic science (the single-minded zeal of which is to eliminate design from the universe); a naturalistic politics (whose first fruits was the French Revolution, and whose last may well be an atheistic socialism); a naturalistic history (which can scarcely find place for even human personality among the causes of events); and a naturalistic religion, which says, "Hands off" to God—if indeed it troubles itself to consider whether there be a God, if there be a God, whether He be a person, or if He be a person, whether He can or will concern Himself with men.⁵⁸

The Reformed branch of Protestantism, largely speaking, had proven a haven of historic Christian orthodoxy. Its Reformed faith was not ashamed to admit mystery, yet neither were its adherents ashamed to demonstrate the reasonableness of that faith and its internal cohesiveness. But change would come, and it was in the late nineteenth century that Warfield's Presbyterian Church in the United States of America experienced it.⁵⁹

In his 1880 inaugural lecture at Western Theological Seminary, Warfield referred to "a certain looseness of belief" that had "invaded" several quarters of the church.⁶⁰ With many controversies behind it, the American body had a history of maneuvers that resulted in preserving an external unity of dissonant theological voices. The 1801 Plan of Union, acknowledging Congregational and Presbyterian ministers alike in the denomination, was finally overturned in the Old School-New School schism of 1837. But new issues and the climate of healing following the Civil War served to minimize and promote tolerance of previous differences. The reunion of 1869 marked a healing of sorts, at least externally, as differences were laid aside. The early 1890s witnessed various heresy trials over the higher criticism, that of Charles Briggs and the loss of Union Seminary being the most famous. Although the Old School conservatives could claim victory in these trials, significant opposition remained, owing often to the safe refuge afforded by several New School-dominated presbyteries. In 1889 many in the Presbyterian Church began calling for confessional revision. "It is an inexpressible grief," Warfield wrote, to see the church "spending its energies in a vain attempt to lower its testimony to suit the ever changing sentiment of the world around it."⁶¹ The movement did not gain all that it sought, but it did

⁵⁸CA, 504.

⁵⁹Perhaps the most helpful study of this period in the Presbyterian Church is Lefferts A. Loetscher, *The Broadening Church* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), 1–89.

⁶⁰W, 1:393.

⁶¹"Revision or Reaffirmation?" *Daily True American* (June 29, 1900); *PJ* 25, no. 27 (July 5, 1900), 7f.; *Southwestern Presbyterian* (July 19, 1900); and elsewhere.

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finally result in the amendments of 1903 and a softening in tone of the strict Calvinism that had historically marked Presbyterianism. This, in turn, opened the way to the 1906 reunion with the Arminian Cumberland Presbyterians in the South. Warfield vigorously opposed all calls for confessional revision on grounds that the proffered changes would not improve at all but rather blur the precision already attained by the Westminster Confession of Faith.⁶² He opposed reunion with the Cumberland Presbyterians on the ground that given their Calvinist-Arminian differences, gospel issues were at stake.⁶³ And he led the cause for the advancement of the historic faith against the higher criticism newly arrived from Germany. In article after article Warfield defended the faith on all fronts, answering the encroaching Arminianism and critics on all sides and launching a counterattack of his own.

Although Warfield remained ever confident of the ultimate triumph of the historic Christian faith, he seems gradually to have seen the cause as lost in his

⁶²"What Is the Confession of Faith?" (address given before the Presbytery of New Brunswick, June 25, 1889), PB 76 (September 4, 1889); reprinted in Shall We Revise the Confession of Faith? (Trenton, NJ: n.p., 1889); also On the Revision of the Confession of Faith (New York: Randolph, 1890); "The Presbyterians and the Revision of the Westminster Confession," The Independent 41 (July 18, 1889): 914-15; "Revision of the Confession of Faith I–III," Herald and Presbyter 49, nos. 51–52, and 50, no. 1 (1889): 2 (in all three issues); "The Presbyterian Churches and the Westminster Confession," PR 10, no. 40 (1889): 646-57; "Confessional Subscription and Revision," PQ 76 (November 1889); "God's Infinite Love to Men and the Westminster Confession," P 59, no. 44 (1889): 6; "The Meaning of Revision of the Confession," PJ 14, no. 46 (1889); "The Present Status of the Revision Controversy," The Central West 4 (March 20, 1890); "As Others See Us," The New York Observer 68 (August 25, 1890): 266; "True Church Unity: What It Is" (December 1890), SSW, 1:299-307; "The Final Report of the Committee on Revision of the Confession," PRR 3 (April 1892): 322-30; "The Revision of the Westminster Confession before the Presbyteries," The Independent 44 (September 22, 1892): 1316-17; "The Significance of the Westminster Standards as a Creed" (November 13, 1897), SSW, 2:660–62; "The Significance of Our Confessional Doctrine of the Decree" (May 17 and 24, 1900), SSW, 1:93-102; "Revision or Reaffirmation?"; "IS There No Danger in the Revision Movement?" PJ 25, no. 29 (1900): 8; "The Revision Movement in the Presbyterian Church," The Independent 52 (August 1900): 1906-9; "Is It Restatement That We Need?" PJ 25, no. 27 (1900): 7-8; also P 70, no. 33 (1900): 8-10; "Revision and the Third Chapter," PB 87 (August 23, 30, September 6, 1900): 12-13 (in all three issues); "Predestination in the Reformed Confessions" (January 1901), W, 9:117-231; "A Declaratory Statement," in Papers Submitted to the General Committee on Confessional Revision for Information (n.p., 1901): 5-8; "The Making of the Westminster Confession, and Especially of Its Chapter on the Decree of God" (1901), W, 6:75-161; "The Confessional Situation," The New York Observer 79 (May 16, 1901): 63; "The Proposed New Statement of Presbyterian Doctrine," P 71, nos. 27-31 (1901): 10-11, 8-9, 8-9, 8-9, 8-9; "On the Diction of the Revision Overtures," P 73, no. 12 (1903): 8–9; PB 89 (March 26, 1903): 1323; also PJ 28, no. 13 (1903): 7–8; also Herald and Presbyter 74, no. 12 (1903): 10–11; "Dr. Warfield's Reply," P 53, no. 14 (1903): 8-9; "The Proposed Union with the Cumberland Presbyterians," PTR 2, no. 2 (1904): 295-316; see also P 74, nos. 15–19 (1904): 7–8 (in each issue); "An Humble Defense," CP 67, no. 17 (1904): 519–20; "Christian Unity and Church Union: Some Primary Principles," PB 91 (July 7, 1904): 103-4; "In Behalf of Evangelical Religion," P 90, no. 39 (1920): 20; reprinted in SSW, 1:385–88. After the amendments to the confession were ratified, Warfield lent his general support, affirming that the changes that were finally adopted did not alter the confession's system of theology ("The Confession of Faith as Revised in 1903," SSW, 2:370-419). Perhaps, but the Cumberland Presbyterians en masse understood them as sufficiently overcoming their differences and thus allowing the reunion.

⁶³Letter to *CP* (quoted in part in an editorial) 68, no. 16 (1904): 484, and printed in full at Warfield's request 68, no. 21 (1904): 655; "On the Misapplication of Historical Names," *P* 74, no. 52 (1904): 8–9. This article had been refused by *CP*; "The Basis of the Proposed Union—Theoretical and Practical," *P* 75, no. 9 (1905): 8–9; "Vote of the Cumberland Presbyteries on Union," *P* 75, no. 19 (1905): 8.

Presbyterian Church. As early as 1882 he wrote that the gravity of the crisis could not be overestimated, being so severe that he suggested getting rid of the critics.⁶⁴ In 1889 even Charles Briggs, Warfield's archrival at Union Seminary in New York, could write of their church:

The Westminster system has been virtually displaced by the teachings of the dogmatic divines. It is no longer practically the standard of the faith of the Presbyterian Church. The Catechisms are not taught in our churches, the Confession is not expounded in our theological seminaries. The Presbyterian Church is not orthodox, judged by its own standards.... It is drifting toward an unknown and a mysterious future.⁶⁵

In May of 1893 Charles Briggs was suspended from Presbyterian ministry for his critical views of Scripture, but he responded with increasing confidence. In his July 1893 "The Future of the Presbyterianism in the United States," he questioned whether liberals would be able to stay in their respective denominations or if they would eventually need to leave and form a union of their own. Either way, he stated confidently, the "ultra conservatives," as he called them, would certainly be "crushed" and in due time left behind.⁶⁶ Later in his controversial 1909 Church Unity he wrote more confidently, "It is evident to intelligent observers that Christianity is passing through a process of change which is gradually transforming it." He wrote this as one laboring to advance that transformation and establish the "coming Catholicism" that he envisioned would be marked by a "deeper and richer religious experience, higher and broader comprehension of divine truths and facts," and free of "fruitless controversies." He recognized the pivotal significance of his era, and with confidence that was at times triumphalistic, he spoke of "The Passing and the Coming Christianity" as though this new and truly "Catholic" church had already emerged, leaving the historic faith behind it.

The antitheses of the sixteenth century are to a great extent antitheses of one-sidedness, which the modern world has outgrown. The world has moved since then. The world has learned many things. We have new views of God's universe. We have new scientific methods. We have an entirely different psychology and philosophy. Our education is much more scientific, much more thorough, much more accurate, much more searching, much more comprehensive. All along the line of life, institution, dogma, morals, new situations are emerging, new questions pressing for solution;

⁶⁴SSW, 2:596, 603.

⁶⁵Charles A. Briggs, Whither? (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 223-24.

⁶⁶North American Review 440 (July, 1893): 9–10.

the perspective is changed, the lights and shadows are differently distributed. We are in a state of enormous transition, changes are taking place whose results it is impossible to foretell—reconstruction is in progress on the grandest scale. Out of it will spring, in God's own time, a rejuvenated, a reorganized, a truly universal Christianity, combining in a higher unity all that is true and real and worthy in the various Churches which now divide the world.⁶⁷

Briggs had lost his own case with the church body, but so fast-paced were the theological changes and so overwhelming was this wave of new thinking that he felt nonetheless assured he was on the winning side.

It was this onslaught exactly that Warfield labored to halt and even destroy. As Raymond Cannata remarks, "At the height of what Sydney Ahlstrom calls the 'Golden Age of Liberal Theology,' B. B. Warfield was a spoiler."⁶⁸ Intellectually and academically well equipped and with a literary output comparable to Augustine or Calvin, he was a towering figure in the counterattack against liberalism. Devastating in his critical analysis of liberalism, Warfield is often referred to as, simply, "the Princeton apologist." Theology and not apologetics was his department of instruction and focus of attention, but it was in large measure a theology polemically maintained and advanced, driven by the circumstances of his day. What marked the Protestant landscape was to him all that smacked of unbelief dressed in new clothing, and he was supremely confident that the facts were on his side and that no critical scholarship or antisupernaturalistic bias would ever overthrow the faith once for all delivered to the saints. James McClanahan observes insightfully that Warfield "may be studying Tertullian, but he has an eye on Harnack. He may be describing the Westminster Assembly, but he's watching Briggs and McGiffert, too."69 "There was no one in the English-speaking world who could surpass the massive learning, lucid pen and sheer intellectual powers of the seminary's own B. B. Warfield."70 Always ready to step up and raise a banner for the historic faith of the church and always ready to address unbelief both inside and outside his denomination, he throughout his career was marked by fervency of spirit, keen insight, and massive learning.

For nearly a century before Warfield arrived on its faculty, Princeton Seminary had stood out as the scholarly bastion of the historic Reformed faith. And due in large measure to the towering influence of Old Princeton, much of the new

⁶⁷Charles A. Briggs, Church Unity (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), viii, 416, 426–27, 435.

⁶⁸Raymond Cannata, "History of Apologetics at Princeton Seminary," in William A. Dembski and Jay Wesley Richards, eds., *Unapologetic Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 71.

⁶⁹James Samuel McClanahan, "Benjamin B. Warfield: Historian of Doctrine in Defense of Orthodoxy, 1881–1921" (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1988), 630.

⁷⁰Cannata, Unapologetic Apologetics, 113.

liberalizing tendencies in the church had been held back in significant degree. By means of his 2,700 students and his endless literary output, Warfield played an enormous role in this. But the undercurrent was always present, and within a decade after his death, liberal currents of thought would gain prominence in his Presbyterian church and at his beloved Princeton also. Warfield once met the wife of the seminary president J. Ross Stevenson while walking down a Princeton street, and she implored him: "Dr. Warfield, I hear there is going to be trouble at the General Assembly. Do let us pray for peace." To this he replied, "I am praying that if they do not do what is right, there may be a mighty battle."⁷¹ Warfield's younger colleague J. Gresham Machen reports a conversation with Warfield some weeks before Warfield's death.

I expressed my hope that to end the present intolerable condition there might be a great split in the Church, in order to separate the Christians from the anti-Christian propagandists. "No," he said, "You can't split rotten wood." His expectation seemed to be that the organized Church, dominated by naturalism, would become so cold and dead, that people would come to see that spiritual life could be found only outside of it, and that thus there might be a new beginning.⁷²

This was Machen's last conversation with Warfield, and it reveals Warfield's thinking regarding the state of his church: it had fallen irreparably into naturalism. Hence Machen's further comment, after the funeral, that he felt as they carried Warfield out, that Old Princeton went out with him.

"Christian Supernaturalism": Warfield in Summary

In his 1896 opening address, "Christian Supernaturalism," delivered before the faculty and students of Princeton Seminary, Warfield criticizes the antisupernaturalistic bias of the age and highlights the necessary supernaturalism of Christianity. In doing so he provides for us a concise outline of the frame of reference that shaped his polemic throughout his career. He charges that the antisupernaturalistic bias of modern rationalism is rooted in a pantheistic—or at least pantheizing—philosophy that blurs the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. This is a dominant feature of the rationalist's "God," whose immanence is championed at the expense of his transcendence. Warfield cites

 ⁷¹W. J. Grier, "Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, D.D. LL.D. Litt.D.," BT 89 (Fall 1971): 8.
 ⁷²JGM, 310.

theistic evolution as an example of giving a nod to "God" but explaining all things in terms of naturalistic development. Warfield suggests that perhaps as in no other era, this antisupernaturalistic bias has dominated and thus driven the thinking of his own age.⁷³

Warfield acknowledges that it would be impossible for such thinking not to affect the church in some ways. And he observes that although "the supernatural is the very breath of Christianity's nostrils" and that there is nothing more deadly to it than such an antisupernaturalistic atmosphere, still the chief characteristic of contemporary "Christian" thought is its naturalistic bias. "The real question with them seems to be, not what kind and measure of supernaturalism does the Christianity of Christ and His apostles recognize and require; but, how little of the supernatural may be admitted and yet men continue to call themselves Christians." To which he adds, "The effort is not to Christianize the world-conception of the age, but specifically to de-supernaturalize Christianity so as to bring it into accord with the prevailing world-view." Hence, the "speculative theism" known commonly as "non-miraculous Christianity" and "that odd positivistic religion" of the Ritschlians,

who, under color of a phenomenalism which knows nothing of "the thing in itself," profess to hold it not to be a matter of serious importance to Christianity whether God be a person, or Christ be God, or the soul have any persistence, and to find it enough to bask in the sweet impression which is made on the heart by the personality of the man Jesus, dimly seen through the mists of critical history.

This "bias" is the presupposition of the era's attempted reduction of Christianity, a "starting point in unbelief" that determines ahead of time the "findings" of its critical investigations and leaves us with a merely naturalistic Christianity.⁷⁴

In the remainder of his lecture Warfield outlines "the frankness of Christianity's commitment to the absolute supernatural," beginning with "the supernatural fact": God. When the Christian says "God," he by definition refers to a God who is more than merely immanent, "entangled in nature" so as to render him indistinguishable from it. For the Christian, God is neither confined to nor limited by the comparatively small forces of the universe. God is indeed a God in nature, but he is a God above nature also, who "transcends all the works of His hands," a supernatural transcendent God, the Maker and Supporter of the universe. From this it follows that the Christian believes also in "the supernatural act": creation. What we call "nature" did not simply come into existence.

⁷³W, 9:25-29.

⁷⁴W, 9:29–31.

It was made. It is neither self-made nor self-existent. It is not the result of evolution or modification. It was created, supernaturally, called into being by the transcendent God. The universe is therefore dependent on God, and he is not only its Creator but its Governor and Lord also. His activities in the world are not confined to its activities, but rather it owes both its existence and its persistence to his mighty will. Second causes he may well use, but they are his nonetheless.⁷⁵

This leads the Christian, next, to affirm and cherish "a supernatural redemption." As surely and as soon as the Christian recognizes the fact of sin that alienated him from God, he must look for a corrective and recovery not to natural causes or simply to providential agencies operating through natural causes. By the nature of the case he must look to the supernatural, the miraculous. The Christian must affirm, further, "the supernatural man"— the man "from heaven," as Paul calls him (I Cor. 15:47)—who came to redeem sinners, Christ, the eternal Son sent from the Father, who was born of a virgin, lived a supernatural life, died bearing the sinner's curse, conquered death, and returned to heaven, whence he came, "in an obviously supernatural ascension."⁷⁶

Next, Warfield argues, the Christian must maintain a hearty faith in a "supernatural revelation," for "how shall we be advantaged by a supernatural redemption of which we know nothing?" Who is competent to reveal and explain the meaning of God's redemptive acts, but God himself? The Christian, by definition, must affirm divine revelation and not in deed only but in word also. It is one thing to speak of a baby born in Bethlehem, but it requires a divine word "to tell us who and what this child was, why He lived and what He wrought by His death, what it meant that He could not be holden of the grave, and what those cloven tongues of flame signified—before they can avail as redemptive facts to us." Only God can reveal these things, and he has done so by his Word, given to us supernaturally by the apostles and prophets. "That we may believe in a supernatural redemption, we must believe in a supernatural revelation, by which alone we can be assured that this and not something else was what occurred, and that this and not something other was what it meant."⁷⁷

Finally, as Christians we must heartily affirm also a "supernatural salvation." It is not enough to know that God has accomplished a supernatural redemption in this world and that he has made it known to us. A supernatural redemption beyond our reach is of no profit to us at all. There must also be a supernatural application of that redemption to us, raising us from our sinful slumber to union

⁷⁵W, 9:31−33.

⁷⁶W, 9:38-41.

⁷⁷*W*, 9:41−43.

"CHRISTIAN SUPERNATURALISM": WARFIELD IN SUMMARY

and fellowship with Christ in faith. And this is accomplished by the creative operations of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart. The Christian is neither the

product of natural forces, however divinely led, nor an "evolution" out of natural man: he is a new creation. He is not self-made but divinely created, made a new man in Christ Jesus by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian is himself a living, walking miracle, the result of the supernatural workings of God.⁷⁸ As Warfield says again elsewhere:

The religion of the Bible is a frankly supernatural religion. By this is not meant merely that, according to it, all men, as creatures, live, move and have their being in God. It is meant that, according to it, God has intervened extraordinarily, in the course of the sinful world's development, for the salvation of men otherwise lost.⁷⁹

Here is the Christian worldview, a frank confession of the "absolute supernatural" that pervades the Christian faith that is "incumbent on every Christian"—a supernatural God, a supernatural redemption, accomplished by a supernatural Savior, interpreted by a supernatural revelation, and applied by the supernatural operations of his Spirit. "This confession constitutes the core of the Christian profession. Only he who holds this faith whole and entire has a full right to the Christian name: only he can hope to conserve the fullness of Christian truth . . . and witness a good confession in the midst of its most insidious attacks." Supernaturalism is, in short, "the very heart of the Christian religion."⁸⁰

This was Warfield's frame of reference from which, throughout his career, he sustained continued and vigorous assault on the naturalistic criticism of his day. From this standpoint he championed the Calvinistic concept of divine sovereignty and opposed all lesser notions, whether Pelagian, Socinian, deistic, Arminian, or Ritschlian. From this vantage point he opposed philosophical evolutionism, the contemporary kenotic theories of Christ's incarnation and person, all nonsubstitutionary interpretations of Christ's death, notions of self-salvation and self-sanctification, and naturalistic accountings of Scripture. Everything rises or falls with the question of supernaturalism. If supernaturalism, then Christianity in its biblical and historic expression and Christianity in its deepest evangelical and Reformed piety and its most profound sense of dependence upon God. Here in brief summary is the career of B. B. Warfield.⁸¹

⁷⁸W, 9:43-45.

⁷⁹W, 1:3.

⁸⁰W, 9:45-46; SW, 73.

⁸¹Samuel Craig provides a nice summary of Warfield's concern for supernaturalism in *BTS*, xxiii–xxix.

Christianity has from the beginning ever come to men as the rational religion, making its appeal primarily to the intellect. It has thus ever evinced itself not merely, as Dr. Macgregor puts it, preeminently as the apologetical religion, but also as the doctrinal religion. Above all other religions, it consists in doctrines: it has truth to offer to men's acceptance, and by their acceptance of this

truth it seeks to rule their lives and save their souls.... The commission is, Go, preach.... Is the foolishness of preaching after all a useless evil, inflicted on men? Was Paul mistaken when he declared that Christ had sent him forth above all to preach the gospel? We may

think as we will; but it is very evident that the founders of Christianity earnestly believed, not that the so-called Word of God is the product of faith and its only use is to witness to the faith that lies

behind it and gives it birth, but that the veritable Word of God is the seed of faith, that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, or, in other words, that behind the Christian life stands the doctrine of Christ, intelligently believed. When for

example the apostle asks the Galatians, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" he intimates with entire distinctness that it is in connection with the truth of God offered to faith that the Holy Spirit is given; and therefore elsewhere, although the gospel is naught save

as it is attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power—and Paul may plant and Apollos may water in vain if God do [sic] not himself give the increase—yet this very gospel itself and its preaching is called the "power of God unto salvation."

SSW, 2:277-79 (emphasis original).

The Apologetic Task APOLOGETICS AS PRIMARY

EVIDENCE AND FAITH APOLOGETICS AND FAITH SUMMARY OF THE APOLOGETIC TASK

The Theological Enterprise THE NATURE OF THEOLOGY AND THE THEOLOGICAL TASK THE RIGHT OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY THE GOAL OF THEOLOGY

Appendix

A BRIEF AND UNTECHNICAL STATEMENT OF THE REFORMED FAITH

B. B. Warfield

I. I believe that my one aim in life and death should be to glorify God and enjoy him forever; and that God teaches me how to glorify and enjoy him in his holy Word, that is, the Bible, which he has given by the infallible inspiration of his Holy Spirit in order that I may certainly know what I am to believe concerning him and what duty he requires of me.

2. I believe that God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and incomparable in all that he is; one God but three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Sanctifier; in whose power and wisdom, righteousness, goodness and truth I may safely put my trust.

3. I believe that the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, are the work of God's hands; and that all that he has made he directs and governs in all their actions; so that they fulfil the end for which they were created, and I who trust in him shall not be put to shame but may rest securely in the protection of his almighty love.

4. I believe that God created man after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, and entered into a covenant of life with him upon the sole condition of the obedience that was his due: so that it was by wilfully sinning against God that man fell into the sin and misery in which I have been born.

5. I believe, that, being fallen in Adam, my first father, I am by nature a child of wrath, under the condemnation of God and corrupted in body and soul, prone to

evil and liable to eternal death; from which dreadful state I cannot be delivered save through the unmerited grace of God my Savior.

6. I believe that God has not left the world to perish in its sin, but out of the great love wherewith he has loved it, has from all eternity graciously chosen unto himself a multitude which no man can number, to deliver them out of their sin and misery, and of them to build up again in the world his kingdom of righteousness: in which kingdom I may be assured I have my part, if I hold fast to Christ the Lord.

7. I believe that God has redeemed his people unto himself through Jesus Christ our Lord; who, though he was and ever continues to be the eternal Son of God, yet was born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that are under the law: I believe that he bore the penalty due to my sins in his own body on the tree, and fulfilled in his own person the obedience I owe to the righteousness of God, and now presents me to his father as his purchased possession, to the praise of the glory of his grace forever: wherefore renouncing all merit of my own, I put all my trust only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ my redeemer.

8. I believe that Jesus Christ my redeemer, who died for my offences was raised again for my justification, and ascended into the heavens, where he sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty, continually making intercession for his people, and governing the whole world as head over all things for his Church: so that I need fear no evil and may surely know that nothing can snatch me out of his hands and nothing can separate me from his love.

9. I believe that the redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ is effectually applied to all his people by the Holy Spirit, who works faith in me and thereby unites me to Christ, renews me in the whole man after the image of God, and enables me more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness; until, this gracious work having been completed in me, I shall be received into glory: in which great hope abiding, I must ever strive to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

IO. I believe that God requires of me, under the gospel, first of all, that, out of a true sense of my sin and misery and apprehension of his mercy in Christ, I should turn with grief and hatred away from sin and receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation; that, so being united to him, I may receive pardon for my sins and be accepted as righteous in God's sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to me and received by faith alone: and thus and thus only do I believe I may be received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. II. I believe that, having been pardoned and accepted for Christ's sake, it is further required of me that I walk in the Spirit whom he has purchased for me, and by whom love is shed abroad in my heart; fulfilling the obedience I owe to Christ my King; faithfully performing all the duties laid upon me by the holy law of God my heavenly Father; and ever reflecting in my life and conduct, the perfect example that has been set me by Christ Jesus my Leader, who has died for me and granted to me his Holy Spirit just that I may do the good works which God has afore prepared that I should walk in them.

12. I believe that God has established his Church in the world and endowed it with the ministry of the Word and the holy ordinances of Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Prayer; in order that through these as means, the riches of his grace in the gospel may be made known to the world, and, by the blessing of Christ and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them, the benefits of redemption may be communicated to his people: wherefore also it is required of me that I attend on these means of grace with diligence, preparation, and prayer, so that through them I may be instructed and strengthened in faith, and in holiness of life and in love; and that I use my best endeavors to carry this gospel and convey these means of grace to the whole world.

13. I believe that as Jesus Christ has once come in grace, so also is he to come a second time in glory, to judge the world in righteousness and assign to each his eternal award: and I believe that if I die in Christ, my soul shall be at death made perfect in holiness and go home to the Lord; and when he shall return in his majesty I shall be raised in glory and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity: encouraged by which blessed hope it is required of me willingly to take my part in suffering hardship here as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, being assured that if I die with him I shall also live with him, if I endure, I shall also reign with him.

> And to Him, my Redeemer, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, Three Persons, one God, be glory forever, world without end, Amen, and Amen.

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