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COMMON SENSE AND AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANISM:
AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF SCOTTISH REALISM
ON PRINCETON AND THE SOUTH
(with an appendix on Protestant Scholasticism)

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INTRODUCTION

It has become cliche' to speak of the "impact of Scottish Common Sense philosophy on American Presbyterianism." No church historian familiar with Presbyterianism in the nineteenth century United States would deny the substantial influence which Scottish Realism has had on theologians and philosophers of that era. Indeed, it is currently popular to emphasize Common Sense Philosophy as an integral component of (if not foundational to) Presbyterian thought in the nineteenth century.[1]

Recently this has become a question of no little importance. Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim have asserted the thesis that Scottish Common Sense Philosophy was combined with the Protestant Scholasticism of Francis Turretin to form a reformed scholastic tradition at Princeton in the nineteenth century.[2] According to Rogers and McKim, in their famous monograph The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible, the Princeton theologians were not aware of the extensive influence of Scottish Realism on their thought. Rogers and McKim contend that Common Sense Philosophy fostered an approach to the scriptures which substantially differed from the reformed tradition. It resulted in a peculiar Princeton approach to hermeneutics and in the development of the doctrines of "plenary verbal inspiration" and "inerrancy." Rogers and McKim continue by noting Princeton's great influence on twentieth-century fundamentalism's idea of scriptural authority and conclude that, in the final analysis, much of the division of the church (at least the churches in the

historic reformed tradition) in our century over the issue of Biblical inerrancy is due to the uncritical acceptance of the Princeton tradition as the only historically valid option concerning scriptural authority within the broad reformed tradition. The agenda of the Rogers and McKim proposal, by the authors' own admission, was to historically document that the "central Christian tradition" concerning the authority of the scriptures was that the Bible, by virtue of its human authorship, contains "errors" in matters of science and history, but is an infallible guide in matters of faith and practice. Hence, Barthian neo-orthodoxy is acclaimed to be more consistent with the "central Christian tradition" than the "Old Princeton Theology". In support of their thesis they spend much time attempting to establish that the ideas of "plenary verbal inspiration" and "inerrancy" are of rather recent vintage (seventeenth century or later). Their polemic functions to wrest the claim to the historical Christian position on the Bible from the defenders of the "Princeton Theology" and establish the teachings of Barth and the later Berkouwer as historically orthodox. Their historical revision, however, has not been met with universal acceptance by ecclesiastical historians.

John D. Woodbridge of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School has written an admirable response to the Rogers and McKim survey in his book Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal. Woodbridge not only points out the deficiencies of their historical method, but also alerts his readers to the

massive flaws in the Rogers and McKim reconstrution of the church's belief concerning the Bible.[3] However, Woodbridge does not attempt a detailed response to Rogers and McKim's suggestion concerning the influence of Common Sense on the Princetonian doctrine of scripture. Woodbridge warns against oversimplifying the relationship between Common Sense and Princeton, then gives a good general evaluation of Princeton and Common Sense.[4]

It will be the goal of this paper to clarify and evaluate the impact of Common Sense Philosophy on American Presbyterianism in the nineteenth century, particularly at Princeton, and in the South at Union and Columbia Seminaries. In order to accomplish this task there are a number of questions which must be asked and answered. Where did Common Sense affect American Presbyterian Theology? More specifically, did Common Sense Philosophy influence theological methodology, content, communication of that content, or defense of that content? How does Scottish Realism affect it? Did the nineteenth century Presbyterians recognize the influence of Realism on their thought or were they unconsciously Realists? Did they understand the consequences of Common Sense Philosophy on their apologetical system? Did a combination of Scottish Realism and Thomistic Scholasticism produce the doctrines of "plenary verbal inspiration" and "inerrancy" of the Bible? To answer these questions for every individual American Presbyterian theologian of the nineteenth century would be a Herculean task, so the scope of investigation must be narrowed. We will do this in two ways. We will use the Rogers and McKim

proposal as a foil for our study, agreeing with, disagreeing with, or modifying their conclusions where appropriate. Secondly, we will focus on two theologians from the Princeton tradition and two from among the Southern Presbyterians. We choose Charles Hodge and Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield from Princeton for our analysis of Common Sense at Princeton. Our choice is not arbitrary. Both are dominant figures in the Princeton tradition, and both are evaluated by Rogers and McKim. Hodge and Warfield were influential not only in their own time, but remain so today. From the South we will consider Robert Lewis Dabney of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and James Henley Thornwell of Columbia Theological Seminary in South Carolina--unquestionably the two greatest southern Presbyterian theologians of the nineteenth century. It should be made clear that by determining the impact of Scottish Common Sense on these men, one is not necessarily assured of knowing all the nuances of influence of Scottish Realism on the broader nineteenth century Presbyterian community. We can, however, by this more specific study clarify the discussion of the relation of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy to American Presbyterianism in general, and offer significant evaluation of the subject. In addition, we may be able to identify particular areas of influence of Scottish Realism on American Presbyterian theology which will need to be dealt with in more detail by those interested in an exhaustive study.

We will divide our study in the following manner. In order

to better understand Common Sense Philosophy and its historical setting, we will overview the philosophy and its proponents in historical context. At that time we will offer suggestions as to where Common Sense might impact on theology. Then we will survey selected writings of Hodge and Warfield at Princeton, attempting to detect Realism's influence on them. Afterwards, we will consider Dabney and Thornwell and some of their representative writings. Having examined the various influences on their theologies, we will conclude our study by evaluating all four theologians. We will offer specific answers to the questions "how" and "where" they were affected by Common Sense.

NOTES

[1] Consult the following works to become familiar with the typical historical evaluation of Common Sense influence on American Presbyterianism, Sydney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 353-356, 419-420; see also Ahlstrom's excellent article, "Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," Church History 24 (September 1955): 257-272; Theodore Bozeman, "Baconianism and the Bible" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1974); Bozeman's "A Nineteenth Century Baconian Theology: James Henley Thornwell As Enlightenment Theologian" (Th.M. thesis, Union Theological Seminary, Virginia, 1970); also by Bozeman Protestants in the Age of Science, (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Press, 1977); M. L. Bradbury. "Samuel Stanhope Smith: Princeton's Accomodation to Reason," Journal of Presbyterian History 48 (Fall 1970): 189-202; David Garth, "The Influence of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy on the Theology of James Henley Thornwell and Robert Lewis Dabney" (Th.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, Virginia, 1979); Paul Helm, "Thomas Reid, Common Sense and Calvinism," in Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition, eds. Hart, VanDerHoeven, and Wolterstorff (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 71-89--this article is an excellent discussion of Common Sense, far better than the average treatment given to the

subject; see also the following book and articles by George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, (New York: Oxford, 1980), pp. 14-21, 109-118; "Scotland and Philadelphia," The Reformed Journal 29 (March 1979): 8-12; "Everyone One's Own Interpreter," in The Bible in America, eds. Hatch and Noll, (New York: Oxford, 1982), pp. 79-100; John Vander Stelt offers massive volume and invective in his Philosophy and Scripture, (Marlton, NJ: Mack, 1978); equally critical is Ernest Sandeen in The Roots of Fundamentalism, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) and "The Princeton Theology," Church History 31 (September 1962): 307-321.

2 For an evaluation of the Rogers and McKim thesis that the Protestants of the seventeenth century were unfaithful to the beliefs of the Reformers and thus created a "scholasticism" which ultimately influenced American Presbyterians in the nineteenth century, see the appendix.

3 Woodbridge catalogues the methodological problems in Rogers and McKim's book in his section on preliminary concerns. The following are difficulties which he points out: 1) Rogers and McKim's arbitary selection of data; 2) over-dependence on secondary sources, while ignoring primary materials; 3) propensity for "labeling"; 4) weak historical evaluation and analysis; 5) lack of acquaintance with historical method; 6) dubious presupposition concerning the history of science. See John D. Woodbridge, Biblical Authority, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1982), pp. 21-30, for an elaboration on these problems.

4 Woodbridge wisely avoids tackling a complex subject in a book which is surveying an already large topic (the historic Christian belief concerning the scriptures--in response to Rogers and McKim). He comments that ". . .scholars have not yet fully clarified what the significance of Common Sense Philosophy/ Baconianism might have been for the Old Princetonians." See Woodbridge, Biblical Authority, pp. 135-140.

CHAPTER ONE -- WHAT IS COMMON SENSE?

Scottish Common Sense Philosophy dominated Britain and then America from the latter-half of the eighteenth century through the end of the nineteenth century.[1] This Scottish Realism was an enlightenment philosophy which attempted to come to grips with the "age of reason" while retaining the epistemological conservatism of an earlier time. The philosophy was an important part of the "Scottish Renaissance" and its story bears repeating.

The Reformers left Scotland a tremendous theological legacy, but that was not all. Knox and Melville bequeathed their land with an inestimable educational inheritance. When John Knox matriculated at St. Andrews in Scotland, his country was the most educationally backward in Europe. But the reforms of Knox and his Presbyterian successors set the stage for Scotland to be the seedbed of the Enlightenment. Knox and Melville both were influenced by their time in Geneva (Melville taught at the Genevan Academy from 1569 to 1574) and poured much energy into the educational reform of Scotland.[2] Scotland's population was transformed into the best educated in western Europe.3 Through reforms in the university system Scotland would become the center of European culture and the capital of the Enlightenment in less than two centuries.[4] Voltaire said of Enlightenment Scotland: "it is from Scotland we receive rules of taste in all the arts--from the epic poem to gardening.[5] Though Enlightenment ideals and Scottish Presbyterianism are worlds apart philosophically, it must be acknowledged that without the educational reforms of the

Presbyterians, there would have been no Adam Smith, David Hume, Thomas Reid, or Robert Burns of the "Scottish Renaissance." It is appropriate, therefore, that out of the Scottish Enlightenment should arise a conservative, enlightened philosophy developed by "moderate" Scottish Presbyterians. That philosophy was Scottish Realism.

The founder of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy was Thomas Reid (1710-1796) but he drew on ideas from at least two important predecessors. The first was the Englishman Francis Bacon (and also his counterpart in the scientific world, Isaac Newton) from whom Reid adopted the method of induction as the experimental foundation of his philosophy. Reid said of Bacon: "Lord Bacon first delineated the only solid foundation on which natural philosophy can be built."[6] By the process of Baconian induction one observes specific individual cases and then attempts to draw from the observation general laws which will hold for unobserved cases of the same sort. The second predecessor who contributed significantly to Reid's philosophy was Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746). Hutcheson was a Presbyterian, born in Northern Ireland and educated at Glasgow. In 1729, after becoming a licentiate of divinity, he was elected to the chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow. In his early writings he espoused a non-Presbyterian view of moral sense (which got him in trouble with Presbytery). He asserted that men have an innate moral sense (knowledge of good and evil) apart from God or the scriptures. Reid modified this idea slightly and said in his Essays on the

Active Powers of Man that God "has given to men the faculty of perceiving the right or wrong in conduct, as far as is necessary to our present state. . . ."[7] Many of the metaphysical ideas of Common Sense also originate with Hutcheson.

Thomas Reid has been called the "archetypical Scottish Philosopher."[8] James McCosh said that ". . . Reid, Aristotle, and Kant, are the men who have exercised the greatest influence on the studies and thoughts of the Scottish philosopher."[9] Reid was the successor to Adam Smith, in the chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow. Before that time he had served as professor at King's College, Aberdeen, and as a pastor at New Machar. He was of the "moderate" party in the Church of Scotland. The moderate party was committed more to moralism than to the traditional evangelical message of the reformed faith, and was supportive of the rights of patrons and nobles to appoint pastors within their spheres of influence. Paul Helm states that, "there is no strong reason to think that Thomas Reid was a Calvinist."[10] Reid was motivated to engage in philosophical activity in reaction to the idealism of Berkeley and the skepticism of Hume. Reid was particularly disturbed by the theory of ideas that these two had inherited from Locke and taken to its logical conclusion. This theory of ideals (representational idealism or representative perception) proposed the impossibility of immediate knowledge. That is, the mind cannot know anything directly, but only through the mediation of an idea. Reid felt that Hume's philosophy challenged the possibility of knowing anything at all. In

response to Hume's Treatise of Human Nature, Reid wrote, some twenty years later, Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense. He argued for a realistic theory of knowledge based on accurate perception and "self-evident truths." These "self-evident truths" constitute the "first principles" of right-thinking. They cannot be questioned or reasoned to (since they are foundational to thinking) and they are the common property of mankind (hence, Common Sense). In this way Reid short-circuited epistemological skepticism. The central tenets of Reid's philosophy of Common Sense, as phrased and collected by Sydney Ahlstrom are:

> I. Philosophy depends on scientific observation, with the primary object of such observation being self-consciousness and not the external behavior of other men(The a priori extension of Newtonian physics to the mental realm was held to be illicit just as "external" observation was felt to imply deterministic conclusions right from the outset).
> II. The observation of consciousness establishes principles which are anterior to and independent of experience. Some principles, like that of substance or cause-and-effect, are necessary, others, like the existence of things perceived, are contingent, but all are in the very constitution of the mind and not the product of experience. (It is at this point where Reid most clearly foreshadows the Kantian revolution in philosophy).
> III. Nothing can be an efficient cause in the proper sense but an intelligent being; matter cannot be the cause of anything but is only an instrument in the hands of a real cause. (The notion of agency or power is revealed by self-consciousness).
> IV. The first principles of morals are self-evident intuitions; moral judgments, therefore, are not deduced from non-moral judgments, for they are not deductions at all.11

In simpler terms: 1) the primary object of philosophical

observation is the self-consciousness (note the anthropocentric bent of Reid's philosophy--characteristic of the enlightenment); 2) As we observe consciousness we discover "first-principles" or "self-evident truths" (on which all other knowledge is based) and "principles" which are derived from the "first principles." None of these truths are derived from experience (sense perception) but are part and parcel of our very minds; 3) the first-principle of cause and effect is not a figment of our imagination but a reality implanted in our minds. Further, matter cannot be a "cause," for only an intelligent being can be a cause (note the metaphysical significance of this); 4) Included among the first principles is moral sense. All men have been given moral intuitions on which to judge right and wrong--morality is not arbitrary or traditional (note the influence of Hutcheson).

For all the influence Reid had on Scottish philosophers, the detail of his thought is surprisingly ignored by the American champions of Common Sense (who generally rely most heavily on Reid's philosophical successors).[12] Perhaps the most prominent of Reid's followers was Dugald Stewart (1753-1828), the great popularizer of Common Sense. Stewart was born the son of Matthew Stewart, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Edinburgh and ordained Teaching Elder in the Scottish Kirk. Dugald Stewart succeeded his father, and in 1785, Adam Ferguson, as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh. Stewart did not add to his mentor's system, but through his great skills of communication won international acclaim for Common Sense Philosophy. It was

Stewart who confirmed the Reidian impact on French philosophy. Under Stewart's influence ". . .Royer-Collard and his disciples, Cousin and Jouffroy, virtually established Common Sense Realism as the official philosophy of the schools and universities [in France].[13]

Less well-known but equally as distinguished was Thomas Brown (1778-1820)--a medical doctor, student of Law and Associate Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh (with Dugald Stewart). Brown was famous for his skills as the orator of Common Sense. But his more famous contemporary, William Hamilton (1758-1856), had more influence in America. James McCosh of Princeton called him one of the two most influential thinkers of the third quarter of the nineteenth century and said Hamilton "has been much admired in the United States of America."[14] Hamilton, however, began to make great deviations from Reid's philosophy--not the least of which was his attempt to create a hybrid philosophy by merging the thought of Reid and Kant.

The title of "apostle of Common Sense to America" most probably belongs to John Witherspoon (1723-1794). Witherspoon was born near Edinburgh, the son of a Presbyterian minister. He entered the University of Edinburgh at 13 and was a distinguished student. As a minister in the Church of Scotland, he was a fierce opponent of the "moderate" party. He referred to his theological adversaries, the "moderates," as "paganized Christian divines." He reluctantly accepted the call to become president of Princeton Unviersity in 1768, only four years after the

publication of Reid's Inquiry. This descendant of John Knox was appropriately a member of the Continental Congress and the only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence. Witherspoon, alarmed with the radical direction of the French enlightenment (tracing this radical philosophy to the doorstep of Hume and Berkeley as all good Common Sense philosophers would) successfully replaced Berkelian philosophy with Common Sense Philosophy at Princeton. It should not be thought that Common Sense of the Reidian sort dominated Witherspoon's thinking. He chose Common Sense as an alternative and was always aware of its "moderate" origins. Sydney Ahlstrom says:

> Witherspoon was not an ideal emissary [of Common Sense Philosophy], however, even though some have credited him with anticipating Reid's "discoveries," because his Evangelical bias blinded him to the real genius of the movement. Yet before his term as president ended, the "French mania" and Deism were becoming dangerously popular. Believing as his whole generation seemed to, moreover, that the regnant views of Locke and Berkeley led inexorably to the "skepticism" of Hume or, worse yet, to the materialism of Condillac and the French "ideologues," they saw no other recourse but to defend orthodox theology with weapons forged in the Scottish universities for quite another kind of battle.15

Witherspoon left a Common Sense legacy that would remain at Princeton throughout the nineteenth century. Common Sense was handed down from Alexander to Hodge to Warfield in the seminary at Princeton, and late in the nineteenth century James McCosh was still proclaiming Scottish Realism's virtues in the halls of the university. From Princeton Common Sense spread far and wide throughout the United States.

It would be a mistake to think that there was something unique to the conservative Calvinism of Princeton which led her to champion Scottish Realism. For she was not the only devotee of Common Sense within the theological community in America. Common Sense also reigned supreme at Harvard, Yale and Andover. Common Sense provided the philosophical system for conservative Calvinism, moderate Calvinism, Unitarianism and early liberalism.[16] The reason Common Sense proved so adaptable to such diverse religious philosophies was because of its inherent metaphysical qualities which made it attractive to any religious group which desired to be philosophically respectable and at the same time religiously, epistemologically and ethically conservative (by Enlightenment standards). The more religiously liberal groups were more influenced by the anthropocentic metaphysical principles of Common Sense, while the more conservative groups attempted to ignore those metaphysical shortcomings (with differing degrees of success) and adapt the philosophy to their theology. Those who would identify Common Sense as foundational to the "Princeton Theology" fail to see Common Sense in its historical context.[17] A more correct estimate of Scottish Realism at Princeton is that it was <u>adapted</u> to suit conservative Calvinism and contributed significantly to the philosophical approach and defense of the "Princeton theology." Common Sense was an earmark but not a bench mark of nineteenth century conservative Calvinism.

Having completed this brief historical sketch of Scottish Realism we will consider the philosophical system itself. Before

we consider the characteristics of this philosophy and how they may "translate" into theology, we will elaborate on four factors which should assist in our understanding of Scottish Realism.

1) Common Sense Philosophy is an Enlightenment Philosophy. There are four general presuppositions of Enlightenment thought: A--man is a rational being, not morally depraved and in the right environment capable of vast improvement, B--environment is all important in shaping human character, C--the physical universe is knowable through the inductive method as demonstrated by Newtonian science--this inductive method is applicable to all fields of knowledge, including philosophy, D--progress is not only possible, but highly probable and even inevitable, and science is a positive promoter of human progress.[18] Scottish Realism bears many of the marks of Enlightenment thinking. Common Sense is optimistic about man's potential and in its estimation of man's condition (cf. Hutcheson's idea of "moral sense"). Common Sense is also focused on man--see Reid's central tenet I. Most obvious is Realism's confidence in science and the inductive method. Common Sense revels in induction not so much because the inductive method was essential to complement Reid's "first-principles," but because of the general scientific optimism of the age.[19]

2) Common Sense Philosophy is the product of "moderate" Presbyterian thinkers. Hutcheson, Reid, Stewart and others were of the "moderate" party in the Scottish Kirk. Many others of the Scottish proponents of Common Sense grew up in the parsonages of

the "moderate" clergy. Scottish "moderatism" was opposed to the evangelical party in the Kirk. The "moderate" movement was very similar in some respects to modern liberalism--it was generally anti-supernaturalistic and moralistic in its theology. As a result, Common Sense was not constructed with Reformed distinctives in mind. There is a predisposition in Common Sense for the metaphysical or the religious, but not for evangelical Christianity. This is not surprising in view of its moderate origins.

3) Common Sense Philosophy developed as a philosophical response to Berkeley and Hume, particularly in their derivatives from Locke's theory of ideas. Reid was convinced that Berkeley's "idealism" (or "phenomenalism") and Hume's "skepticism" were the epistemological Waterloo for truth and knowledge. Phenomenalism holds that we know by perception--and hence we can know only as we perceive. Skepticism holds that we can't know things at all. Hume inconsistently held to a milder form of skepticism--Empirical Agnosticism which holds that we can't know whether we know things. Reid saw that these theories led to epistemological and ethical bankruptcy. Reid responded by saying that our knowledge is founded on "first-principles" and that we perceive things basically as they are because of "Common Sense."[20] In this philosophical reaction, Common Sense Philosophy displays its "conservative" character. In contrast to other Enlightenment philosophies which tend toward epistemological and ethical skepticism, Common Sense defends universal knowledge and moral sense.

4) Common Sense matured in reaction to the radical philosophy of the French revolution. Not only did Enlightenment thought lead to disturbing revolutionary activity on the continent of Europe, but became increasingly antimetaphysical. Common Sense provided the "conservative" alternative for men who desired to retain the Enlightenment outlook but who were horrified at the excesses of the sensualistic continental philosophy.[21] Common Sense provided a respectable Enlightenment philosophy with a predilection for metaphysics.

In light of these factors, the first two which stress Scottish Realism's Enlightenment origins and the second two which account for Common Sense Philosophy's epistemological, ethical and metaphysical conservatism, it is quite apparent why we have classified Scottish Common Sense as a conservative Enlightenment philosophy in the age of reason and revolution.[22]

Our task is now to consider how the characteristics of Common Sense Philosophy translate into theology. We have already noted that Scottish Realism includes definite tenets such as: the dependence of philosophy on the scientific observation of the self-consciousness; the existence of "self-evident truths" or "first-principles" given by God to all men (which are the foundation of knowledge) and the necessity of "principles" (which are derived from "first-principles" by reason) for right-thinking. Common Sense beliefs require no justification since they are foundational. Perception is basically reliable because of Common Sense foundations. All men possess a "moral sense", an

innate knowing of good and evil.

We may expect the following results in theology, if Common Sense is taken to its logical extent: 1) Theology is dependent on the self-consciousness and hence reason is the final court of appeal in matters of theology or revelation. 2) All men are in possession of self-evident truths, among which are truths about God and theology. If men will only apply the rules of right-thinking in deriving their "principles" they can come to a true knowledge of God. 3) Theology will entail an inductive methodology. 4) Man's moral nature is in a good condition and capable of deciding for right over wrong (the Fall has had little or no effect).

There may be other ways to phrase these theological translations of Common Sense, but these axioms accurately reflect what one might expect "Common Sense Theology" to look like. It is also clear that this "Common Sense Theology" is radically removed from the conservative Calvinistic theology of Old Princeton. The only theology extant in nineteenth century America which could whole-heartedly adopt "Common Sense Theology" was Unitarianism. Sydney Ahlstrom comments:

> [The Unitarians] could adopt and use the system of fellow moderates in Scotland. For the better part of a century they could grow with and within the tradition because their needs harmonized with its basic presuppositions. Nor did these presuppositions put their theology under stress. On the contrary, the "Scottish period" of Unitarianism was its "Augustan Age" of growth and expansion.23

What, then, was responsible for Princeton's adaptation of

and fervor for Scottish Realism? This is a difficult question to answer briefly but we will outline several factors. 1) The Princetonians desired a philosophically acceptable defense of their Christianity (in an age of rationalism) and Common Sense was philosophically respectable. 2) The Princetonians wanted a philosophy capable of adaptation to their metaphysics. Common Sense was the only one available. 3) The Enlightenment philosophies all led to an epistemological morass. The Princetonians needed a philosophy consistent with historical Calvinistic truth claims and Scottish Realism--by virtue of its "conservative" character--provided them with their only alternative. Scottish Realism has its peculiarities but comes closest (of the Enlightenment philosophies) to dogmatic Realism, which is essentially the historic Calvinist epistemology. Common Sense Philosophy's difficulty is not with the compatibility of its realism with Calvinistic theology, but with the latent empiricism which is present in Common Sense epistemology.[24] 4) The Princetonians were looking for a philosophy to concur with an evangelical, revelation-based ethic, and Common Sense, with its conservative morality, seemed to fit the bill.

If the Princetonians were going to accomodate themselves to the philosophical bent of the day, and that seems to be what they did, Common Sense provided them with the only viable and respectable philosophy which could be adapted to Calvinistic epistemology, ethics and theology. Paul Helm lists several practical concerns which made Scottish Realism appealing to the

theologians of its day:

> First, it provided a ready reply to skepticism. . . The second possible advantage is connected with the first. A Reidian, whether a Calvinist or not, could make the assumption, as a busy pastor or apologete, that he, his flock, and the enemies of unbelief all live in the same common-sense world. Appearances are not deceptive. They are a good guide, the best guide, to reality. . . . A third advantage which might accrue from Reid's common-sense foundationalism is that it is compatible with, if it does not entail, certain other matters that the typical Calvinist of that era valued. . . it is compatible with a broadly inductivist approach to the acquistion of knowledge about matters of fact, both scientific matters and also the data of the Scriptures. . . . A further matter that Reidism is compatible with, if it does not actually entail it, is the dominant "a posteriori" apologetic stance of English-speaking theology and philosophy since the end of the seventeenth century (emphasis mine).25

We have now considered the characteristics of Scottish Realism and how they might convert into a theological situation. We have also noted a basic incompatibility between Common Sense beliefs and Calvinism, and attempted to offer some explanations for the conservative nineteenth century American Presbyterian adaptation of Common Sense Philosophy to theology. With these things in mind we will be better prepared to discover areas where Common Sense has influenced American Presbyterians, and to evaluate just what that influence has been on representative theologians.

But before we analyze the writings of particular theologians, we will review Rogers and McKim's evaluation of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy's influence on American Presbyterians. Then later, we will compare our conclusions with

their evaluation.

ROGERS AND MCKIM ON COMMON SENSE AND AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANISM

Rogers and McKim propose the following:

1. John Witherspoon's Scottish Realism was foundational to the Princetonian approach to Biblical interpretation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.26

2. The Princeton theologians were unaware of the extensive influence of Scottish Realism on their theology.27

3. Princeton's belief in propositional truth is peculiar to them and is due, to a large extent, to their commitment to Scottish Realism.28

4. Princetonian's Common Sense beliefs led them to ignore the Calvinistic doctrines of the noetic effects of sin and fostered an "almost Pelagian confidence" in the mind.29

5. Princeton's Common Sense beliefs led to a strange view of history.30

6. Hodge's Common Sense approach to Biblical interpretation based on induction, led him to ignore the emphasis of Calvin on the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit.31

7. Hodge's Common Sense beliefs led him to define faith as intellectual assent.32

8. Warfield's apologetical method is significantly indebted to Scottish Common Sense Philosophy.33

9. Princeton's doctrines of "plenary verbal inspiration" and "inerrancy" are resultant from their commitment to Scottish Realism and Protestant Scholasticism. The "central Christian tradition" concerning the Bible is not that of "inerrancy."34

Though these hypotheses are directed at the Princeton theologians, they can be applied by implication to other nineteenth century theologians to the degree that they were influenced by Common Sense Philosophy.

NOTES

[1] Scottish Common Sense goes by several names: Scottish Realism, Common Sense Realism, the Scottish Philosophy, and Baconian Realism (perhaps wrongly). The purpose of this chapter will not be to make any new contribution to the history of Common Sense Philosophy, but to familiarize the reader with the historical background of Common Sense and its philosophical architects. We will attempt to make some new evaluations of Common Sense in trying to determine the reasons for its popularity with conservative Calvinists and with nineteenth century America as a whole. For more on the historical background of Scottish Common Sense see Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," pp. 257-261 and Daniel Sommer Robinson, ed., The Story of Scottish Philosophy (New York: Exposition Press, 1961).

[2] See R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner, eds., The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982), p. 43.

[3] See W. Stanford Reid, Trumpeter of God (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), pp. 198-199.

[4] The term "enlightenment" (German - Die Aufklarung, French - La Siecle des Lumieres) denotes both the philosophical movement of the eighteenth century (anti-authoritarian and rational) and the general time period from the Peace of Westphalia to the French Revolution.

[5] Quoted in Gerald C. Cragg, The Church and the Age of Reason 1648-1789 (New York: Penguin Books, 1960), p. 90. See his whole chapter on "Covenanters and Moderates in Scotland," pp. 81-92.

[6] Quoted in Mark Noll, "Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought," American Quarterly 37 (Summer 1985): 223.

[7] Quoted in Noll, "Common Sense Traditions," p. 221. See also Reid, Thomas Reid's Lectures in Natural Theology, ed. E. H. Duncan (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1981).

[8] Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy", p. 260.

[9] James McCosh, A Defence of Fundamental Truth (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1869), p. 9.

[10] Paul Helm, "Thomas Reid, Common Sense and Calvinism," in Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition, eds. Hart, VanDer Hoeven, and Wolterstorff (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983) p. 81.

11

Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy", p. 261, for Reid's own comments see, Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man, (London: MacMillan, 1941), Chapter II, Essay VI.

12

Noll, "Common Sense Traditions," p. 220. Noll comments: "Modern Historians who look for the specific influence of Reid in the heritage of American evangelicalism will be as disappointed as modern philosophers who look for a careful discussion of fine shades of Reid's thought more generally in the nineteenth century."

13

Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy," p. 261.

14

McCosh, Defence, p. 7. One reason was Hamilton's editing of the popular Dugald Stewart's works, see bibliography.

15

Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy," pp. 261.262.

16

Ahlstrom demonstrates this conclusively in "Scottish Philosophy," pp. 262-265.

17

Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 244-248. Rogers and McKim's comment: Witherspoon's Scottish Realism laid the foundation for the theories of biblical interpretation developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at Princeton Seminary," is an example of a perspective that fails to put Common Sense in the context of its overall effect on American Theology--since Common Sense was equally influentual (or more so) at Harvard, Yale, and Andover which developed divergent biblical theories.

18

James Smart, classnotes from History 33--History of the Enlightenment, Furman University, Greenville, South Carolina, May 26, 1982 (Typewritten).

19

This is not to suggest that because induction was not a philosophical necessity for Common Sense, that induction was not an essential element of Common Sense. It was. We are simply suggesting that the origin of the role of the inductive method for Common Sense Philosophy is in Enlightenment scientific confidence.

20

Reid's epistemology is hence classified as "Realist." It should be noted that Reidian realism is not as metaphysically construed as Aristotelian-Thomist realism.

21

Good examples of the upholding of Common Sense as the world's hope for deliverance from French sensualistic philosophy are found in Benjamin Morgan Palmer's, "Baconianism and the Bible," Southern Presbyterian Review VI:2 (October 1852), pp.

250-252; and in Robert Lewis Dabney, The Sensualistic Philosophy, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1876). Dabney exclaims: "The chief point which I aim to make, however, in this introduction, is my emphatic protest against the assumption now so common among the sensualistic school, that no metaphysic is valid," (p. 3).

22 For a full, philosophical discussion of the previously mentioned aspects of Common Sense Philosophy see S. A. Grave, The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973) and Andrew Seth, Scottish Philosophy, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1890). Also, for more on the Enlightenment context of Common Sense see Bertrand Russell's discussions of Bacon and Hume in A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), pp. 522-545, 659-674.

23 Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy," p. 268.

24 "Christian Dogmatism therefore must be realistic" so says Gordon H. Clark in his excellent treatment of Dogmatisim and Realism in Three Types of Religious Philosophy (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1973), pp. 107-126--quote on page 109.

25 Helm, "Thomas Reid, Common Sense and Calvinism," condensed from pp. 78-81.

26 Rogers and McKim, p. 248.

27 Ibid., p. 289.

28 Ibid., pp. 289-290, 297.

29 Ibid., p. 290.

30 Ibid., p. 292.

31 Ibid., pp. 292-295.

32 Ibid., pp. 295-296.

33 Ibid., pp. 325-334.

34 Ibid., p. 247, see also the appendix on Protestant Scholasticism.

CHAPTER TWO--COMMON SENSE AT PRINCETON CHARLES HODGE AND B. B. WARFIELD

In the historical studies of the influences of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy on Princeton Seminary one can discern two distinct points of view. The first is an unsympathetic, and more often than not, polemical approach to the Princeton tradition. This "school" is represented by Ernest Sandeen, John C. Vander Stelt, and Jack Rogers and Donald McKim. Ernest Sandeen was the first to attempt to link the Princetonian's Biblical position to their allegiance to Common Sense Philosophy.[1] John Vander Stelt's doctoral dissertation (done partly under the supervision of G. C. Berkouwer) at Free Amsterdam provided a voluminous and severe critique of the Princeton Theology from a "Dutch" theological perspective.[2] Rogers and McKim follow on the heels of these studies and are quite dependent on the Sandeen interpretation of Princeton and Common Sense.[3] Also similar in his view of how the Princeton theology's doctrine of inerrancy ralates to Common Sense is George Marsden. Marsden, however, is more moderate in his evaluation than the Sandeen "school" and writes without the pronounced invective of these other authors.[4]

The second approach is sympathetic but not uncritical in its appraisal of Common Sense's influence on Princeton. This way of evaluating the Princeton tradition is reflected in writings of Mark Noll, John Woodbridge, and Paul Helm. Mark Noll has spent much time developing his expertise on the Princeton tradition.[5] He is quite willing to acknowledge the influence of Common Sense

at Princeton, where it can be demonstrated, but not to overestimate Scottish Realism's contribution to the Princetonians. John Woodbridge has worked closely with Noll and is well-known for his critique of Rogers and McKim.[6] Paul Helm, of the University of Liverpool, has also contributed an excellent article on the subject.[7] These men evince a more historical approach to the relation of Common Sense to American Presbyterianism.[8] Our purpose is not to survey historiography in this chapter, but readers should be informed of these divergent interpretations concerning Princeton. We now turn to Charles Hodge.

John Woodbridge says in his critique of the Rogers and McKim proposal:

> Charles Hodge's debt to Common Sense Realism is a complex one. The scholarly world awaits a careful study of his commentaries, theology texts, and correspondence; it might help explain what appear to be the unresolved tensions between his professed Reformed anthropology and his appreciation for aspects of Common Sense Realism.9

This is not it. That would be a task which would require some hundreds of pages. Our goals are more modest but equally as important. We will concentrate on Hodge's Systematic Theology and attempt to delineate some areas of Common Sense influence as well as vindicating Hodge from certain unjust charges. We have already noted in our survey of Common Sense Philosophy that we should expect Scottish Realism to impact theology by the heightening of the place of reason, buttressing a sort of "natural theology," emphasis on inductive method, and an

overestimate of men's moral capabilities. In addition, some have attributed Princeton's views on the inerrancy of scripture, propositional truth and history to dependence on Common Sense. We will look for these things in Hodge. We will comment on his method of Biblical interpretation, views on faith and reason, belief concerning propositional truth, and anthropology. Though we cannot be exhaustive by any means in this survey we can draw some general conclusions concerning Hodge's theological methodology, content, and communication of that content.

Charles Hodge (1797-1878) graduated from Princeton Seminary in 1819. In 1822 he was appointed Professor of Oriental and Biblical Literature. He studied theology in Germany from 1826-1828 and returned to Princeton where he remained a professor for the rest of his life. He is undoubtedly the most renowned of the nineteenth century Presbyterian theologians. His Systematic Theology continues to be a standard reference work for contemporary Calvinistic seminary students. Hodge is described by Mark Noll as being "the most complex of the Princetonians, he possessed the most capacious mind (which perhaps explains some of the tensions in his thought), and he has been the least understood by modern observers."[10] His Systematic Theology will be the focal point of our study of him.

HODGE ON THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY AND SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION

The first area to which we will attend is Hodge's teaching concerning the method of theology and of biblical interpretation.

Rogers and McKim point out that Hodge's treatment of theology as "science" and interpretation of the Bible by induction are clear evidences that Scottish Realism had entered into a crucial area of Princeton's theology--and distorted the whole. They comment:

> There is no carefully developed theory of biblical interpretation (hermeneutic) to be found in the writings of the Princeton theologians. Interpretation was apparently no problem to them. They had the framework of a system of theology given in the Thomistic categories of Francis Turretin's theology. Furthermore, they uncritically accepted the principles of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy as determinative of how all knowledge was acquired. With these two systems assumed as valid the Princeton theologians proceeded with confidence in the certainty of their knowledge.11

Rogers and McKim add elsewhere: "The manner in which Hodge interpreted the Bible arose from his Scottish Common Sense assumptions."[12] They go on to quote this section for the "Introduction" of Hodge's Systematic Theology as evidence of Baconian influence on Hodge's interpretation:

> The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science. It is his storehouse of facts; and his method of ascertaining what the Bible teaches, is the same as that which the natural philosopher adopts to ascertain what nature teaches.13

Hodge's description of theology as science seemed to reflect a debt to Common Sense, as does the reference to the Bible as a "storehouse of facts." In addition, Hodge is said to be implying "induction" as his hermeneutical method. At first glance, this quote may tend to confirm that Hodge's principle of biblical interpretation is "Baconian induction." Further, when we see this quote in a section entitled "The Inductive Method as Applied

to Theology," we are tempted to declare the case closed. Better judgment, however, warns us not to conclude so hastily for at least three reasons. First, it is absolutely necessary to note that Hodge is talking about the application of induction to theology, not to Biblical interpretation. Here, "theology" denominates systematic theology. It is the task of the systematic theologian with which he is concerned. The quote comes from his introductory section where he is discussing prolegomenous issues. This section has nothing to do with principles of Biblical interpretation. We will deal with Hodge's interpretational principles shortly. Secondly, as we evaluate the significance of Hodge's paralleling of theology and science, we should take into consideration his more restrained language in the section which immediately follows. Hodge emphasizes the fact that the systematic theologian is to collect all the facts which God has revealed in the Bible concerning the subject(s) with which he is dealing and then says: "It may be admitted that the truths which the theologian has to reduce to a science, or, to speak more humbly, which he has to arrange and harmonize. . . (emphasis mine)."[14] It can hardly be denied that arranging and harmonizing are tasks for the systematic theologian (for instance, consult the massive dogmatics of Barth and Berkouwer). Apparently it is this task which causes theology to resemble science, which also must arrange and harmonize, in Hodge's mind. Thirdly, we may question whether the description of theology as science is unique to the Common Sense tradition. Consider the comments of two twentieth

century theologians who are self-consciously not in accord with the precepts of Common Sense Realism. Donald Carson points out that Hodge's analogy is "not all that bad".[15] Louis Berkhof, who is critical in his Introduction to Systematic Theology of labeling systematic theology as science, admits that it is proper to maintain the scientific character of theology if we understand science as "systematized knowledge."[16] Consequently, even though "theology as science" and "storehouse of facts" are usual nomenclature in the Common Sense tradition, they do not constitute evidence of Common Sense influence on Hodge's Biblical interpretation.

The quote does raise the question of Hodge's debt to Common Sense for his theological method. However, the place in Hodge's introduction which most clearly reflects distinctive Common Sense language and thought follows immediately after the statement about the Bible as a "storehouse of facts." Hodge says:

> He [the theologian] must assume that validity of those laws of belief which God has impressed on our nature. In these laws are included some which have no direct application to the natural sciences. Such, for example, as the essential distinction between right and wrong; that nothing contrary to virtue can be enjoined by God; that it cannot be right to do evil that good may come; that sin deserves punishment, and other similar first turths, which God has implanted in the constitution of all moral beings, and which no objective revelation can possibly contradict.17

Notice the Common Sense terminology, "laws of belief," "impressed on our nature," "first truths," "implanted in the constitution of all moral beings." But more importantly, note the Common Sense

influence on theological methodology as observed in the phrase, "'first truths'. . .which no objective revelation can possibly contradict." The uniqueness of Hodge's "inductive method" is not induction. Both Carson and Berkhof point out that induction is used by all schools of theological methodology.[18] What Common Sense brings new to theological method is the idea of first truths "authenticating" objective revelation. This is what is unique to Hodge's inductive approach. It is also evident in Hodge's statement "the Bible contains the truths which the theologian has to collect, authenticate, arrange, and exhibit in their internal relation to each other (emphasis mine).[19] This is the very thing Louis Berkhof criticizes in Hodge's theological methodology with the words of Kuyper and Bavinck:

> Hodge finds the object of theology in the "truths" and "facts" of Scripture, which the theologians must "collect, authenticate, arrange, and exhibit in their natural relation to each other." In Kuyper's estimation this definition is "in the main not incorrect," but both he and Bavinck rightly object to the idea that the theologians must "authenticate" the truths and facts of Scripture, because this virtually destroys the concept of the ectypal theology, and logically brings the theologians once more under the dominion of naturalistic science.20

The Berkhof-Kuyper-Bavinck critique is basically correct, though they may not quite be grasping the Common Sense definition of "authenticate". Hodge's "first principles" by which the theologians authenticate the facts of objective revelation are not "Hutchesonian" (innate ideas or consciousness, apart from God). On the contrary, Hodge explicity says "God has impressed" and "God has implanted" these first truths in our nature.

Whether we agree with Hodge or not (and I do not), we must hear him out. Hodge is not trying to subject the facts of revelation to the autonomous human reason. Nor is he proposing a natural theology. He is being perfectly consistent with his fusion of Calvinistic and Common Sense epistemology. Hodge believes the author of Scripture to be God and the author of first truths to be God. Therefore, as he said, they cannot contradict one another. Hodge does not subject God's revelation to man's reaon, but insists that the theologian uses his reason to determine the agreement between God's first truths and God's revelation. This will be discussed further as we deal with Hodge on faith and reason.

For now the question must be asked, did this theory of theological method impact on the content of Hodge's theology? Our answer is, in the main, no. This conclusion is supported by the following considerations: 1) Hodge's "first truths" all can be derived from scripture itself; 2) Hodge qualifies this use of first truths in the inductive method; 3) The idea of "authentication" is a comparatively insignificant component within the broader context of Hodge's methodology--a few sentences in thirty-five pages of prolegomenon; and 4) a comparison between Hodge and Berkhof, who differ on this issue, will reveal no substantial doctrinal variations in their respective Systematic Theologies.[21]

We have yet to deal with Hodge's views on Biblical interpretation and so we should straightway. Hodge, contrary to

Rogers and McKim's claims, has indeed spoken to the question of rules of interpretation. Here they are:

> 1. The words of Scripture are to be taken in their plain historical sense. That is, they must be taken in the sense attached to them in the age and by the people to whom they were addressed. This only assumes that the sacred writers were honest, and meant to be understood.
>
> 2. If the Scriptures be what they claim to be, the Word of God, they are the work of one mind, and that mind divine. From this it follows that Scripture cannot contradict Scripture. God cannot teach in one place anything which is inconsistent with what he teaches in another. Hence Scripture must explain Scripture. If a passage admits of different interpretations, that only can be the true one which agrees with what the Bible teaches elsewhere on the same subject. If the Scriptures teach that the Son is the same in substance and equal in power and glory with the Father, then when the Son says, "The Father is greater than I," the superiority must be understood in a manner consistent with this equality. It must refer either to subordination as to the mode of subsistence and operation, or it must be official. A king's son may say, "My father is greater than I," although personally his father's equal. This rule of interpretation is sometimes called the analogy of Scripture, and sometimes the analogy of faith. There is no material difference in the meaning of the two experiences.
>
> 3. The Scriptures are to be interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which guidance is to be humbly and earnestly sought. The ground of this rule is twofold: First, the Spirit is promised as guide and teacher. He was to come to lead the people of God into the knowledge of the truth. And secondly, the Scriptures teach, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor. ii.14.) The unrenewed mind is naturally blind to spiritual truth. His heart is in opposition to the things of God. Congeniality of mind is necessary to the proper apprehension of divine things. As only those who have a moral nature can discern moral truth, so those only who are spiritually minded can truly receive the things of the Spirit.22

The importance of this passage should not be underestimated. It is Hodge's only comment on rules for Scripture interpretation in his entire three volume Systematic Theology. It is fair to assume that it represents the crystallization of his thought on the subject. There is absolutely nothing in his description of the rules of Biblical interpretation which would give the slightest indication of influence of Scottish Realism. Furthermore, a quick check of Reformed theologians comments on hermeneutics from the time of Calvin on will evince the fact that none of Hodge's rules are either new or original with him. This passage also demonstrates Hodge's recognition of the necessity of the Holy Spirit in interpretation, the noetic effects of sin on spiritual understanding, and of the importance of the historical setting of scripture passages. Hodge is often accused of ignoring these things.

HODGE ON FAITH AND REASON

A subject closely related to the preceeding one concerns Hodge's views on the place of reason in theology and his definition of faith. We will concentrate on his description of reason in theology first. Hodge makes some incredibly strong statements about reason in his Systematic Theology. Perhaps the most infamous is: "it is prerogative of reason to judge of the credibility of a revelation."[23] Elsewhere, Hodge says:

> He [the theologian] must also assume the trustworthiness of his mental operations. He must take for granted that he can perceive, compare, combine, remember, and infer; and that only he can

> safely rely upon these mental faculties in their legitimate exercise.24

These quotes and others like them cause Rogers and McKim to make the following comments about Princetonians and the place of reason in theology:

> The overriding influence of Scottish Realism and its coherence with the Thomism of Francis Turretin was evidenced here. Despite the constant profession of faithfulness to Calvin and the Augustinian tradition, the Princeton theologians seemed never to fear that their minds had been affected by sin. Their later followers worked out the full implications of this faulty psychology. The Princeton men were sure that sin had made emotions unreliable. But they held an almost Pelagian confidence that the mind was essentially undisturbed by sin's influence.25

We should first observe that in Hodge's concept of the relation of reason and revelation there is obviously considerable influence of Common Sense Philosophy (as we will see in detail momentarily). Secondly, we should note the absolute inaccuracy of Rogers and McKim's comment about the Princetonians' denial of the noetic effects of sin (this, too, we will concentrate on later but see our quote from Hodge on Biblical interpretation, point three). Thirdly, as to the idea that Hodge is subjecting God's revelation to man's autonomous reason, our very understanding of Hodge's use of the Common Sense idea of "first principles" will enable us to appreciate that Hodge himself did not consider his comments to imply that divine revelation is subject to independent human reason. And finally, we will immediately demonstrate the historical inaccuracy of Rogers and McKim's characterization of Francis Turretin's use of reason as

"Thomistic" by quoting Turretin on that very subject:

> Some wrongly conclude, from this judgment of private discretion which is assigned to every believer, that human reason is the judge of controversies, and the interpreter of Scripture, as the Socinians teach, and as has been refuted already by us, under the use of reason in theology (locus 1, question 8), because the believer is not in this matter (hic) moved primarily by the light of reason, but by the word (dictatem) of the Spirit. And although every interpreter may examine the meaning of Scripture in accordance with natural reason, one is not permitted to oppose the word of Holy Scripture, or to reject faith in it on account of some preconceived notion, possibly of contrary meaning. Human reason, which is fallible and tricky, is more certain to depart from the truth of the matter than is Holy Scripture, which is the word of truth, and truth itself, and so reason is to be made captive to faith (II Cor. 10:5), not raised above it.[26]

Turretin may use the scholastic method of "questions" to convey his Reformed theological content and he may overstep his bounds in some places, but he is not scholastic here in his view of reason and revelation. It is important to note that Hodge alludes to this very passage in Turretin (and Hodge knew Turretin well) several times in his Systematic Theology when writing about the historic Protestant doctrine of "private discretion" or "private judgment."[27] This will come to bear on our discussion of Hodge's "rationalism" in a moment.

Hodge's most important section on the relation of reason and revelation is entitled "Proper Office of Reason in Matters of Religion."[28] This is the passage most often quoted to show Hodge was rationalistic. There are a number of important observations that need to be made about it. Hodge describes three functions of reason in religion. 1) Reason is necessary for the reception

of revelation. 2) Reason must judge the credibility of a revelation. 3) Reason must judge the evidences of a revelation. Louis Berkhof critiques the content of this section by implication in his Introduction to Systematic Theology.[29] Cornelius Van Til critiques this section specifically in his Introduction to Systematic Theology.[30] They are both particularly concerned with the rationalistic ideas of functions two and three, in Hodge's concept of reason and revelation. These are generally good critiques. They both stress the weaknesses of scholastic (of the medieval sort) understanding of reason and revelation, and the empirical approach to epistemology (which is essentially rationalistic). Once again, I find myself in agreemeent with Berkhof and Van Til (as over against Hodge) in this area of epistemology. They are in more consonance with Calvin on the question. However, they have probably not quite understood what Hodge is saying. They critique rationalism of the Butler and Paley sort. It is difficult to believe Hodge could be promoting exactly that view in light of two considerations. First, Hodge's passage on the function of reason comes right in the middle of the section in which he is criticizing rationalism. Could Hodge be so blind as to subject divine revelation to autonomous human authority immediately after saying this(?):

> Nothing, therefore, can be more opposed to the whole teaching and spirit of the Bible, than this disposition to insist on philosophical proof of the articles of our faith. Our duty, our privilege, and security are in believing, not in knowing; in trusting God, and not our own understanding. They are to be pitied who have no more trustworthy

teacher than themselves.[31]

Secondly, Hodge is consciously trying to represent the Reformed position on epistemology as over against Rationalism, Mysticism, and Romanism.[32] Whether he is or not, Hodge thinks he is in agreement with Calvin and Turretin.

What then is Hodge's view? We have already noted the Common Sense precepts that Hodge is importing into this issue. This is specifically seen in Hodge's assertion that reason's "judgment must be guided by <u>principles</u> which commend themselves to the common consciousness of men (emphasis mine)."[33] He goes on to list those "principles" in a paragraph entitled "What is Impossible." In fact, Common Sense thought pervades the section. There are two keys to understanding Hodge here. First, to recognize that he is not offering "reason" as an alternative <u>principium cognoscendi internum</u> (the internal means by which a man knows the external Word and believes) to Turretin's "word of the Spirit." Hodge alludes to the Turretin quote in this passage. Hodge is using a synthesis of Calvinism and Common Sense to explain <u>how</u> the <u>principium cognoscendi internum</u> works. Granted, this is an example of a little "scholasticism" on Hodge's part. But, no matter what our estimation of it is (Calvin probably would not approve), it does reflect brilliant thinking. Second, Hodge never asserts that an unbeliever can exercise this kind of judgment. Indeed, he specifically declares the thought of this controversial section to concern Christians' use of reason.[34] Further, in this reasoning the Christian is not

autonomous but reliant on the "first principles" which God has given him.

Redeemed reason receives the revelation, then applies these first principles to revelation and discovers the revelation to be credible and the evidence for that faith reliable. This is Hodge's scheme for how the principium cognoscendi internum "works." Apart from Common Sense's "first principle" idea, Hodge's statements about reason appear to contradict his high regard for Scriptural authority. Perhaps a comparison of Hodge's view of principium cognoscendi internum with the medieval scholastic approach and the Berkhof view will help clarify this confusing nuance in Hodge's thinking. The scholastic approach, roughly, says that human reason evaluates the revelation on the basis of objective evidence and the testimony of the church, and decides to accept the Scripture as the Word of God. Berkhof, on the other hand, says that we receive God's Word as God's Word by faith. Faith is "the positive knowledge that does not rest on external evidence nor on logical demonstration, but on an immediate and direct insight."[35] The ground of this faith is the testimony of the Holy Spirit speaking in scripture. Thus Berkhof represents the classical Calvinist formulation. Hodge's view is slightly different. We believe revelation to be true, when the Holy Spirit illumines our understanding and enables our reason to see that the testimony of revelation is in perfect consonance with our God-given "first principles."

The difference between Berkhof and Hodge is Hodge's greater

stress on the mind (reason) and attempted explanation of a logical way that the Holy Spirit convinces us of the Bible's truth. Now obviously some rationalism has slipped into Hodge's thinking here--but not to the extent of medieval scholasticism. His Scottish Common Sense beliefs actually tend to temper the empirical tendencies in this area of epistemology which had been present in Reformed circles from the seventeenth century.

How should we evaluate Hodge in this area? What effects does this Common Sense twist in his epistemology have? First, it allows him to continue in the stream of historical-evidential apologetics (for better or worse). Common Sense harmonizes with an evidential approach to apologetics (although it does not necessarily foster it). Second, it allows him to stress the intellectual aspects of belief in an age of theological subjectivism. Lastly, there is really no other area that this peculiar epistemological view influences. This is the case because, once again, all his so-called "first principles" can actually be derived from Scripture.

We still need to comment on Hodge's view of faith. Rogers and McKim contend that Hodge viewed faith as intellectual assent. They say: "Although he used terms in ambiguous ways, he was quite clear that faith was understood in the scholastic sense as assent to truth."[36] The thrust of their comments on Hodge's view of faith serve to connote that he made the Bible (or truth) the object of his "faith" rather than God. They add: "No consideration was given to the Reformation sense of faith as a

trustful commitment of the whole person to God as a person."[37]

Hodge's own words however, bear testimony to the contrary. On Fides Generalis Hodge indeed comments:

> It is conceded that all Christians are bound to believe, and that all do believe everything taught in the Word of God, so far as the contents of the Scriptures are known to them. It is correct, therefore, to say that the object of faith is the whole revelation of God as contained in His Word.38

Hodge continues, however, saying that Fides Specialis is necessary for salvation. He describes it thusly:

> In the general contents of the Scriptures there are certain doctrines concerning Christ and his work, and certain promises of salvation made through Him to sinful men, which we are bound to receive and on which we are required to trust. The special object of faith, therefore, is Christ, and the promise of salvation through Him. And the special definite act of faith which secures our salvation is the act of receiving and resting on Him as He is offered to us in the Gospel. This is so clearly and so variously taught in the Scriptures as hardly to admit of being questioned.39

This is hardly non-personal mental assent to truth. Lest it be thought an invention of Hodge to refer to the Bible as the "general object of faith," we should consult the words of a learned divine who lived long before the days of Common Sense Philosophy. Thomas Boston (1676-1732) said:

> The real object [of faith] in general is the whole Word of God. . . . The personal object of faith is, (1)general; God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. . . (2) special; Jesus Christ, as in the text [John 14:1]. He is the object of faith, as it saves and justifies the sinner. . .40

Boston and Hodge are both reflecting the beautiful statement of The Westminster Assembly of Divines on faith:

> By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting on Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.41

HODGE ON PROPOSITIONAL TRUTH

Charles Hodge is often accused of holding a peculiar view of propositional truth because of his commitment to Scottish Common Sense Philosophy. It is said that the Scottish Realist view of language led to his theory of verbal inspiration, because in order for the Scriptures to present truth in a propositional form it was necessary for the very words to be inspired. Rogers and McKim suggest that:

> The implications of this view of language for biblical interpretation were immense. The biblical writers perfectly portrayed what they saw and experienced. Once the modern interpreter understood the established usage of the words in the biblical account, the interpreter was brought into direct contact with the event itself. To read the biblical words was to encounter the biblical thought or deed just as if the interpreter had had direct experience of it.42

Of course, underlying this evaluation of Hodge's strange view of language is the belief that words are not adequate to convey biblical thoughts or deeds, and that truth cannot be adequately expressed in propositional form. Supposedly, this belief that truth <u>can</u> be expressed in propositional form is unique to the Princetonians and has been inherited by twentieth century fundamentalists. However, one needs to look no further

than the Old Testament to see clearly the idea of verbal, propositional revelation. James Barr, the great critic of fundamentalists, admits:

> [As to] direct verbal communication between God and particular men on particular occasions, such direct communication is, I believe, an inescapable fact of the Bible and of the OT in particular. God can speak specific verbal messages when he wills, to the men of his choice. But for this, if we follow the way in which the OT represents the incidents, there would have been no call of Abraham, no Exodus, no prophecy. Direct communication from God to man has fully as much claim to be called the core of the tradition as has revelation through events in history. If we persist in saying that his direct, specific communication must be subsumed under revelation through events in history and taken as subsidiary interpretation of the latter, I shall say that we are abandoning the Bible's own interpretation of the matter for another which is apologetically more comfortable.[43]

In the final analysis, the Princetonians' belief in the ability to express truth verbally lies in their recognition that God has Himself communicated truth to man in revelation in the form of words, not just in events. And that God has recorded His words in the Bible.[44]

HODGE ON ANTHROPOLOGY

We have already noted on the subject of anthropology that Charles Hodge is often represented as proponing a view of original sin that does not take into account the effect of the fall on the mind. We have already quoted Rogers and McKim's phrase on this subject that "they [the Princeton theologians] held an almost Pelagian confidence that the mind was essentially

undisturbed by sin's influence." However, Hodge specifically addresses the issue of the noetic effects of sin in his Systematic Theology. Hodge says that because of the fall: "reason and conscience are no longer adequate guides as to 'the things of God.'"[45] Hodge also speaks on sin's direct effect on the mind in his section on man's inability where he says:

> According to the Scriptures and to the standards of doctrine above-quoted, it [the inability of the sinner] consists in the want of power rightly to discern spiritual things, and the consequent want of all right affections toward them. And this want of power, of spiritual discernment arises from the corruption of our whole nature, by which the reason or understanding is blinded, and the taste and feelings are perverted (emphasis mine).46

Suffice it to say that these quotes from Hodge reflect the fact that his anthropology (particularly concerning the effect of original sin on the mind) is in general agreement with the characteristic teaching on that subject in the reformed tradition.

AN EVALUATION OF CHARLES HODGE

In this brief review of Charles Hodge's thought on theological methodology, biblical interpretation, faith, reason, propositional truth, and anthropology, we have become better able to judge where Scottish Realism has influenced his thinking and where it has not. For instance, we noted that Common Sense Principles were evident in his epistemology and theological methodology, but that Scottish Realism made no apparent contribution to his approach to biblical interpretation, or his views on propositional truth and anthropology. Further, we explained the highly nuanced approach to faith and reason which

was in line with the broader Reformed tradition (particularly Hodge's understanding of faith and saving faith) but highly technical in its treatment of reason's function in Christian epistemology.

In addition we have been able to clarify in some measure how Scottish Realism affected certain areas of Hodge's theology. In theological methodology, for example, it has been observed that Hodge's approach to theology as "science," while certainly consonant with the general ideas of Scottish Realism, is by no means unique to the Scottish tradition. In light of that factor it may be presumptuous to assert that Common Sense caused Hodge to approach theology in that manner. The inductive method influences his methodology, not so much by the use of induction, but through the use of "first principles" and possibly by approaching the scripture as a collection of individual facts which the theologians must correlate (as opposed to stressing that much of Scripture "facts" are accompanied by revealed [scriptural] correlation and interpretation). This last point must not be over-generalized. Berkhof, whose methodology differs from Hodge in theory, can still speak of the "data of the Scriptures" being correlated by the systematician. Further, Hodge's methodology does not result in doctrinal difference with Berkhof.

The main result of Scottish Realism in Hodge's epistemology was in his combination of the "first principles" idea with a more historical-evidentialist approach to apologetics. This comes out

also in his description of the use of reason in theology. Common Sense Philosophy allowed him to be more faithful to Calvin's knowledge of God than a pure Butler/Paley approach to epistemology and apologetics, but kept him from grasping an apologetic and epistemology consistent with Calvin. In regard to reason, Hodge does not depart from the Reformed tradition in his insistence on the use of reason in theology. Hodge's deviation is in his description of <u>how</u> reason should function in theology, and is a result of his Common Sense combined with Calvinism.[47]

Finally, it is apparent that Scottish Common Sense Philosophy has not determined Hodge's beliefs concerning biblical interpretation, anthropology, propositional truth, or doctrine of scripture. Common Sense has its greatest influence on Hodge's language (how he communicates his content), a mild influence on his methodology--in theory at least, a more pronounced influence on his epistemology, but virtually no contribution to his theological content (bibliology, theology proper, anthropology, or soteriology).

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921) entered Princeton Theological Seminary in 1873 after graduating from Princeton College (during the presidency of James McCosh). Warfield was from a genteel Virginian background, born in Kentucky into one of the great families of the Old South. In 1887, after a brief time

as a New Testament professor at Western Theological Seminary, near Pittsburgh, Warfield was called to the chair of Didactic and Polemic Theology at Princeton. He was to replace A. A. Hodge. Warfield was a prolific writer, editing and contributing to scholarly journals, authoring numerous books and commenting on the issues of the day. Warfield was not the "churchman" that Charles Hodge was. He rarely attended the meetings of the church, primarily because of the necessity of attending to his invalid wife and because of a kind of public shyness. His pen served as his way of influencing the church. Warfield's great intellectual foe was the theological liberalism of the day, which he opposed within and without his church. Warfield's defense of Biblical inerrancy was so cogent, articulate, and overpowering (and is so today) that his critics often could only respond by charging him with inventing the concept. His collected writings fill no less than ten volumes and numerous monographs are due to his authorship. We will concentrate on Warfield's monumental Westminster Assembly and Its Work, Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, and Studies in Theology (all from his collected writings) as well as quotes from other pertinent shorter writings.

Our review of Warfield's thought will be much more limited than our survey of Hodge. We will look for Warfield's debt to Common Sense in three specific areas, inerrancy, his interpretation of the Westminster Confession of Faith concerning scripture and his apologetic approach. All these topices were

burning issues in Warfield's day and he was personally a participant in the debate on these subjects. We will attempt to clarify what role Common Sense played in his position on these issues.

WARFIELD ON INERRANCY

In several recent book and articles, authors have taken it for granted that there is a necessary relationship between Scottish Realism and the "Princeton doctrine" of the inerrancy of Scripture.[48] It is the purpose of this section to answer that question. It would be difficult to answer this query simply by referring to Warfield's writings in view of the fact that his language rarely reflects the Common Sense terminology in which Charles Hodge wrote so frequently. It is equally difficult to argue what the philosophical implications of Common Sense are for the inerrancy of scripture. In our study of Scottish Realism, we discovered nothing which would lead us to suspect it to naturally result in "inerrancy" when combined with Calvinism. The fact that Common Sense Philosophy's use at Harvard, Andover, and Yale did not lead to this result tends to confirm our evaluation. Those who do insist on a cause and effect relation between Common Sense and inerrancy have never adequately demonstrated their case. In the absence of historical demonstration of this "link," only vague allegations are substituted, even by those who have written voluminously on the subject.[49]

It appears that one good way of separating the alleged cause and effect link between Princeton's use of Common Sense

Philosophy and doctrine of Scripture would be to demonstrate Princeton to be in harmony with other theologians, not from the Princeton tradition, concerning the doctrine of the Biblical inerrancy. And so, we will compare Warfield's statements on the issue with those outside of the Princeton tradition.

Rogers and McKim make the following observation concerning Warfield's doctrine of Scripture:

> The concept of biblical inerrancy at which Warfield finally arrived was based on deductions from premises peculiar to the Princeton theology rather than from the "facts" and phenomena of Scripture. As other Christians increasingly came to question the Princeton stance, Warfield made calm discussior difficult by refusing to reflect on his presuppositions and by continually attributing his position to the New Testament writers.50

They go on to give an accurate description of Warfield's position, with words:

> This meant for Warfield "the complete trustworthiness of Scripture in all elements and in every, even circumstantial statement." The Bible "in all its parts and in all its elements, down to the least minutiae, in form of expression as well as in substance of teaching, is from God." For Warfield this "complete trustworthiness" and "entire truthfulness" of Scripture included its accuracy and correctness in matters of history and science.51

In his own words, Warfield proclaimed:

> Our Lord and his apostles looked upon the entire truthfulness and utter trustworthiness of that body of writings which they called "Scripture," as so fully guaranteed by the inspiration of God, that they could appeal to them confidently in all their statements of whatever kind as absolutely true; adduce their deliverances on whatever subject with a simple "it is written," as the end of all strife; and treat them generally in a manner which clearly exhibits that in their

> view "Scripture says" was equivalent to "God says."[52]

This, then, is Warfield's doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. The question that must be answered is--"Is this doctrine taught before and outside of Princeton?" If the answer is negative, then the possiblity is pronounced that some peculiar aspect of Princeton theology (such as Common Sense Philosophy) is responsible for such a belief. If the answer is affirmative, then there can be no cause and effect relationship between Common Sense Philosophy and Biblical inerrancy.

We will choose some quotations from theologians of various geographical locations and periods in the Church's history to compare with Warfield's ideas on the subject. Augustine some fourteen centuries before the inception of Scottish Realism said:

> I do not say this in order that you may recover the faculty of spiritual sight,--far be it from me to say that you have lost it! --but that, having eyes both clear and quick in discernment, you may turn them towards that from which, in unaccountable dissimulation, you have turned them away, refusing to see the calamitous consequences which would follow on our once admitting that a writer of the divine books could in any part of his work honourably or piously utter a falsehood (emphasis mine).[53]

John Calvin had words on the subject, too. He says, "For our wisdom ought to be nothing else than to embrace with humble teachableness, and at least without finding fault, whatever is taught in Sacred Scripture."[54] Thomas Boston, who lived fifty years before Thomas Reid's birth, says:

> The penmen of the scriptures were infallible in their writing, so that they were not mistaken in anything, even of the last moment: far less is

> there any real contradiction among them, being all guided by the same Spirit, who inspired the very words, and kept them from all error, 2 Peter i.20,21.[55]

These are three quotes out of hundreds which could be marshalled to show that inerrancy is no new doctrine and is not peculiar to Princeton or nineteenth century Presbyterians in general. Contemporaries of the Princetonians from competing traditions like Bavinck and Kuyper could be cited as in full accord with this so-called "Princeton doctrine."[56]

It appears then that Common Sense Philosophy should not be identified as even a factor in the development of the church doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. The language in which the Princetonians conveyed the doctrine may reflect Common Sense modes of expression (though that seems less true of Warfield), but the teaching of inerrancy itself is a most ancient belief of the Church.

Rogers and McKim also feel that the Princetonians have played down the humanity of Scripture. At one point they state that "the Princeton position as brought to its most refined form by Warfield, allowed no practical manifestation of the human element in Scripture."[57] Yet Warfield himself says in his article on "The Divine and Human in the Bible" says:

> The fundamental principle of this conception is that the whole of Scripture is the product of divine activities which enter it, however, not by superseding the activities of the human authors, but confluently with them; so that the Scriptures are the joint product of divine and human activities, both of which penetrate them at every point, working harmoniously together to the

> production of a writing which is not divine here and human there, but at once divine and human in every part, every word, and every particular. According to this conception, therefore, the whole Bible is recognized as human, the free product of human effort in every part and word. And at the same time, the whole Bible is recognized as divine, the Word of God, his utterances, of which he is in the truest sense the Author.58

WARFIELD ON THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH'S DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

One of the major debates of Warfield's life took place over the issue of the teaching of the Westminter Divines on the subject of the doctrine of Scripture. Warfield's antagonist was Charles Augustus Briggs of Union Theological Seminary in New York. Briggs had asserted in a pamphlet entitled, "Whither?" that the Westminster Divines did not teach the doctrines of plenary verbal inspiration or inerrancy in the first chapter of the Westminster Confession. Briggs charged that the theologians of Princeton had invented a contra-confessional doctrine and imposed it on the Presbyterian Church. Warfield responded that:

> Pressed with the obvious fact that the Westminster Confession teaches the verbal or plenary inspiration and infallibility or inerrancy of the original Scriptures, Dr. Briggs seeks on the one hand to explain away the obvious meaning of the document, and on the other to undermine it by the round assertion that the British theologians of the Westminster age did not believe the doctrine of the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.59

Rogers and McKim contend in their section on Warfield that C. A. Briggs' position on the Westminster Doctrine of Scripture is the historically correct position. They further maintained:

> The basic thrust of Warfield's argument was the assumption that the Westminster Divines were identical in their theology to that of the post-Reformation scholastics such as Turretin. Warfield did not prove that this was the case. He postulated it. The Scottish common sense philosophy, so long before absorbed by the Princeton theology had taught an identity of past historical views with those of the present. Warfield took for granted that there was one Reformed system of theology and that all those whom he considered Reformed, of whatever historical period, held to that system. Warfield found it incomprehensible that "the Reformed theologians of Britain were in violent (though assuredly unconscious) opposition to their brethren on the Continent, in the most fundamental postulate of their system.60

Was Warfield's interpretation of the Westminster Confession's doctrine of scripture conditioned by his commitment to Protestant Scholasticism and Scottish Realism? We will answer that question by comparing Warfield's assertion that the Divines believed in inerrancy, with the views of a contemporary who did not hold to Scottish Common Sense foundationalism and with a Divine who lived in close proximity to the Assembly itself.

Paul Helm has pointed out that W. G. T. Shedd did not hold to Scottish Common Sense foundationalism.[61] Yet, Shedd opens his essay on the Westminster doctrine of scripture with these words:

> Those who deny the inerrancy of the original autographs of Scripture, and are endeavoring to introduce this view into Biblical Criticism, claim the support of The Westminster Standards. We propose to show that the Westminster Confession teaches that the Scriptures in their first form, as they came from the prophets and apostles, were free from error in all their parts, secondary as well as primary.62

Thomas Boston, who lived but a generation after the Divines, wrote in his commentary on the Westminster Confession these words

of interpretation of the Divine's Chapter on Holy Scripture:

> The consent of all the parts of scripture; though written by several hands, and at different times, yet all of them so agreeing in their precepts, narratives of matters of fact, and designs, that there is no irreconcileable [sic] difference to be found amongst them. But here the Socinians call us to consider this point at more length; for they say that there is some repugnancy in the scriptures in some things of little or no moment, and that not a seeming but real repugnancy. but we believe that in nothing does one holy writer differ from another in the scriptures, but that such things as seem to be repugnant do in themselves most exactly agree. This principle I shall endeavour to prove.
>
> (1.) There are no things in the Scriptures of little or no moment; and if so, the writer could not err in them. That there are no such things in it; the scripture plainly teaches, as in the text, All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, &c. Rom. xv.4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' The Jews said, that there was not one point in scripture but mountains of mysteries hang on it. See Matth. v.18. It argues a profane spirit to talk of the scriptures at that rate. The people of God know that many a time they have read over a scripture in which they could see little or nothing, but afterwards they have seen a great deal in it when the Spirit hath been commentator: and though in some things we never see any weighty thing, must we therefore conclude that there is none there?
>
> (2.) The holy penmen were, in all that they wrote, acted and guided by the Spirit of God, or wrote all by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as says the text, and 2 Pet. i. 20,21. If all scripture was given by inspiration, if no scripture be of private interpretation, nor came by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, how can there by any error in any passage of scripture? If the scriptures be the word of God they must be altogether pure, Psal. xix. 7,8.
>
> (3.) Those things in which there is some repugnancy betwixt the penmen of the scriptures, are either a part of the canonical scripture, or not. If they be, then [1.] All scripture is not given by inspriation of God. [2.] The scriptures

> are holy scriptures, Rom. i.2; but errors, whether in greater or lesser things, are unholy, and cannot be a part of the holy scriptures. If they be no part of the holy scriptures, why do they charge the holy scriptures with errors therein?
>
> (4.) If it be so that there is such repugnancy in the scriptures, then they cannot found certain and divine faith; for a fallible testimony can ground only a fallible belief. And how shall we know when they are right, and when they are wrong? One says that he is guided by the Spirit, and tells us such a thing; another says the same, and tells us the contrary: Whom shall we believe? If you say it must be determined by the greater number of the holy penmen, it is well known, that amongst those who are fallible, one may be righter than many. But this is plainly to lean to human testimony; for one speaking by the Spirit is as much to be believed as ten thousand. So that this truly dissolves the authority of the whole scriptures.
>
> In short, we refuse that there are any real inconsistencies or contradictions in the holy oracles of God. Whatever seeming inconsistencies or repugnancies there may be, they may be easily reconciled, and have been actually reconciled to satisfy every sober person, by many learned divines, whose writings may be consulted on this head.63

Warfield is clearly in accord with Boston's interpretation of the Divines' doctrine of scripture (and Boston, who lived years before the birth of Reid, could not have been influenced by Scottish Realism).

WARFIELD ON APOLOGETICS

B. B. Warfield is difficult to analyze on the subject of apologetics. In his writings on the subject there seems to be a shift from the Common Sense/Evidentialist approach of Charles Hodge to the Historical/Evidentialist approach more associated with Butler and Paley. In Warfield, one does not find any of the

Common Sense language which one finds in Hodge's Systematic Theology. While Warfield reflects the commitment of Common Sense foundationalism to the accuracy of sense perception, he never makes appeal to "first principles" or "self-evident truths" in his descriptions of how reason functions in apologetics. For these reasons it is difficult to determine whether Warfield's apologetics are in debt more to Scottish Realism or to Medieval Scholastic apologetics.

Rogers and McKim severely criticize Warfield's apologetical approach. They say, "for Warfield, therefore, philosophy preceded theology. The requirements of human reason had to be met before God could give faith."[64] Warfield also has received significant criticism from systematicians who hold to inerrancy. For instance, Robert Reymond of Covenant Theological Seminary says:

> Let no one conclude that I am not appreciative of Warfield's unparalleled efforts to call men to commitment to the full inspiration and authority of Scripture, and in the sense that Warfield (and Hodge) reflects a faith that is not a blind faith but a faith that seeks to elucidate its grounds, a faith that militates against mysticism, all believers stand in his (and their) debt. Moreover, I deeply appreciate his powerful logic in demonstrating the rank inconsistency in those theologians who would speak in glowing terms of the "Master" and the "great Teacher" but who at the same time would pick and choose among His teachings and reject among other things His testimony to the inspiration, authority, historicity, and revelatory nature of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. On the other hand, as I have said, I feel no good is done--indeed, positive harm can only result--by developing a method of vindicating a theory of inspiration which, when done, has reduced all of the evidence, including Christ's testimony, to only "probable" evidence and which by implication

> denies the depravity of the "natural man." How much better to affirm the Christian Scriptures to be self-attesting, the Word of the self-attesting Christ, which comes to men with all the authority of the triune God behind it, and to elucidate an apologetic which is consistent with that first principle! Such an apologetic would be in line, it seems to me, with Scripture, with Calvin, the Reformed faith, and the Westminster Standards.65

Warfield receives such criticism because of statements such as this:

> The truth therefore is that rational argumentation does, entirely apart from that specific operation of the Holy Ghost which produces saving faith, ground a genuine exercise of faith. This operation of the Spirit is not necessary then to produce faith, but only to give to a faith which naturally grows out of the proper grounds of faith, that peculiar quality which makes it saving faith.66

What makes Warfield difficult to understand is that he with equal force pronounces the following:

> Of course mere reasoning cannot make a Christian; but that is not because faith is not the result of evidence, but because a dead soul cannot respond to evidence. The action of the Holy Spirit in giving faith is not apart from evidence, but along with evidence; and in the first instance consists in preparing the soul for the reception of the evidence.67

Of course, there is unity of thought in these two statements but at the same time a different stress on the work of the Holy Spirit and on the place of reason. A more indepth study of Warfield's apologetical writings will be necessary before it is possible to unravel the sources of his particular approach to the defense of the faith. But in light of the lack of Common Sense terminology in Warfield's apologetics, one should be more reserved in his estimation of Scottish Realism's contribution to

Warfield's thinking on this subject.

AN EVALUATION OF B. B. WARFIELD

Though our discussion of Common Sense influence on Warfield was limited, we will offer a terse evaluation. It has already been suggested that it would be a serious mistake to attribute Warfield's doctrine of inerrancy to Common Sense origins.[68] The doctrine simply antedates Scottish Realism. Warfield may have used Common Sense methods to defend the doctrine, but he did not originate it. Also, Warfield seems to be clearly in the right concerning the meaning of the Westminster Assembly's statements on Scripture. No voting member of that body has ever been shown to believe that there were errors of any sort in the Bible.[69] Warfield's understanding of the chapter on Holy Scripture is also in harmony with Thomas Boston's interpretation (pre-Common Sense) and W. G. T. Shedd (not committed to Common Sense).

In the areas of apologetics and use of reason, however, Rogers and McKim seem to be correct in their contention that Warfield has been unfaithful to the Calvinian tradition. They are less correct in attributing his apologetical stance to Common Sense. Warfield did not feel that apologetics had come into its own until the end of the nineteenth century.[70] He read more widely on the subject than his Princetonian predecessors and this probably contributed to his philosophy of apologetics. Though Warfield did remain faithful to many of the epistemological tenets of Common Sense, the idea of "first principles" (so

crucial to Hodge's epistemology) is not evident, if present at all, in his writings. Warfield's use of reason in apologetics reflects a greater debt to Thomistic natural theology than to Common Sense/evidentialism. For instance, when Warfield speaks of "authenticating" Scripture, he never appeals to the "first principles" as did Hodge.[71] Warfield's appeal is to reason. It should be noted that many twentieth century theologians who are appreciative of Warfield's doctrine of Scripture are equally critical of the epistemological implications of his apologetical system. There is no necessary relationship between the two, as Rogers and McKim imply.[72] Work still needs to be done in determining the exact part which Common Sense plays in Warfield's apologetics and what other factors he incorporated into his system. Right now, the role of Common Sense is probably being over-played.

In regard to language, Warfield's writings reflect a lack of Common Sense terminology, in contrast to his fellow Princetonian Charles Hodge. This might be explained by the nature or occasion of Warfield's writing. Another possible answer is the waning of the prominence of Common Sense language and philosophy in academic circles in Warfield's time. This would have made it either inexpedient or unnecessary for Warfield to write in explicit Common Sense language.

On the other hand, Warfield seems to remain solidly committed to Common Sense foundations such as the reliability of sense perceptions and induction. Warfield's ordering of the

theological disciplines (Apologetics preceding Theology) is evidence of his application of induction in his philosophy of theological methodology. In short, Common Sense contributes little to Warfield's theological vocabulary and content, but has major influence on his methodology.

NOTES

[1] Sandeen's first work on the subject was "The Princeton Theology" in Church History 31 (September 1962): 307-321. It is an openly hostile evaluation of Princeton. His Roots of Fundamentalism which followed in 1970, was also written in the perjorative. Sandeen's views have been effectively criticized by professional historians from within and without the Princeton tradition (see Woodbridge p. 217, footnote 81).

[2] Vander Stelt's theological perspective (late Berkouwerian and philosophically Dooyerweerdian) is unabashedly pronounced throughout his dissertation, Philosophy and Scripture, 1978. His vendetta against Van Til is a well-known fact in the American Dutch Reformed community. These things blur his ability to objectively critique Princeton. For a critique of his dissertation see, Peter DeJong, "Philosophy and Scripture," Outlook (January 1979), pp. 16-19.

[3] Rogers and McKim's overdependence on Sandeen has been duly noted by Woodbridge, p. 22.

[4] Although Marsden avoids the extremes of Sandeen, Vander Stelt, Rogers and McKim (who take what I call the "witch-hunt approach" to Common Sense at Princeton in the nineteenth century) there are deficiences in his generally fine works: "Scotland and Philadelphia," Reformed Journal 29 (March 1979): 8-12 and Fundamentalism and American Culture. He overidentifies Common Sense and inerrancy--see Woodbridge, pp. 211 (footnote 22) and 219 (footnote 88) for a critique.

[5] Noll has written the best article on the subject, "Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought," American Quarterly 37 (Summer 1985): 216-238 and also edited the Princeton anthology, The Princeton Theology 1812-1921 (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1983).

[6] In addition to his critique of Rogers and McKim, Woodbridge

has co-written and co-edited books related to the subject such as, The Gospel in America (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1979); Scripture and Truth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1983); and Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1986).

[7] Paul Helm has written the splendid, "Thomas Reid, Common Sense and Calvinism."

[8] Sydney Ahlstrom should also be commended for his earlier work on the subject. He is critical of Princeton but not depreciatory in the extreme. His criticism also does not attempt to link Common Sense and Inerrancy. Of course, his greatest contribution has been demonstrating the pervasive influence of Common Sense on nineteenth century theology--not only at Princeton, but also at Harvard, Yale and Andover.

[9] Woodbridge, Biblical Authority, p. 137.

[10] Noll, The Princeton Theology, p. 14.

[11] Rogers and McKim, p. 289.

[12] Ibid., p. 292.

[13] Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982), Vol. I., p. 10.

[14] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 11.

[15] Donald Carson, "Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture," in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, p. 18. See also Carson's comments on the recent historiography on Common Sense and American Presbyterianism.

[16] Louis Berkhof, Introduction to Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 47. Berkhof's theological-nationality makes him particularly unsusceptible to Scottish Realism!

[17] Hodge, Vol. I, p. 10.

[18] Rogers and McKim, themselves, use historical induction when they postulate that because the Princeton Presbyterians were influenced by Common Sense to believe in inerrancy therefore all Presbyterians (who believe in inerrancy) were influenced by Common Sense to believe inerrancy. This is, by the way, roughly the thesis of their book from pages 235-379.

[19] Hodge, Vol. I., p. 1.

[20] Berkhof, Introduction, p. 42.

[21] Hodge, Vol. I, pp. 10-11, and more broadly pp. 1-35.

[22] Ibid., pp. 187-188.

[23] Ibid., p. 50.

[24] Ibid., p. 9.

[25] Rogers and McKim, p. 290.

[26] Francis Turretin, The Doctrine of Scripture, edited and translated by John W. Beardsley III (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 224. Turretin is treated terribly unfairly throughout Rogers and McKim's "history" of bibliology.

[27] For instance see, Hodge, Vol. I., pp. 186-187, 48-49.

[28] Hodge, Vol. I, pp. 49-55.

[29] Berkhof, Introduction, pp. 170-173, 180-185.

[30] Cornelius Van Til, Introduction to Systematic Theology (Phllipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), pp. 31-42.

[31] Hodge, Vol. I, p. 48.

[32] Ibid., pp. 34-150.

[33] Ibid., p. 51.

[34] Ibid., p. 49.

[35] Berkhof, p. 182.

[36] Rogers and McKim, p. 295.

[37] Ibid., p. 296.

[38] Hodge, Vol. III, p. 95.

[39] Ibid., p. 96.

[40] Thomas Boston, The Complete Works of Thomas Boston, edited by Samuel M'Millan (London: William Tegg and Co., 1853), Vol. II, p. 402-403.

[41] Westminster Confession of Faith, XIV:2.

[42] Rogers and McKim, p. 291.

[43] James Barr as quoted by Robert Reymond, in "Some

Prologomenous Issues Confronting the Systematic Theologian," Presbyterion IV:2 (Spring, 1978): 8-9.

[44] It is interesting to note that the Baconian idea of "truth" is pragmatic. If it works then it is true. The Princeton theologians emphatically reject this Baconian idea. For further discussion of this topic see, Norman L. Geisler, "Inductivism, Materialism and Rationalism: Bacon, Hobbes,and Spinoza," in Biblical Errancy ed. Norman L. Geisler, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), pp. 9-22.

[45] Hodge, Vol. I, p. 363.

[46] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 261.

[47] For a better description of the place of reason in theology from a Calvinistic perspective see, James I. Packer, Fundamentalism and the Word of God, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1958), pp. 126-145.

[48] Ernest Sandeen, "The Princeton Theology;" John Vander Stelt, Philosophy and Scripture; George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture and "Scotland and Philadelphia" in which Marsden says: "Common Sense philosophy is related, as Vander Stelt shows, to the famous Princeton formulation concerning the inerrancy of scripture, most clearly articulated by Benjamin B. Warfield (p. 9).

[49] The best that the Vander Stelt critique can produce is its "stock" charge of dualism. He says: "The meaning of infallibility is for Warfield, as for all Old Princeton theologians, determined not only by an allegiance to the basic assumptions and thought-structures of [Common Sense Philosophy], but also by an acceptance of the traditional, scholastic, and religiously dualistic distinction between that which is natural and that which is supernatural" (p. 181).

[50] Rogers and McKim, pp. 344-345.

[51] Ibid., p. 345.

[52] B. B. Warfield, "The Inerrancy of the Original Autographs," in Selected Shorter Writings, Vol. 2, ed. John E. Meter, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), p. 580.

[53] Augustine, Letters 40.4. as quoted in Norman Geisler, What Augustine Says, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), p. 40.

[54] John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), (1,18,4), p. 237.

55
Thomas Boston, Complete Works of Thomas Boston, Vol. I., ed. Samuel M'Millan, (London: William Tegg and Co., 1853), p. 33.

56
For voluminous information and documentation to the historic views of the church concerning the Bible see: Woodbridge, Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers and McKim Proposal; Norman Geisler, ed., Inerrancy (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980; H. D. McDonald, Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study 1700-1960 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979); Carl F. H. Henry, ed., Revelation and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958).

57
Rogers and McKim, p. 345.

58
B. B. Warfield, "The Divine and Human in the Bible," Selected Shorter Writings, p. 547.

59
B. B. Warfield, The Westminster Assembly and Its Work (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 263.

60Rogers and McKim, p. 357.

61
Paul Helm, "Thomas Reid, Common Sense and Calvinism", p. 83.

62
W. G. T. Shedd, Calvinism: Pure and Mixed (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), p. 132.

63
Thomas Boston, Complete Works, Vol. I, pp. 29,30.

64
Rogers and McKim, p. 328.

65
Robert L. Reymond, The Justification of Knowledge (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), pp. 62-63.

66
B. B. Warfield, "A Review of De Zekerheid des Geloofs" in Selected Shorter Writings, Vol. II, p. 115.

67
B. B.Warfield, Studies in Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 15.

68
Mark Noll comments, "The Common Sense tradition has had little appreciable influence on the historic Christian belief in the divine origin and trustworthy nature of Scripture. Only the great distance that separates other segments of English-speaking Christendom from the church's historical attitudes toward Scripture obscures the fact that evangelicals in the Common Sense tradition have continued to believe roughly the same things about the nature of the Bible as the church as a whole has believed since its beginning." in "Common Sense Traditions and American

Evangelical Thought," p. 229.

[69] Woodbridge, Biblical Authority, p. 103.

[70] Warfield, "Apologetics," in Studies in Theology, p. 19.

[71] For example see, Warfield, "Introduction to Beattie's Apologetics," in Selected Shorter Writings, p. 98.

[72] Rogers and McKim are not so concerned with correcting Warfield's mistakes in apologetics, as in discrediting his view of Scripture. This becomes very apparent in the exchange between Rogers and Van Til in E. R. Geehan's (ed.), Jerusalem and Athens (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), pp. 154-171.

CHAPTER THREE--COMMON SENSE IN THE SOUTH

Lest anyone think that the august Presbyterians hailing from New Jersey had a corner on the Common Sense market, he need only heed the words of Prudence, Piety, and Charity to Pilgrim, and "look south." To hear some tell of it, Princeton was the sole tributary feeding Common Sense Philosophy into the intellectual mainstream of American thought. But below the Mason-Dixon line there were many disciples of Common Sense who never darkened the doors of Princeton.[1] Recognizing this fact and observing the latitude of thought among American Presbyterians (both northern and southern) committed in one degree or another to Common Sense Realism will safeguard against the tendency to make Princeton a Common Sense "whipping boy" or to treat Common Sense Philosophy as a monolithic thought-form rolling like a juggernaut over American Presbyterianism.

Recently, historians have been giving great attention to the debts of Southern thinking, religious and social, to Scottish Realism.[2] Much of that attention is focused on Southern Presbyterians. But the Presbyterians of the South, like their counterparts at Princeton, were not alone in their adaptation of Common Sense Philosophy. For instance, the leaders of the "Disciples" (later "Disciples of Christ" or "Christian Church"), Thomas and Alexander Campbell were wholeheartedly committed to the economic, social, political and religious ideas of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy.[3]

The high esteem in which Common Sense was held by the

theologians of the South may be epitomized in Benjamin Morgan Palmer's article "Baconianism and the Bible." He declares that, "the only philosophy which has given to the world a true physical and intellectual science, is itself the product of Protestant Christianity."[4] He continues his accolade in describing his article's content:

> It will devolve upon us, therefore, to show the radical deficiency of the science and psychology possessed by the ancients, until the inductive method was fully expounded by Sir Francis Bacon; and then to show the historical and logical connexion [sic] between his philosophy and the Christian scriptures.5

The goal of Palmer's article is to demonstrate the influence of the Bible on Baconian methodology (and Palmer sees that influence as extensive). After discussing the shortcomings of philosophy throughout the ages until the time of Bacon, Palmer argues six reasons why Baconianism should be the philosophy of Protestantism. They give us a glance at what was philosophically appealing about the Common Sense approach in the eyes of a great Southern theologian. Palmer's reasons are: 1) "The Theologian and the Inductive Philosopher proceed on similar principles in the construction of their respective systems." He goes on to add that: "the materials of theology indeed are not gathered precisely in the same way [as the materials of science] by observation and experiment, but are given immediately by Revelation. . . the same patience, and diligence, and caution are required in ranging up and down the Record, as in surveying Nature . . . ."[6] Here is evident the typical qualified

paralleling of the tasks of theology and science by those theologians of the Common Sense School.

2) "A second feature of resemblance, or point of contact, between the two [Protestantism and Baconianism], is the faith which lies at the foundation of both."[7] Palmer argues that faith is not only necessary in Christianity, but is "truly at the foundation of science."[8]

3) "A third particular in which the Bible exerts its influence upon philosophy, is by stirring the human intellect, and preserving it from relapsing into apathy."[9] Palmer explains that both the Bible and philosophy excite the mind. However, the Bible does not only speak to the mind. Its truth "takes possession of all the powers of the soul, and reigns with equal supremacy in each. It gives exercise to the understanding, controls the affections, and subdues the will; thus subjugating all the faculties of thought, feeling and action."[10]

4) "A fourth advantage accrues to philosophy from the complete information afforded on all moral subjects, by which the mind is released to pursue the studies of science."[11] The Bible definitively settles all moral and religious questions so that the philsopher no longer has to "reason" about them. Hence, men are freed to concentrate their minds on "the fields of science."

5) "Revelation does not confine itself to these indirect methods of benefitting science. It reveals the uniform laws of God's moral government, and thereby hints to science her true province, that of tracing and expounding the fundamental laws of

the physical universe."[12] Palmer asserts that the Biblical understanding of the Creator/Creation distinction will direct science to look for signs of the Creator's hand in creation. Creation itself is not God (as in pantheism) but bears the mark of God's design.

6) "But the Bible contains within itself the highest philosophy. . . the cases are not rare in which a careful study of the scriptures alone has gradually imbued the mind with the profoundest truths of mental science."[13] At the same time Palmer can speak of the subject of the philosophy of the Bible as being "man." Hence, in this section is contained a twin emphasis, the typical Common Sense stress on the anthropocentric character of philosophy and the high Presbyterian regard for the Bible.

Palmer concludes this section of his discussion with his famous comment, "There never could have been a Bacon without the Bible."[14] Palmer's history of philosophy is, of course, a bit colored in this article, but it reflects the general philosophical enthusiasm of the nineteenth century, the theologians' awareness of philosophical issues (not limited to Presbyterians), and a particular, conservative, Southern Presbyterian's esteem for aspects of Baconian methodology which were held in common by Scottish Realists.[15]

Having seen that Common Sense was indeed important in Southern thinking in general and Southern Presbyterianism in particular, we will set forth the goals of this chapter. We will not attempt to set forth extensive examples of differences

between the Presbyterians of the South and of the North, who were committed to Common Sense. Neither will we attempt to survey various Common Sense influences on Southern Presbyterian theology in the same way in which we did Hodge. We will, however, focus on two great Southern Presbyterians: Robert Lewis Dabney and James Henley Thornwell. As we review their theological/philosophical thought we will attempt to do three things: 1) Observe their general commitment to Common Sense, 2) Note the complexity and variety of Common Sense thought--as evidenced in their personal testimony to serious differences with other conservative Common Sense theologians, on Common Sense issues, and 3) Comment on other important factors influencing their theological thought. This will help to correct two problems rampant in the historiography of Common Sense, as well as give us a better understanding of Scottish Realism's role in the thought of Dabney and Thornwell. The first historiographical problem (addressed in point two) is that of over-generalization. By concentrating on the complexity of Common Sense, we will avoid the mistake of attributing the same views to all who held to the Common Sense Philosophy. We will also avoid the pitfall of treating Scottish Realism as a rigidly unified thought form which does not reflect any diversity of opinion. The second historiographical problem (addressed in point three) is that of mono-causational interpretation. That is, a kind of historical tunnel vision, in which men's thoughts are attributed to only one particular influence to the exclusion of other important factors.

Common Sense in American Presbyterianism is often approached in this way, and by the very nature of the focus of this paper we could tend to foster that mistake. So we will consider, briefly, some other factors influencing Presbyterians in the nineteenth century. We will discuss Robert Lewis Dabney first.

Robert Lewis Dabney (1820-1898) was a native of Louisa County, Virginia. He grew up on his family's plantation there and often reminisced in the years after the War between the States of the gentility of antebellum southern life. However, his childhood was not carefree. When he was thirteen his father died and he had to assume responsibility beyond his years. He attended college at Hampden-Sydney and during his time there professed faith in Christ. D. F. Kelley reports that:

> Dabney left Hampden-Sydney without completing his course in order to come home and help his mother improve the precarious financial position of their plantation. For about two years Robert, though a slave-holder, worked with his hands quarrying stone, rebuilt one of the family mills, managed the fields, and in addition opened and taught a neighborhood school--all of this at age 18.16

Dabney certainly showed every sign of being exceptional, even in early life. Dabney eventually graduated from the University of Virginia. He enrolled at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia in 1844. In 1846 he was licensed to preach. After serving as pastor of the Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church for six years, he was called to the chair of ecclesiastical history and polity at Union Theological Seminary. He remained a professor at Union until 1883. During a leave of absence from the Seminary (1861-

1865) he served as a chaplain in the Confederate Army and as chief of staff to General Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson. In 1883 he accepted a position as Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at the University of Texas. While in Austin he became involved in the founding of Austin Theological Seminary. Dabney was one of the most prolific writers among the Presbyterians of his day. He authored numerous volumes of material on theology and philosophy. We will concentrate on his Lectures in Systematic Theology, The Sensualistic Philosophy, and three articles from his Discussions, "The Influence of False Philosophies Upon Character and Conduct," "Hodge's Systematic Theology", and "The Bible Its Own Witness."

Dabney was a first rate philosopher in his own right. He wrote more on philosophical subjects than any of his Southern Presbyterian contemporaries. Consequently, we know more of his thought on Common Sense than most other theologians of that day. Dabney was highly respected by his contemporaries both as theologian and philosopher. One man said: "As a philosopher, this man was so preeminent that it is safe to say he will appear larger to men one hundred years from now than he did to his contemporaries."[17] His thought has enjoyed a resurgence of late. Twenty five years ago Morton H. Smith complained: "Sad to say, that at present, he [Dabney] is largely unknown and forgotten by his own Church today."[18] But recently D. F. Kelley commented, ". . . now, in the 1980's, [Dabney] has a larger audience than at any time during his life."[19] The republication of Dabney's

writings, almost all of which have been reprinted, has much to do with his audience.

DABNEY ON COMMON SENSE

Robert Lewis Dabney was unquestionably a Common Sense Philosopher. Much can be learned about the nineteenth century conservative Presbyterian allegiance to Scottish Realism by surveying Dabney's Common Sense critiques of the "European" philosophies. Dabney went to war on the Sensualistic Philosophy which was becoming so popular in his day. His most extensive critique was in his book, The Sensualistic Philosophy of the Nineteenth Century Considered. He was infuriated by the denial of metaphysics so prevalent among the proponents of this school of philosophy. Dabney's argument against the Sensualists can be summed up in this paragraph from his essay, "The Influence of False Philosophies Upon Character and Conduct." Dabney says:

> Finally, there is a modern class of professed religionists who seem to regard Mill, Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley as very apostles of philosophy (why, we know not); and when thereafter proclaiming their agnosticism, add, that they still leave room for religion; that while religion has no standing-ground in philosophy, she may be admitted in the sphere of feeling. Our pious neighbors are very thankful! This is the "advanced thought" destined to sweep everything before it; and we are so grateful that it still leaves us a corner for our dear religion! But common sense says: "Thank you for nothing, Messrs. Agnostics. You have not left any corner for our precious religion. Better speak out as honest atheists. The universal law of mind is that it can only feel normally as it sees intelligently. Where there is no logical ground for credence, there should be no source for feeling."20

Dabney's critique here clues us in to one reason for the

popularity of Common Sense among nineteenth century Presbyterians. The quote reflects Dabney's appreciation of metaphysical Common Sense. He wants it understood that religious truth is of the same sort as philosophical truth. This idea is reflected in his statement that: "Moral and spiritual judgments are no less logical than the scientific."[21]

Another aspect of Scottish Realism which Presbyterians appreciated was its stance on knowledge. The Sensualists offered only a relativistic theory of knowledge and truth. This was unacceptable to the Presbyterians. Common Sense constituted the only alternative. Robert Lewis Dabney's commitment to epistemological Common Sense is reflected in this paragraph from the same article quoted above:

> Now it is as plain as common sense can make it, that if there are any propositions of natural theology logically established, if any principles of ethics impregnably grounded in man's universal, necessary judgments, if any infallible revelation, any philosophy that conflicts with either of these is thereby proven false. Now, I believe there is an infallible revelation. Therefore, unless I am willing to become infidel, the pretended philosopher who impinges against revelation has no claim on me to be even listened to, much less believed; unless he has proved himself infallible. There are also fundamental moral principles supported by the universal experience and consent of mankind, and regulating the laws of all civilized nations in all ages. All human history and God's Word testify, moreover, that the dominancy of these moral principles is the supreme end for which the universe exists, and for which providence rules (read Butler's "Analogy"). The rule of God's final judgment is to be: everlasting good to the righteous, condemnation to the wicked. Here then is a criterion, as firmly established as the foundations of human reason and the pillars of God's throne. He who discards this criterion makes man a

> reasonless brute, and the world an atheistic chaos; that man has no longer any right to any philosophy, any more than a pig. For has he not discarded the essential conditions of all philosophy, intuitive reasons in man, and rational order in the series of causes and effects? We may, therefore, safely adopt this criterion as a touchstone for every philosophy--that if it unsettles conscience and God, it is erroneous.22

In addition to Dabney's appreciation of epistemological Realism, we see in this quote his commitment to the ethical implications of Common Sense. Note also several of the hallmarks of Common Sense language and thought, such as: "universal, necessary judgments," "fundamental moral principles supported by the universal experience and consent of mankind," "intuitive reason," and "causes and effects."

Dabney, naturally adapts Common Sense to his theological approach. Not only is this clearly evident in lectures I, II, VIII, IX, X, and XII of his Systematic Theology, but in many of his articles.[23] One such article is, "The Bible Its Own Witness." In this short piece Dabney argues that the truth of the Bible is self-evident and appeals to the common sense of the reader. He says: "Thus the Bible contains, in its own message and effects, evidence which should be sufficient for the common mind, if honest. This evidence has been represented to you here as appealing, not only to the reason, but to the conscience."[24] In this article Dabney displays a pure Common Sense approach to verifying the authenticity of the scriptures in contrast to the B. B. Warfield apologetical approach. The difference is illustrated by the fact of Dabney's continual appeal to

conscience, and intuition. For instance, in concluding his article Dabney says: "I now take you to witness that, in establishing the truth of this gospel, I have used no other materials than that familiar knowledge and common-sense which the humblest reader may bring to his English Bible, if he is honest."[25] Over and against this Common Sense apologetic is the typical Warfield entreaty to reason and rational, objective evidence. We should not draw a hard line between these two approaches because Dabney, of course, wants to appeal to external evidence also. But there does seem to be a signficant difference in emphasis between the two.

DABNEY AND THE DIVERSITY OF COMMON SENSE

We have already noted that the complexity and variety of Common Sense is rarely appreciated by historiographers. This means that theologians who were committed to Scottish Realism are often treated as if they all thought the same way on theological issues, or Common Sense is assumed to have the same kind of influence on their theology. We also said that Common Sense is often singled out (occasionally being coupled with Protestant Scholasticism) from among all the influences on a theologian as the reason for his peculiar views. Hence, other factors important to his thinking are ignored. The following is a good example of both these problems. John B. Hulst in his review of Dabney's Lectures in Systematic Theology concludes:

> One final comment concerning Dabney's theological method--he is obviously committed to the Scottish Common Sense Philosophy of Realism,

> which he sees as a way to affirm Christianity as a well-reasoned faith. His reliance on Scottish Realism causes him first to consider "natural" and them "revealed" theology. In the line of Thomas Reid--founder of the Common Sense School-Dabney establishes the traditional proofs for God's existence on the basis of cause and effect. His adherence to the categories of Scottish realism also reflects itself in his view of the sacraments, in which he declares Calvin's view of sacramental union and the real presence of Christ, considered from a rational point of view, is "not only incomprehensible, but impossible."[26]

Hulst is of course correct in pointing out Dabney's commitment to Common Sense and alerting the reader to its possible effects on theological methodology. Further, I am intrigued with his suggestion that Common Sense is in some way responsible for Dabney's rejection of Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper. At this point, however, we see combined the two historiographical tendencies mentioned previously. First, Common Sense is alleged to be the reason for Dabney's view on the sacraments. This conclusion is too facile. Thornwell, another theologian committed to Common Sense, held staunchly to Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper--as did the host of his Presbyterian contemporaries (Dabney apparently one of the few exceptions). Why did not these other men, who were also committed to Scottish Realism, reject Calvin's view? Here we see displayed graphically the fact that Common Sense does not work into theology the same way every time. Secondly, only Common Sense is considered as an explanation of Dabney's peculiar view. Could not there be other reasons? Dabney himself claims that exegesis does not bear out Calvin's view and he therefore rejects it. These considerations do not

rule out the possibility of Common Sense playing a part in Dabney's reasoning concerning the sacraments. But they should serve to caution us to abstain from hasty conclusions. Determining historical cause is a difficult thing.

Another way of witnessing the complexity of Common Sense when translated into theology is to compare two theologians on the same issue. We have a unique opportunity for such a contrast between Charles Hodge and Robert Lewis Dabney. The comparison is made by Dabney himself in his "Hodge's Systematic Theology" a long review article which appeared in the Southern Presbyterian Review. Although Dabney interacts with Hodge on a number of theological questions, we will consider only one--the seat of depravity in man's nature. This comparison will touch on some of the areas which we have already reviewed in Hodge's Systematic Theology; the testimony of the Holy Spirit, primacy of intellect, and the Holy Spirit's role in illumination and regeneration. In observing the differences between Hodge and Dabney on these issues, we will gain an appreciation for the complexity of determining Common Sense influence on theological opinion--since even two conservative, nineteenth century, Presbyterians who are committed to Scottish Realism, can differ substantially on issues in which Common Sense epistemology comes to bear.

Dabney begins his review of Hodge with words of commendation, and stresses, as he does throughout the article, that he considers Hodge to be orthodox. Dabney remarks:

> Our general verdict upon the work of Dr. Hodge may be expressed very fairly by saying that it is

> such a book as the Presbyterian public expected of him; for that public has been long accustomed to recognize, and, whenever writing upon a subject in his own proper department, to value very highly Dr. Hodge's characteristics. We find the work, then, learned, perspicuous, nervous, dogmatic and orthodox.[27]

This does not constitute a blanket approbation of Hodge's work by Dabney. He goes on to say: "Since we have commended the general orthodoxy of this work, the points must of course be very few upon which we should feel constrained to dissent from the author's conclusions."[28] Dabney proceeds to disagree with Hodge in an important area--the nature of total depravity. Dabney states the issue thusly:

> It is this: In defining depravity, are we to place the rudimentary element of the sinful nature in the blinded understanding misleading the spontaneity, and thus qualifying the soul as a whole morally evil? Such is the view of the divines named [Hodge, Alexander, and Dick]. Or, are we to find it rudimentally in the perverted habitus of the will, causatively corrupting and blinding the understanding, and thus qualifying the soul as a whole morally evil?[29]

Dabney claims that this view of the seat of depravity has implications on other areas of Hodge's theology. Notice that Dabney acknowledges that Hodge is teaching that the whole nature is depraved. Their difference is in the way in which the whole being is infected. Hodge, according to Dabney, says that the understanding (or intellect) is depraved leading to the corruption of the emotions and volition. Whereas Dabney teaches that the habitus (disposition) of the will is perverted consequently blinding the understanding, will and affections. Dabney is anxious to stress the unity of the soul in his

explanation of depravity. He protests: "the soul is a unit, a monad, not constituted,, as material things are, of parts or members, but endowed with faculties which are distinct modes of individual activity. These, according to the psychology of the Bible and of common sense, fall into three divisions of intelligence, will and sensibility. . ."[30] Dabney feels that Hodge has not paid enough heed to this unity of soul and has thus overplayed the role of the mind in depravity. By the way, this is exactly opposite of the Rogers and McKim interpretation of Hodge and the Princetonians. They contend that the effects of total depravity on the mind were ignored by Princeton theologians.[31] Dabney counters this view (one hundred years before its proposal), asserting that Hodge, Alexander and Dick, make "the intellect, as distinguished from the will, the ultimate source of depravity in man."[32]

The implications of the Hodgian view of depravity, in Dabney's opinion, are an over identification of regeneration and illumination, and improper view of faith. Dabney's evaluation of Hodge (and his Princeton predecessors) is as follows:

> Holding that the rudiments of our depravity are in blinded understanding primarily, and in the perverted will derivatively, they also hold that illumination is regeneration; but they add that, in order for this illumination, a supernatural operation on the mind itself is necessary. And that operation is the causative source of conversion. This distinguishes their scheme from that of Pajon. This also saves their orthodoxy; yet, we repeat, it seems to us an inconsistent orthodoxy in one particular.33

This confusing of regeneration and illumination leads the

Princetonians, in Dabney's mind, to mis-define faith as "belief of truth." He quickly adds that Hodge's definition of faith differs from that of Dr. Alexander. Dabney says: "Dr. Hodge, on this point, departs from the teaching of his venerable predecessor with fortunate inconsistency."[34] According to Dabney, Hodge understood correctly the Biblical idea of faith as "trust" which included not only "assent to" but the "embracing of" the gospel promise.

Dabney proposed what he considered to be a more Biblical explanation of how the Holy Spirit remedies man's completely depraved condition in the work of regeneration. He suggests: "if our view is held, then regeneration is primarily a sovereign, immediate revolution of the will (having illumination as its divine attendant), and faith is a receiving and resting upon Christ for salvation."[35] Dabney admits elsewhere that Hodge and Alexander did indeed teach the immediate and supernatural work of the Spirit. He says: "This Drs. Hodge and Alexander stoutly and sincerely assert, along with all sound Calvinists. What we claim is, that we can assert it more consistently than they, with their peculiar theory of sin and holiness."[36]

In Dabney's evaluation of Hodge, on a subject in which Common Sense is reputed to influence nineteenth century American Presbyterian theologians, we have an interesting dynamic. If Common Sense theory on anthropology and epistemology is dominating a theologian's perspective on this subject, we would expect him to deny (to some extent) the effect of depravity on

the mind and assert men's ability to determine spiritual matters apart from a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. But we do not see this in either Hodge or Dabney. In fact Dabney's complaint against Hodge is that he has <u>over-stressed</u> the role of the intellect in his discussion of depravity (and Dabney does not want to underplay the aspect of spiritual blindness, resultant from depravity, in his own view). In addition, Dabney is dogmatic in his insistence that faith is not mere intellectual assent and that it is the result of the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, not just on the mind, but on the <u>whole</u> soul.

There are two conclusions which we can draw from what may seem to be a rather obtuse discussion of minor points of difference between Hodge and Dabney. 1) The nineteenth century American Presbyterian debt to Common Sense is complex and varied. The theologians are not uniform in their doctrinal opinions in areas in which we expect Common Sense to influence their thinking. Indeed, it is difficult to determine <u>where</u> (if at all) Common Sense has influenced their divergent doctrinal conclusions. And if we could determine an area of influence, could we determine exactly <u>how</u> Common Sense influenced them? For instance, in the preceding paragraph we noted that Hodge and Dabney's emphases were exactly opposite of what we might expect from "Common Sense theologians." Further, if they both were influenced by Common Sense Philosophy, why do they differ from one another on this subject? This leads to our second conclusion. 2) Factors other than Common Sense must be figured into

any accurate evaluation of last century's Presbyterians. Common Sense simply cannot account for the difference of doctrinal opinion and emphases between these two Presbyterian theologians, both of whom were committed to Scottish Realism. Failing to consider other influences on their theology not only warps a true picture of Common Sense's impact but distorts a correct understanding of the men themselves. The accuracy of these two conclusions will be verified as we review another great Southern Presbyterian, James Henley Thornwell.

James Henley Thornwell (1812-1862) was born in Marlborough District, South Carolina. When Thornwell was still a boy of eight, his father died. His mother, a good Christian woman of Baptist stock was left to raise him. Through the kindness of patrons, Thornwell was able to obtain an excellent education. Already showing signs of intellectual brilliance, he graduated from Cheraw Academy and the University of South Carolina (then, South Carolina College). Thornwell entered the teaching profession after his graduation. While teaching in Sumterville, South Carolina, Thornwell became a Christian. He made his public profession of faith in Christ in May of 1832. Before becoming a Christian, Thornwell had already developed an appreciation for Presbyterianism--having read a copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith as a teenager. About a year after becoming a member of Concord Presbyterian Church in Sumterville, Thornwell was received by the Presbytery of Harmony as a candidate for the gospel

ministry. Thornwell briefly attended Andover Seminary and Harvard, but being dissatisfied with the former and suffering from ill-health at the latter, he returned to South Carolina intending to enroll at Columbia Theological Seminary. However, due to the shortage of ministers, he was immediately licensed to preach and ordained the following Spring (1835) to the pastorate of a church in Lancaster, South Carolina. While there, he married Nancy Witherspoon. In 1838 he was called to a professorship at South Carolina College. In 1847, at the age of 35, he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, the youngest man ever to hold that high office. In 1851 he was named the President of the College and in 1856 was called to Columbia Theological Seminary (then, in Columbia, South Carolina) as Professor of Systematic Theology. He died in 1862, revered by his colleagues as "the Calvin of the Southern Presbyterian Church." Thomas Law said of him: "This generation will never look upon his like again; a single century cannot afford to produce his equal."[36]

Thornwell, like Dabney, was both an accomplished theologian and philosopher. He served as a professor of Logic and Belles Lettres at South Carolina College for a number of years. Thornwell's biographers describe him as well read in the history of philosophy. For instance, Palmer describes reading a quotation from Cousin to Thornwell in his study one day to which Thornwell responded by tracing philosophy from the Greek masters to the mid-nineteenth century, giving careful attention to the

various nuances of thought between the different schools of philosophy.[37] As well read as Thornwell was in the history of philosophy, his contemporaries tell us that he was not bound to the thought of even his favorite philosophers. Palmer says: "As a thinker he was as independent as he was cautious. He bound himself to no school, and became the partisan of no master."[38] Recently, however, writers have called that evaluation into question. One man has suggested: "Thornwell's affirmation of Common Sense Philosophy invariably led him to a particular view of the sinful world in which he lived and how that world could best be brought into conformity to the Bible."[39] He goes on to assert that Thornwell's ecclesiology, hermeneutical principles, and views of the relation of church and state (among other things) were the result of Common Sense influence on his thinking. He says: "A more reasonable explanation for Thornwell's positions than the influence of the political situation seems to be the influence of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy, resulting in a cultural and social conservativism that typified the views of James Henley Thornwell and Old School Presbyterians."[40] The author does not suggest <u>how</u> Scottish Realism brought about Thornwell's particular views nor does he seem to be interested in developing an indepth answer to that question. Here we have a good example of the over-simplified historical interpretation which often is offered concerning Common Sense in American Presbyterianism. Later in this chapter we will attempt to discern another factor which may have

influenced Thornwell.

THORNWELL ON COMMON SENSE

As a philosopher James Henley Thornwell identified himself with Scottish Realism. This was not an unqualified commitment. Thornwell's personal view of philosophy was closer to William Hamilton than the other Scottish Common Sense philosophers, although he would have rejected the Kantian elements which Hamilton blended into Common Sense Realism. Thornwell conceived of Scottish Realism as divided into two camps--Rationalists (usually the earlier Realists) and the School of Experience (usually the later Realists). He belonged to the latter class. Thornwell was, then, willing to be classified as a Common Sense philosopher, but did not mind differing from the School (or its representatives) on various issues.[41]

Thornwell's identification with Common Sense was also conditioned by his opposition to sensationalism (like Dabney). In a long paragraph John Lafayette Girardeau describes Thornwell's philosophical position:

> He emphatically belonged to that class of thinkers who advocate what is known as the Philosophy of Common Sense, in contradistinction from the class whom he designates as Sensationalists. As both these classes hold that the materials of knowledge are in part derived from contact with the external world through sensation, they are distinguished from each other by the affirmation or denial of the existence of certain primary intuitions, or fundamental laws of belief, implicitly contained in the constitution of the mind, which, brought into contact with the materials derived from the external world, enable us to

> know. These the Sensationalists denied, the other class affirm. As Dr. Thornwell steadily contended for them, he must, of course, be assigned a place among the advocates of the Philosophy of Common Sense, as discriminated from either the pure, or the moderate, Sensationalists. So far as the origin of knowledge is concerned, he was no more a disciple of Locke, moderate as he was, than of Condillac and the French Encyclopaedists [sic], who pushed the principles of Locke to an extreme which he would have disavowed. He had a profound respect for the great English philosopher, and followed him up to the point at which the principles of the Common Sense Philosophy compelled a departure from him. At that point he ceased to be a disciple, and became an antagonist.42

With these qualifications in mind, it is correct to refer to Thornwell as a member of the Common Sense School of philosophers.

Thornwell's Common Sense language and thought also transferred into his theology. He retained the distinctions of "natural" and "revealed" theology common to other Presbyterian theologians committed to Scottish Realism. He championed the use of the inductive method in theology and, consistent with his Common Sense beliefs, described both revelation and "first principles" as sources of theology. He adds that the "first principles" are correspondent to the Scripture's teaching and not supplementary.[43] In regard to the place of reason in theology he makes the following comments:

> . . . reason, though wholly incapable of discovering the data [of revelation] in the free acts of the Divine Will, yet when these are once given by revelation as matters of fact, can discern the obligations which naturally arise from them ... But in no case is reason the ultimate rule of faith. No authority can be higher than the direct testimony of God, and no certainty can be greater than that imparted by the Spirit shining on the Word.44

Thornwell, like Hodge, said that the Bible could never contradict the reason--this was because "reason" is made up of the "first principles" and legitimate deductions from them. God authored the Bible, the "first principles" and the laws of deduction. They will, of necessity, be self-consistent because He does not contradict Himself. Thornwell explains this in his article "Revelation and Reason." He says:

> The resistless laws of belief which [God] has impressed upon the constitution of our minds, which lie at the foundation of all human knowledge, without which the materials of sense and consciousness could never be constructed into schemes of philosophy and science, derive all their authority from his own unchanging truth . . . . That instinct is the testimony of God; and what we call reasoning is nothing but the successive steps by which we arrive at the same testimony in the original structure of our minds. Hence belief, even in cases of the strictest demonstration, must, in the last analysis, be traced to the veracity of God.45

Understanding Thornwell's postulates on reason, we can put into perspective his concluding remarks on reason in his "Preliminary Observatons." He declares:

> Unassisted reason, when it inquires in a candid spirit, can partially discern the traces of Divine intelligence and glory, but when illuminated by the spirit it wants no other evidence of Divine interposition. The truth overpowers it with a sense of ineffable glory, and it falls down to worship and adore; for faith is only reason enlightened and rectified by grace.46

Thornwell applied his version of Common Sense to the question of God's existence with interesting results. Thorton Whaling tells us that Thornwell did not believe God's existence to be known by "intuition." He commented further: "Nor is God's

existence established by a process of syllogistic reasoning, and the common theological arguments for His existence are of value only as unfolding the contents of the knowledge already possessed."[47] Thornwell's own words on the subject are revealing. While commenting on the debate about the existence of God, Thornwell says:

> In this case, as in many others, it has happened that the very simplicity of the truth has been an occasion of perplexity. Many have sought for erudite proofs of what God meant should be plain and addressed to every understanding. Self-evident truths require no proof; all that speculation can do is to distinguish them and to indicate the characteristics which define them. The attempt to prove the existence of matter, of an outer world, of our own souls, is simply absurd. They authenticate themselves. All that philosophy should undertake is to show that these are primitive cognitions, and to be received upon their self-manifestation with an absolute faith. The Being of God is so nearly a self-evident truth that if we look abroad for deep and profound arguments, or expect to find it at the end of a lengthened chain of demonstration, we shall only confuse what is plain, and mystify ourselves with vain deceit.[48]

This approach to the proof of the existence of God constitutes a difference between Thornwell and his fellow Presbyterian theologians. Thornwell was critical of the "proofs" and set limits on their usefulness. After saying "that the being of God never can be demonstrated in the strict and proper sense of the term," he assigned to the "theistic proofs" the role of "the arguments by which man <u>fortifies his faith</u> in the being of God (emphasis mine)."[49]

There are also other areas of difference between Thornwell and his compatriots. For instance, in the definition of theology

as "science," Thornwell, though he will allow the nomenclature, is less dogmatic than Hodge, Warfield or Dabney. He says the issue depends upon how one defines science. After giving two legitimate definitions he says:

> But if by science is meant a deduction from principles intuitively given, and a demonstration from the nature and properties of its matter, then there is no science of God, but at the same time there is no science of anything else. All knowledge begins in faith; principles must be accepted, not proved, and it matters not whether you call them principles of faith or reason.[50]

As Thornwell concludes his discussion of the nature and limits of man's knowledge of God he makes another telling comment on the scientific character of theology. He says that man is not able to comprehend God and consequently "there can be no such thing as a science of God."[51]

With this qualified understanding of science in mind, Thornwell also differs from Hodge and Dabney concerning the question--of what is theology the science? Hodge argued that theology was "the science of the facts of divine revelation."[52] Dabney defined theology as the "science of God."[53] Thornwell said, "Theology is the science of religion; that is, it is the system of doctrine in its logical connection and dependence, which, when spiritually discerned, produces true piety."[54] He went on to say:

> In other words, the truth objectively considered is Theology; subjectively received, under Divine illumination, it is religion. In relation to religion, therefore, theology is a science only in the objective sense. It denotes the system of doctrine, but not the mode of apprehension. The cognition which produces the

> subjective habit to which theology corresponds is not knowledge, but faith and depends, not upon speculation, but upon the Word and Spirit of God. It knows, not for the purpose of knowing, but for the purpose of loving.54

Though Thornwell's differences with Hodge and Dabney are sometimes subtle, they do raise a question. What accounts for the differences in emphases, definitions, and doctrinal conclusions between three Presbyterians committed to Common Sense? Obviously, there were other factors influencing all three men as they each attempted to expound the most Biblical system of theology of which they were capable. In the next section we will consider one major influence on Thornwell (other than Scottish Realism) in order to help put Common Sense in perspective with regard to its effect on his theology.

THORNWELL, CALVIN AND COMMON SENSE

Earlier in this chapter, we said that there were two tendencies prevalent in the study of Common Sense in American Presbyterianism. The first was to ignore the diversity of thought among theologians identified with Scottish Realism. The second was to ignore other factors which might be equally important to their thought. In our discussion of Robert Lewis Dabney we gave an example of some differences he had with another Common Sense theologian, Charles Hodge. In this section, we propose to give an example of how an influence (other than Scottish Realism) impacts on the thought of a Presbyterian theologian committed to Common Sense.

There is nothing surprising or unique about a Presbyterian

Teaching Elder with high regard for John Calvin. But when Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God is so ascendant in the theology of a nineteenth century Presbyterian, that it alters Common Sense emphases, we should take notice. Calvin's approach to theology had that effect on James Henley Thornwell. Thornwell not only reflects Calvin's language, but his thought, throughout the crucial introductory chapters of his lectues in Systematic Theology. Thornwell's teaching bears the stamp of Calvin's thought in his definition of theology, teaching on the necessity of revelation, assertion of man's ignorance of God, and doctrine of the knowledge of God. We should then consider Thornwell's high regard for Calvin, his understanding of his thought, and of Calvin's influence on Thornwell's theology.

Thornwell's textbook in theology at Columbia Seminary was Calvin's Institutes. Thornwell himself wrote a partial analysis of the Institutes which was also used in his classes. The Systematics course at Columbia consisted of attending Thornwell's lectures, reading Calvin's Institutes and answering extensive questions (which Thornwell prepared) on both. B. M. Palmer relates why Thornwell "found no master equal to the great theologian of the Reformation." He says:

> Dr. Thornwell admired Calvin for his clearness and precision, for the compactness and order of his arrangement, and, above all, for his superior wisdom in founding his opinions upon the express declarations of Scripture, rather than upon the shifting speculations of human philosophy.56

Palmer also tells of the appreciation for Calvin which Thornwell

engendered in his students. He says that one student described Thornwell's introductory lecture on the Institutes, in this way:

> I remember well the account he gave of his visit to Calvin's grave, and of his musings upon the moulding influence of the mighty Reformer upon theological thought; and the statement of his conviction, that the emergencies of the conflict with Rationalistic infidelity were now forcing the whole Church more and more to occupy Calvin's ground. His pale face alternated with flushes of red and white, as he was speaking, and his eyes dilated until it seemed almost supernaturally large and luminous. Deeply moved myself, and fired with an enthusiasm for Calvin, which I hope never to lose, I turned a moment's glance to find the class spell-bound by the burst of eloquence and feeling.57

Thornwell also evidenced a mastery of the contents of the Institutes. His Analysis is a good example of this. Thornwell represents Calvin's thought accurately, even when it runs against the grain of nineteenth century Common Sense opinion. Take for instance, Thornwell's interpretation of Calvin's teaching on the ground of the scripture's authority (Inst. 1:7:4,5). The tendency of Thornwell's generation was to stress external evidence (although they certainly paid attention to internal attestation) of the authority of Scripture; Warfield being the most obvious example of this. But Calvin grounded the authority of scripture in God's authority. He taught that the evidences of Christianity or the historical proofs cannot lead to faith. The Word is self-authenticating and the Spirit enables us to perceive its authority. Thornwell accurately reflects Calvin's though on this subject. He comments:

> The real ground of the authority of Scripture is the reality of its being a Divine revelation.

> Its authority is the authority of its Author. That it may exert this authority there must be a certain and infallible persuasion that it is the Word of God. This certain and infallible persuasion is produced only by the illumination of the Spirit. What are called the evidences of Christianity, its historical proofs, are of use in conciliating attention and in leading to the study of Scripture, but they can never produce anything but opinion. They cannot give birth to a faith which establishes the heart.58

Thornwell seems to have a better understanding of Calvin on the conviction of scripture's truth, than Warfield who struggles in his interpretation of Calvin's use (or lack thereof) of the "proofs" and argument for Biblical authority.[59]

Thornwell also was acquainted with the sources of Calvin's theology and familiar with the authors that Calvin frequently quoted in the Institutes. Thornwell made it his practice to comment on these things in class to further illuminate Calvin's meaning on different subjects. This fact is illustrated by a delightful story told by Thomas Law:

> I well remember a little incident, the like of which is often told. Dr. Thornwell's text-book in theology was Calvin's Institutes, the meaning of which, even to the barest historical allusions, he brought out with wonderful comprehension and thoroughness. And one day after a recitation, as several of us were talking over the lesson, my classmate, Dr. Jas. S. Cozby, remarked: "I tell you, brethren, that man, Jimmie Thornwell, finds in Calvin's Institutes what John Calvin himself never thought of."60

Thornwell's devotional approach to the subject of theology indicates a debt to Calvin in thought, if not in language. Thornwell attributes his definition of theology, as the science of religion, to Calvin's teaching that the purpose of the

knowledge of God is the production of piety.[61] Christian theology is not a matter of pure intellect to Thornwell (critics often charge that Common Sense produced an overly cognitive Christianity). He says: "To know is not religion, to feel is not religion, to do is not religion; but to know by a light which at once warms and enlightens, which makes us, at the same time and in the same energy, know and feel and do--that is eternal life--the life of God in the soul of man."[62]

Thornwell also affirms Calvin's rejection of "natural religion" insisting that only Word and Spirit can lead us to a knowledge of God. Calvin says: "As experience shows, God has sown a seed of religion in all men. But scarcely one man in a hundred is met with who fosters it, . . . and none in whom it ripens. . ."[63] Thornwell mimics in his chapter on "Man's Natural Ignorance of God":

> What we affirm is, that while the existence of God and a general sense of our relations to Him are so grounded in the soul as to make man, wherever he is found, a religious creature, no just and consistent notions of His nature, His character and His attributes are anywhere compassed by natural light; and that whenever apprehended at all, He is apprehended in no such light as to generate the dispositions and emotions which constitute true piety. In other words, apart from revelation, He is nowhere rightly represented in thought, and even with revelation He is nowhere truly loved and worshipped without special grace. . . . Throughout the earth there is not a heart which beats in love at the mention of His name or is touched with a sentiment of pure devotion to His service, except where the Word and the Spirit have taken their lodgment.64

The very fact that in the four introductory lectures to Thornwell's Systematic classes, two are devoted to "Man's

Ignorance of God" and the "Limits of our Knowledge of God" is highly irregular for a "Common Sense theologian." The answer for Thornwell's conspicuous placement of these lectures in his course of theology, lies in his conviction of the importance of Calvin's idea of "learned ignorance."[65] Calvin specifically applies this idea to the study of the "decrees." Thornwell applies it to all of theology. He concludes his discussion of our knowledge of God, saying:

> Our wisdom is to believe and adore. The limits of our human knowledge are a sufficient proof that thought is not commensurate with existence; that there are things which the very laws of thought compel us to accept, when it is impossible to reduce them into the forms of thought; that the conceivable is not the standard of the real; that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy."
>
> It is a great lesson when man has learned the enormity of his ignorance. True wisdom begins in humility, and the first dictate of humility is not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.[66]

This statement is, frankly, impossible for a man whose epistemology is ultimately dominated by Common Sense. Hence, we conclude that Scottish Realism could not have been supreme in Thornwell's Christian theory of knowledge. He seems to be captivated by a Biblical epistemology and the formulation of that able expositor, John Calvin.

One other area in which Thornwell shows a debt to Calvin in his knowledge of God is in what <u>kind</u> of knowledge of God we possess. Calvin is skeptical about men who attempt to consider God absolutely, or who attempt to "define" God. Calvin suggests

that we do not know God as he is, but as he reveals himself to us. In his own words: ". . . he is shown to us not as he is in himself, but as he is toward us."[67] Thornwell describes God's knowledge as "Archetypal" and our knowledge of the Divine as "Ectypal."[68] This is to stress that when we apprehend Truth, we are simply thinking God's thoughts after him. Thornwell describes our knowledge as "analogical" (not unlike Van Til).[69] Thornwell's language and thought reflect Calvin on this subject. Thornwell says: "Religion never contemplates its object absolutely, but in relation to us."[70] He elucidates his understanding of how our knowledge of God is accurate in these words:

> The measure of knowledge which [God] thus chooses to communicate is before Him as the archetype or pattern in conformity with which ours must be regulated. When thus conformed to the Divine ideal, our knowledge becomes Ectypal--the express image or resemblance of that which God has proposed as a model.[71]

Thornwell continues by saying that since we cannot have direct access to the Divine mind, this archetypal knowledge is only obtainable in the Word of God--the Bible.[72]

This all-too-brief survey of comparison between Thornwell and Calvin on theology and epistemology (the two areas in which Common Sense displays its most obvious influences), demonstrates the significant indebtedness of Thornwell to a source other than Scottish Realism. Undoubtedly, many other examples could be cited in Thornwell's writings. And we should not presume that Thornwell was the only nineteenth century American Presbyterian

who was affected by factors equally as important as Common Sense Philosophy.

A BRIEF EVALUATION OF DABNEY AND THORNWELL

In our review of Dabney and Thornwell we have clearly seen three things. 1) Their general commitment to Common Sense Philosophy. Both Thornwell and Dabney belong in the philosophical class of Scottish Realism. Their Common Sense leanings are often carried over into their methodology and theological prolegomenon. But Common Sense does not prove to be decisive in either of their theologies. 2) Common Sense Philosophy is not identical but diverse. There is a tremendous amount of flexibility in Scottish Realism and its proponents reflect that fact. Furthermore, when Common Sense is combined with theology it becomes even more complex. In Dabney, we saw an example of a "Common Sense theologian" who could vehemently disagree on "Common Sense doctrines" (that is, doctrines which are supposed to be affected by Realism) with another "Common Sense theologian," Charles Hodge. We also saw evidence of this diversity in Thornwell. 3) Theologians who appeal to Common Sense Philosophy are also influenced by other factors, at least equally important. We saw evidence of an overwhelming epistemological and theological debt in Thornwell's writing to John Calvin. These non-Common Sense influences can only be ignored with the result of inaccurate historiography. These other sources of influence are present in all the nineteenth century Presbyterians. Dabney, for instance, quotes over 150

authors in his lectures. Among the top ten (numerically considered) are Turretin, Hodge, Calvin, and Thornwell--and not one Scottish Philosopher.[73] This should be a starting point in estimating the relative weight of "influences" on his theology. Before the nineteenth century Presbyterians are ever evaluated fairly, the whole of their theological commitments will have to be considered. Among these commitments is a high view of Scripture which is integral to the Reformed tradition.

Recognition of the diversity of ideas which result (even among conservative Presbyterians) when Common Sense is translated into theology, and consideraton of other components in nineteenth-century Presbyterian theology will prevent the historical over-generalization which usually accompanies writing on the subject of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy.

NOTES

1 This is not to downplay the contribution Princeton theology and philosophy made to the South. Many southerners became committed to Common Sense at Princeton and brought it back South. However, Common Sense made pathways into American education, directly from Scotland, at institutions other than Princeton. Some of those institutions were in the South.

2 Examples of this attention may be found in the writings of Theodore Dwight Bozeman, "Science, Nature, and Society: A New Approach to James Henley Thornwell," Journal of Presbyterian History 50 (1972): 307-325; "Baconianism and the Bible: The Baconian Ideal and Ante-Bellum American Presbyterian Thought"; "A Nineteenth Century Baconian Theology: James Henley Thornwell As Enlightenment Theologian"; and Protestants in An Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Ante-Bellum American Religious Thought; also, E. Brooks Holifield, The Gentleman Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860 (Durham: Duke University

Press, 1978).

[3] Daniel Sommer Robinson, The Story of Scottish Philosophy (New York: Exposition University Press, 1961), p. 8.

[4] Benjamin Morgan Palmer, "Baconianism and the Bible," Southern Presbyterian Review Vol. VI, No. 2 (October 1852), p. 230.

[5] Ibid., p. 231.

[6] Ibid., p. 243.

[7] Ibid., p. 244.

[8] Ibid., p. 244.

[9] Ibid., p. 245.

[10] Ibid., p. 246.

[11] Ibid., p. 247.

[12] Ibid., p. 248.

[13] Ibid., p. 249.

[14] Ibid., p. 250.

[15] It should be noted that "Baconianism" and "Common Sense Philosophy" are not synonymous terms (though often used that way). Baconian methodology is but one component (albeit a prominent one) in Scottish Realism.

[16] Douglas Floyd Kelley, "Robert Lewis Dabney," in Reformed Theology in America, David F. Wells, ed., (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), p. 210.

[17] Thomas Cary Johnson, The Life and Letters of Robert Lewis Dabney (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1903), p. 561.

[18] Morton H. Smith, Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology (Jackson, MS: Presbyterian Reformation Society, 1962), p. 192.

[19] Kelley, "Dabney," p. 226.

[20] Robert Lewis Dabney, "The Influence of False Philosophies Upon Character and Conduct," in Discussions, Vol III, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), pp. 407-408.

[21] Dabney, "The Bible Its Own Witness," in Discussions, Vol I, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), p. 130.

[22] Dabney, "The Influence of Philosophy," pp. 400-401.

[23] Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1927, reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 5-26, 78-119, 133-144.

[24] Dabney, "The Bible Its Own Witness," p. 129.

[25] Ibid., p. 131.

[26] John B. Hulst, "A Review of Lectures in Systematic Theology," Pro Rege Vol. XV, No. 3 (March 1987), p. 24.

[27] Robert Lewis Dabney, "Hodge's Systematic Theology" in Discussions Vol. I, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), p. 229.

[28] Ibid., p. 231.

[29] Ibid., pp. 234-235.

[30] Ibid., p. 233.

[31] Rogers and McKim, p. 290.

[32] Dabney, "Hodge's Systematic Theology," p. 232.

[33] Ibid., p. 236.

[34] Ibid., p. 237.

[35] Ibid., p. 236.

[36] Thomas H. Law, "Thornwell as Preacher and Teacher," in Centennial Address, (Spartanburg, SC: Band and White, 1913), p. 17.

[37] Benjamin Morgan Palmer, The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), pp. 537-538.

[38] Ibid., p. 540.

[39] Luder G. Whitlock, Jr., "James Henley Thornwell" in Reformed Theology in America, David F. Wells, ed., (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), p. 239.

[40] Ibid., p. 237.

[41] Palmer, Life and Letters, pp. 541-545.

[42] Ibid., p. 541.

[43] James Henley Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. I: Theological, John B. Adger, ed., (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), pp. 581-582.

[44] Ibid., p. 50.

[45] Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. III: Theological and Controversial, John B. Adger, ed., (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), p. 187.

[46] Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. I, p. 52.

[47] Thornton Whaling, "Dr. Thornwell As a Theologian," in Centennial Addresses, (Spartanburg, SC: Band and White Printers, 1913), pp. 26-27.

[48] Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. I, pp. 53-54.

[49] Ibid., pp. 66, 71.

[50] Ibid., p. 579.

[51] Ibid., p. 139.

[52] Hodge, Systematic Theology, p. 21.

[53] Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, p. 5.

[54] Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. I, p. 36.

[55] Ibid., p. 37.

[56] Palmer, Life and Letters, pp. 533-534.

[57] Ibid., p. 534.

[58] Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. I, p. 603.

[59] Warfield, The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, Vol. V, Calvin and Calvinism (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), pp. 40, 41, 87-90.

[60] Thomas Law, Centennial Addresses, p. 19.

[61] Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. I, p. 598.

[62] Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[63] John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Ford Lewis Battles, trans., John T. McNeill, ed., Library of Christian Classics, Vols. XX and XXI, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), (1-4-1), p. 47.

[64] Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. I, p. 76.

[65] Calvin, (3-21-2), p. 922.

[66] Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. I, p. 142.

[67] Calvin, (1-10-2), p. 97.

[68] Thornwell, Collected Writings, Vol. I, pp. 28-29.

[69] Ibid., pp. 118-131.

[70] Ibid, p. 42.

[71] Ibid., p. 29.

[72] Ibid., pp. 29-30.

[73] Kelley, "Robert Lewis Dabney," p. 216.

CHAPTER FOUR--COMMON SENSE TODAY: EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

A glance at the recent historiography of Common Sense Philosophy will reveal that it is credited with fostering the Jeffersonian concept of human rights and justifying slavery, maintaining the societal status quo and providing the basis for a radical critique of society, engendering the New School Presbyterian movement and dominating the thought of the Old School Presbyterians; as well as giving birth to the states' right movement, Princeton's view of Scripture, Hodge's view of biblical interpretation, Warfield's apologetical technique, the Southern view of Church and State, Dabney's Zwinglian view of the sacraments, and Thornwell's ecclesiology.[1] Surely there is room for a saner historical evaluation of Common Sense's influence.

We will make an evaluation of Common Sense's impact on American Presbyterianism based on conclusions drawn from our survey of Hodge, Warfield, Dabney and Thornwell. As well as commenting on the extent of Scottish Realism, we will identify "where" and "how" Common Sense produced an effect on nineteenth century American Presbyterian theologians--attempting to answer the questions set forth in the introduction to this paper. Though we cannot be so definitive as to end debate on the subject, we hope to provide parameters for a more realistic estimation of Common Sense influence on American Presbyterianism.

OBSERVATIONS ON HODGE, WARFIELD, DABNEY, AND THORNWELL

In the introduction, the questions were asked--where and how

did Common Sense affect American Presbyterianism? We broke these questions down into specific parts--did Common Sense influence theological methodology, content, communication of that content, or defense of that content? We will now offer some answers to those questions:

1) Common Sense and Theological Methodology.

In the theological prolegomenon of all four men that we surveyed we noted their acknowledgment of Common Sense methodology in their philosophy of theological method. This included stress on the inductive method, which entails, the use of a priori beliefs, empirical evidence, and logical reasoning. Though this usually led them to stress the scientific character of theology, we saw that this is not uniform among "Common Sense theologians" (e.g., Thornwell). The effects of their predisposition for Common Sense methodology are not pronounced (as is evidenced by their theological content) and should not be overestimated. One way this method is displayed in their works on Systematic Theology is in their marshalling evidence for doctrines from geology, mathematics, philosophy, psychology and other non-theological disciplines before presenting the conclusive biblical evidence. This is the result of their Common Sense penchant to stress the unity of truth--what is true in theology, is also true in science (which is not a new idea for Protestants). Their uniqueness lies in the way they stress that unity. The consequence of this method is chiefly that modern readers must wade through large amounts of, what they feel is, extraneous

information to get to the usually excellent theological statements of these nineteenth century Presbyterians.

2) Common Sense and Theological Content

No area in the study of Scottish Realism and American Presbyterianism is so misunderstood as Common Sense's effect on theological content. Extravagant claims are often made in this regard. But a review of the doctrinal content of these four Presbyterians has confirmed their substantial agreement with the Reformed tradition. There is no evidence that Common Sense caused them to create "new doctrines" because, frankly, they didn't contribute any "new doctrines" to Prebyterian theology. Common Sense does appear to have influenced their content in some ways. For instance, their confidence in Common Sense epistemology leads them to attempt very detailed explanations of how the "testimony of the Spirit" works with reason to produce belief in God, the Bible and Christianity. There also are tendencies in their writings to stress the intellectual aspects of faith (though again, this is not uniform, e.g. Dabney). Common Sense epistemology may run aground on the Reformed doctrines of the noetic effects of sin and anthropology, but there is no indication that these men abandoned their orthodoxy to uphold Common Sense tenets. The fact that so many twentieth century theologians, who disavow the whole Common Sense Philosophy, appreciate the doctrinal formulations of these Presbyterians, indicates the miniscule impact of Common Sense on their theology.[2]

3) Common Sense and Communication of Content

Here is an area in which Common Sense has had indisputable impact. Common Sense language pervades nineteenth century Presbyterian writing, even when they are writing on subjects unrelated to Common Sense. This has had two results: i - The pervasive Common Sense language has led some to overestimate Common Sense influence on the content being communicated; and ii - Twentieth-century theologians and historians have had a hard time understanding exactly what the "Common Sense theologians" are saying. Their language is almost "encoded" because of our lack of familiarity with their use of Common Sense terminology. This language gave them the ability to communiate very effectively with all sectors of society in a century accustomed to Common Sense nomenclature. However, it poses interpretational problems for us today.

4) Common Sense and Defense of Content

Another area in which Common Sense has undoubtedly left its imprint on nineteenth-century Presbyterians is in the defense of the faith, apologetics. We should, however, be cautious in our description of the exact nature of Realism's apologetical contribution. First, we should acknowledge that empirical apologetics had been in vogue in Protestant circles since at least the seventeenth century. Second, we should note that Common Sense was easily accomodated to an evidential approach, but may or may not have been a factor in determining Princeton's preference for that approach. Third, Princeton's Common Sense/

Evidentialism was epistemologically more consistent with Calvinism than it may at first appear to be. The Princetonians may quote Aquinas, Butler and Paley often, but their approach to the defense of the faith is, in principle at least, different. Fourth, Warfield's application of Common Sense to his defense of the Bible's authority is difficult to dissect, and may represent a departure from the standard Common Sense apologetic. Recognition of these factors can enable us to estimate more accurately Common Sense's influence on nineteenth century Prebyterian apologetics. It may also open the doors for a re-evaluation of Princeton by the modern apologetical camps--evidential and presuppositional.

In addition to these areas of influence, we noted in our introduction that some have proposed specific theses 1) The "Common Sense theologians" were unconsciously committed to Scottish Realism. This could not be further from the truth. Not only were the theologians we surveyed aware of their philosophical stance, they were also critical of the Scottish Common Sense School of Philosophy. Hodge was critical of Hamilton and Reid, Dabney dissented from Brown and McCosh, Thornwell differed from a whole host of the Scottish school (which he called Rationalists). This, of course, does not prove that they were not unconsciously influenced in some ways by Scottish Realism, but it does serve to show that they were deliberate and critical in their affiliation with Common Sense Philosophy.

2) Common Sense brought about the doctrines of "plenary verbal inspiration" and "inerrancy." There is no evidence to support this assertion. No one has ever given a suggestion as to how Common Sense might have had this result. From our review of Common Sense beliefs we saw no tenet which could serve to heighten the Protestant view of Scripture. In fact, when Common Sense does influence theology (Yale, Harvard, Andover) it tends to weaken or lead to the rejection of Protestant doctrine (e.g. original sin, predestination, Trinity, person of Christ), not to heighten that theology. If the "central Christian tradition" on the Bible were that it is "infallible only in matters of faith and practice" we should expect Common Sense to weaken that stance, not strengthen it. Also, in view of the almost universal use of Common Sense Philosophy in the nineteenth century, even if Princeton could be credited with "inventing" inerrancy, one would have to look elsewhere for an explanation.

In conclusion, Common Sense Philosophy's greatest contributions to nineteenth century American Presbyterianism were in language, epistemology, apologetics, and methodology. At the same time, Realism contributed little to their theology or their view of Scripture.

EVALUATION OF ROGERS AND MCKIM

In the first chapter of this paper (page 21) were listed nine propositions concerning Common Sense and American Presbyterianism extracted from Rogers and McKim's book, The

Authority and Interpretation of the Bible. We propose to evaluate them according to our findings in the writings of Hodge, Warfield, Dabney and Thornwell.

1) Their first proposition is that John Witherspoon's Scottish Realism provided the foundation for biblical interpretation at Princeton. RESPONSE--While Witherspoon indeed introduced Common Sense at Princeton in opposition to Berkelian philosophy (which in turn resulted in a Common Sense legacy at Princeton), it would be inaccurate to identify principles of biblical interpretation as the area in which Witherspoon's Common Sense made its impact. Realism had influence on Princetonian epistemology and theological methodology but their hermeneutical principles do not seem to differ from those of preceding generations.

2) The Princetonians were unaware of the extensive influence of Scottish Realism in their theology. RESPONSE--On the contrary, Common Sense was a deliberate epistemological alternative to relativism, chosen by the Princetonians because of its ability to uphold historical Calvinistic truth claims. It is granted, that Princeton may have felt that Scottish Realism was the only option in upholding their claims of truth. Thus, Common Sense gained a status of orthodoxy which encouraged the Princetonians' willingness to engage in epistemological speculation, which was then pronounced to be "biblical." But, for the most part, the Princetonians were quite conscious of what their Common Sense commitments entailed.

3) Princeton's belief in propositional truth is an innovation, due in part to their commitment to Common Sense Realism. RESPONSE--We noted in our survey of Hodge that propositional truth predates Common Sense by several thousand years. It should also be remembered that Realism is not unique to Common Sense. This historical jab at Princeton by Rogers and McKim is probably due to their commitment to a twentieth century existential theory of truth and knowledge. A simple survey of the history of epistemology will vindicate the Princetonians on this issue.

4) Common Sense led Princeton to ignore the noetic effects of sin. RESPONSE--Dabney said that Hodge overemphasized the role of the mind in depravity. Although the issue is nuanced, it is fair to say that Rogers and McKim's characterizaton of Princeton's confidence in the mind as "almost Pelagian" is a gross exaggeration. The Princetonians did take into account sin's effect on the mind.

5) Princeton's Common Sense beliefs led to a strange view of history. RESPONSE--Apparently this "strange view" is that we are capable of understanding people from other cultures and in previous ages. The only specific examples given are Hodge's belief that he could understand the Old Testament writers and Warfield's interpretation of the Westminster Confession's doctrine of Scripture. Woodbridge comments that Rogers and McKim's charges at this point throw them into an "epistemological quandry."[3] There again is no evidence presented to substantiate this

charge. We offer no response because none is needed.

6) Common Sense caused Hodge to ignore the Calvinistic emphasis on the "testimony of the Holy Spirit." RESPONSE--Common Sense certainly led Hodge to attempt to explain how the "testimony of the Spirit" works, perhaps wrongly, but he did not underemphasize it. The way in which Hodge synthesized Common Sense and Calvin's thought here, though reflective of brilliant thinking, is neither as forceful nor biblical as Calvin.

7) Common Sense led Hodge to define faith as intellectual assent. RESPONSE--Dabney acknowledges that Hodge did not define faith as intellectual assent and our own study came to the same conclusion. It may be true that the Princetonians are occasionally inconsistent on this issue. Some of them (particularly Alexander) overemphasized the "assent to truth" aspect of faith. It should be said that Rogers and McKim represent the opposite extreme, equally out of accord with the Calvinian tradition, that faith does not involve assent to truth. This is acutally mysticism--exactly what the Princetonians were battling when they stressed the mental element of faith.

8) Warfield's apologetical method is significantly indebted to Scottish Common Sense Philosophy. RESPONSE--The question of Warfield's debt to Common Sense has already been identified as a difficult one. Rogers and McKim are justified in pointing out Warfield's apologetical differences with Calvin. However, their concern is not to foster a more Reformed approach to apologetics, but to raise doubts about Warfield's faithfulness to the Reformed

tradition in his view of scripture (inerrancy). Princeton's apologetics certainly bear the marks of Common Sense, which we have already acknowledged.

9) Princeton's view of Scripture is due to its commitment to Common Sense Philosophy. RESPONSE--Why then, did not all the other nineteenth century theologians and philosophers committed to Common Sense, champion inerrancy. For instance, Charles Augustus Briggs uses Common Sense language and thought in some of the very passages in which Rogers and McKim quote him against Warfield.[4] Surely Briggs' Common Sense commitment did not lead to the doctrines of "plenary verbal inspiration" and "inerrancy." The origins of Princeton's view of the Bible simply must be traced to a source other than Common Sense.

Almost all the problems in the Rogers and McKim interpretation of Common Sense's influence at Princeton can be traced to their unhistorical approach to the subject. They are not primarily interested in understanding Common Sense Philosophy's influence, but in securing a polemic against the Princeton doctrine of Scripture. This deficient approach is reflected in some of the characteristics of Rogers and McKim's analysis.

1) Over-generalization--Rogers and McKim pay no attention to the diversity of the Princetonians in their implementation of Common Sense in their theology.

2) Non sequitur--Closely related to over-generalization is the Rogers and McKim historical non sequitur. Their argument is:

if Common Sense has influenced Princeton, then Common Sense has caused Princeton to believe something. The argument does not follow. Influence and cause are two entirely different things. Their confusion of the two constitutes a critical flaw in the Rogers and McKim proposal.

3) Ambiguity--Rogers and McKim often insinuate but rarely demonstrate their interpretation. This is particularly evident in their hypothesis that Common Sense and Scholasticism "produced" the doctrines of inerrancy. How?

4) Improper use of terminology--Rogers and McKim use terms like "enlightenment," "scholasticism," and "Common Sense Philosophy" in a stilted way. Each is approached as if it were an intellectually homogenous movement, and then is used to "label" the historical figures under discussion.

These problems in the Rogers and McKim proposal are by no means unique to them, and in many cases are simply indicative of their dependence on previous interpretations of Common Sense Philosophy's influence on American Presbyterianism.[5] They do raise the question of how to avoid these historiographical pitfalls in the study of Common Sense. We shall offer some suggestions in the next section.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE COMMON SENSE HISTORIOGRAPHY

One of the goals of this paper was to clarify the influence of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy on American Presbyterianism. Because of the complexity of Common Sense, there are a number of important factors to take into consideration when evaluating

Common Sense influence. In an effort to aid future historiography in clarifying Scottish Realism's role in nineteenth century Presbyterian thought, we offer the following suggestions.

1) The Broad Influence of Common Sense Philosophy--No historiography on Realism's influence on Presbyterianism will be successful without acknowledging Common Sense Philosophy's broad effects on nineteenth century theology outside of Presbyterianism. Sydney Ahlstrom has pointed out the fact that Common Sense is by no means unique to the conservative Presbyterians at Princeton. Common Sense was prevalent in the North and in the South, among liberals and among conservatives. Recognition of this fact should safeguard against simplistic identification of Common Sense with one particular theological group.

2) The Variety of Common Sense Philosophy--Failure to take into account the diversity and complexity of Common Sense Philosophy is fatal to historiography on the subject. All Common Sense philosophers are not alike. Treating them as such leads to the over-generalization so prevalent in writing on Scottish Realism.

3) The Nuances of Common Sense Theology--Not only is Common Sense Philosophy diverse, but when it is translated into theology it does not influence every individual theologian in the same manner. Common Sense results at Harvard differed from those at Princeton, and at Andover from those at Yale. Recognizing this will keep the historian from rushing to hasty conclusions about

how Common Sense affects theology.

4) The Uniqueness of Common Sense Philosophy--Many historians do not show a working knowledge of Scottish Realism itself. In evaluating Common Sense Philosophy's contribution to nineteenth century thought, it is important to know what is unique about Common Sense as a philosophy and what is not. For instance, Scottish Realism is not the first or only form of philosophical realism. To identify realism as a unique characteristic of Common Sense is simply incorrect. Further, the Common Sense belief in the objectivity of knowledge and truth is also not unique to Scottish Realism. The Common Sense justification for the objectivity of knowledge and truth is unique to Scottish Realism. Some historiographers have confused Common Sense's unique argument for truth, as being a unique commitment to truth. A better understanding of Common Sense would alleviate such confusion.

5) Respect for Scottish Realism--Historiographers need to take Common Sense seriously in its response to Hume. Sydney Ahlstrom has correctly noted that Scottish Realism is no "churchwarden philosophy."[6] The very fact of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy's dominance in America in all segments of society for an extended period of time suggests that Common Sense is a philosophy to be reckoned with.

6) The Conservative Presbyterian View of Scripture--As historians survey the various influences on nineteenth century theologians and Presbyterians in particular, it is vital that

they pay attention to the Presbyterian commitment to inerrant, authoritative scriptures. It is quite evident from historical study that this commitment is not of recent origin in the Christian tradition. Hence, this source of theological influence needs to be taken seriously by those attempting to discover the origins of nineteenth century American Presbyterian theology.

NOTES

[1] For example of sweeping (and contradictory) interpretations of Common Sense influence see David K. Garth, "The Influence of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy on the Theology of James Henley Thornwell and Robert Lewis Dabney," (Th.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, VA, 1979) pp. 190-198; Marsden, "Scotland and Philadelphia," Whitlock, ,"James Henley Thornwell;" Hulst, "Review of Lectures in Systematic Theology;" Rogers and McKim, the Authority and Interpretation of the Bible; Sandeen, "The Princeton Theology."

[2] Berkhof, Lecerf, Hendriksen, Van Til, Frame, and Reymond to name a few.

[3] Woodbridge, Biblical Authority, (footnote 11) p. 158.

[4] For instance, Rogers and McKim, p. 353.

[5] Rogers and McKim are heavily indebted to Ernest Sandeen's interpretation of Princeton theology, see bibliography.

[6] Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," p. 257.

APPENDIX

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PROTESTANT SCHOLASTICS: SHOULD THEY BE IDENTIFIED WITH THE MEDIEVAL SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGIANS?

Students of Church History are familiar with the themes of consolidation and conflict which pervade the post-Reformation period in Europe. Church History surveys typically devote space to a description of the theological tenor of the age. Modern historians' evaluations of the Protestant theologians of the period are usually less than kind. For instance, Justo Gonzalez says:

> Theologians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries zealously defended the teachings of the great figures of the sixteenth, but without the fresh creativity of that earlier generation. Their style became increasingly rigid, cold, and academic. Their goal was no longer to be entirely open to the Word of God, but rather to uphold and clarify what others had said before them. Dogma was often substituted for faith, and orthodoxy for love. Reformed, Lutheran, and Catholic alike developed orthodoxies to which one had to adhere strictly or be counted out of the fold of the faithful.1

This type of unrestrained diatribe is not unique. Dillenberger and Welch suggest: "On many levels there was a discernable shift from religious thinking which always arises out of the experience of faith to a stress upon proper and right thinking." As they continue their discussion of the spirit of Protestant Orthodoxy they comment:

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1 Justo L. Gonzalez, The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day, Vol. 2, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 133.

> The spirit of this approach is reflected in the second term which is frequently applied to the movement as a whole, "Protestant scholasticism." The term scholastic is used because of definite analogies to medieval scholasticism. Assent to truth in propositional form marked both periods. There was similarity also in emphasis upon a natural knowledge of God, supplemented by revelation (and, in the case of Protestants, also corrected by revelation).[2]

John Leith chimes in on this theme when he adds that Protestant Scholasticism "has its roots in medieval scholasticism. . ."[3]

Is this an accurate portrayal of the post-Reformation theologians and their theology? The question must be asked. The answer has major implications for one's evaluation of the developing Protestant movement. The question may be put in different ways. Were the Protestant orthodox theologians scholastic? Is the theology of Protestant orthodoxy primarily indebted to the reformers or to the medieval schoolmen? The answer is not a matter of yes and no, but one of balance. The challenge is to determine to what extent the Protestant theologians were scholastic? We do not deny a significant use of medieval scholastic techinque by the Protestants--this is not the issue. The task is to determine to what extent is medieval scholasticism foundational to the theology of the Protestant

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[2] John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, Protestant Christianity: Interpreted through its Development (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), pp. 96-97.

[3] John H. Leith, Introduction to the Reformed Tradition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), p. 118.

Orthodox Theologians or to what extent they may simply be characterized as scholastic because of similarity in theological method or mode of communicating that theology. Having ascertained this, we should ask: "have the Protestant orthodox theologians departed from the doctrines of the Reformers?" The conclusions to these two queries will answer the questions: "were the Protestant orthodox theologians scholastic?" That is, were they "scholastic" in the absolute sense of the word? More precisely, should they be identified more closely as legitimate successors to the Reformers or as the unwelcome resurrection of musty medieval theology?

Because of the controveresy in this period, Protestant orthodoxy is often viewed as a reactionary development. The divisions of the Protestant Church are sometimes attributed to the Orthodox theologians' hyper-precision in development of dogma. The usual name given by Church historians to these theologians is "Protestant Scholastic." Protestant Scholasticism is so denominated to connote a relationship with the theology and method of the Medieval Scholastic theologians. Rationalism and Natural Theology (resulting from the influence of Aristotelian logic) are characteristics of Medieval Scholasticism which have drawn strong reactions from modern historians, theologians, and philo-

sophers alike.[4] Though the Medieval Scholastics are admired by twentieth century historians for their speculative genius, they are severely criticized (often times rightly so) and their thought is usually evaluated as being antiquarian. The relation of the Protestants of the Post-Reformation to the Medieval Scholastics is one of guilt by association. It is also a relatively new thesis in historical study.[5] The question remains, however: were the Protestant orthodox theologians "Scholastics"?

The era of Protestant Scholasticism is usually delimitated by the death of John Calvin (1564) and the advent of the Enlightenment (ca 1750). The first stage of the Reformation runs from 1517 (Ninety-Five Theses) to 1564, according to the customary design of modern historians.[6] The effects of these datings can be very significant. If a reader marks the end of the "classical" Reformed era with the death of Calvin, he may unknowingly insert

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[4] This writer had a Philosophy professor from a prominent University tell him, "Aquinas ruined the entire development of philosophy and theology by introducing logic to the subject. We'll never be able to overcome this horrible contribution of rationalism." Upon reflection this writer had a greater appreciation for the title of C. Gregg Singer's From Rationalism to Irrationality which deals with the overview of development of theology, philosophy, and history to modern times! It is very common for modern critics to hold forth irrationality as the only alternative to rationalism.

[5] William Cunningham, Historical Theology (London: Billing and Sons, Ltd., 1862; reprint ed., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), pp. 424-425. This thesis was unknown in historical study at Cunningham's time and only developed in post-Heppe, German, liberal theological thought. This would date such a thesis into the 20th century. This does not invalidate the thesis in and of itself, but may serve to raise questions about the absolute accuracy of the thesis.

[6] Leith, Introduction, pp. 115-117.

an artificial wedge between the early Reformers (Zwingli, Luther and Calvin) and their immediate successors. Hence, the dating serves as a subconscious way of separating Protestant Scholasticism from the teachings of the great Reformers in the mind of the reader. The typical charges against the Protestants of the Post-Reformation era usually include the thesis that the Protestant Scholastics were unfaithful to the broader belief of their predecessors. The Lutheran orthodox theologians are accused of drastically altering and narrowing Luther's view of the Bible. Cunliffe-Jones says:

> What the Lutheran Scholastics concentrated upon was the once-for-all clarification of the authority of Scripture. (Here they hardened the trusting but critical attitude of Luther and many sixteenth-century Lutherans).[7]

On the Reformed side, the Scholastics are criticized for touching on the question of the order of decrees (infralapsarianism or supralapsarianism) which Calvin did not explicitly deal with in the Institutes. John Leith comments: "Today most people regard such controversies as abstruse and presumptious, which they were."[8] A. C. McGiffert also charges the Reformed theologians with altering the earlier, broader views concerning the inspiration and historicity of the Bible.[9]

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[7] Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, Christian Theology Since 1600 (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1970), p. 12.

[8] Leith, Introduction, p. 117.

[9] A. C. McGiffert, Protestant Thought Before Kant (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1911; reprint ed., New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), pp. 146-149.

Along with this accusation of deviation from the earlier Reformers, comes the postulation that Protestant orthodoxy is simply a resurrection of Medieval Scholasticism at its rationalistic worst. McGiffert chides:

> There was little new in the Scholasticism of the period. The theology, in spite of many differences in detail, was very largely that of the Middle Ages. Reason and Revelation were employed in a similar way, and the method of treatment was identical. The reigning philosophy was that of Aristotle, as understood by the medieval schoolmen, and the supernatural realm was conceived in the same objective and realistic fashion. Compared with that of the Middle Ages, Protestant Scholasticism was much more barren, and at the same time narrower and more oppressive.10

The older writers on the subject (such as McGiffert) often accused Protestant orthodoxy of drawing from two sources: reason and revelation.[11] However, more recent critics have corrected this erroneous view, by noting that the hallmark of Protestant Scholasticism is revealed religion. That is, Christianity is based on the authority of Scripture (as opposed to Natural Theology or reason). Leith notes: ". . .any Protestant Scholasticism is modified by the Protestant doctrines of the authority of Scripture and justification by grace through faith."[12] In a favorable review of Protestant orthodoxy, Robert Clouse writes:

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10 Ibid., p. 145.

11 Ibid., p. 141.

12 Leith, Introduction, p. 118. It should be noted that this author agrees that the orthodox theologians presupposed the authority (and inerrancy) of the scriptures, but they brought no baggage about justification. The scriptures are plain enough to explain the strong Protestant belief in Justification by Faith.

> The central tenet of the 17th-century orthodoxy emphasized the Bible as the fundamental presupposition of theology. Scripture was trusted as God's Word, and the external statement was not differentiated from the underlying meaning. . . therefore, the Bible is the infallible norm for Christians as well as the court of final appeal in all theological arguments.[13]

The corrections which have been made in regard to the place of reason and revelation in the theology of Protestant Orthodoxy, however, have not stopped the accusations against them for being rationalistic. One writer who gives a rather moderate treatment to Scholasticism in his book says that orthodoxy represented a "modified scholasticism" which is a "type of theology which places a great emphasis upon precision of definition and upon logical, coherent, consistent statements." He goes on to say that Scholasticism may become "very abstract and remote from life."[14]

What the recent critics are really criticizing in Protestant orthodoxy is the belief in the existence of propositional truth and the inerrancy of Scripture. John Leith clearly displays this kind of criticism in his little book Assembly at Westminster. He challenges three "assumptions" of modified scholasticism:

> One was the assumption that Christian faith can be adequately embodied in propositions. . . . A second assumption is that human reason, either as

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[13] Robert G. Clouse, The Church in the Age of Orthodoxy and Enlightenment (St. Louis: Concordia, 1980), p. 38.

[14] Leith, Introduction, pp. 118-119.

> it exists in men or as it is redeemed by the Holy Spirit, can take the infallible materials of the Bible and radically abstract them into precise propositions, putting them together in a system of impeccable logic. A third assumption is that truth is more adequately expressed in dogmatic pronouncements than in dialetical tension of opposing views.[15]

This criticism is virtually identical with the criticism leveled at the "Princeton Theology" which was supposedly too influenced by Scottish Common Sense Philosophy.[16] It is interesting to note that both the "Princeton theology" and the orthodox theologians held in common their view on the authority and inspiration of Scripture, the belief in propositional truth, and the perspicuity of Scripture for the believer. Notice, that neither Princeton nor the Scholastics are claiming that anyone can understand the truths of the Bible. Both are affirming that the Spirit-led believer may understand all the essentials because of the clarity of Scripture.[17] The importance of the Protestant Orthodox view of Scripture will be touched on again in the analysis of the charges against orthodoxy.

Criticism of Protestant orthodoxy has also been extended to seventeenth-century confessional documents. Often the statements of the sixteenth century are preferred, by the critics, over

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[15] John H. Leith, Assembly at Westminster (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), p. 72.

[16] George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 110, 111.

[17] Ibid., p. 111. Marsden misses this point at the top of the page in his interpretation of the Turretin quote.

seventeenth-century statements. The seventeenth-century documents are said to be stale, impractical, overly dogmatic, non-experiential, and guilty of omitting discussion of the practice of faith. While the confessions of the sixteenth century are described as: vibrant, filled with the vitality of Christian experience, and encouraging men to trust in God rather than in the Bible.

Leith asserts:

> The Reformed confessions and theologies of the seventeenth-century reflect the changed stance (of scholasticism). The Canons of Dordt, the Westminster Confession, the Helvetic Concensus Formula are abstract, objective, and logical in contrast to the historical, experiential, and fragmentary character of the Scots Confession of 1560, the First Helvetic Confession of 1546, and the Genevan Confessions of 1536. The seventeenth-century confessions are increasingly more concerned with the authority of faith than with the fact of faith, with the right definition of faith than with proclamation.18

Do Leith's charges of abstractness and logical arrangement hold up under scrutiny? We will examine this question in the next section.

Having gained an overview of contemporary historical opinion concerning the so-called "Scholastics," we shall now evaluate these charges. The first order of business is to determine just what is Medieval Scholasticism so that is may be compared with Protestant orthodoxy.

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18 Leith, Assembly, p. 66

The main characteristic of Medieval Scholastic theology is the application of the metaphysics and dialetics of Aristotle to the subject of theology. The sources of their authority were the Bible and church tradition (especially as manifested in the Church Fathers). There tended to be endless series of deductions from relatively minor points in their system-building. The greatest weakness in Scholastic theology (after their inclusion of tradition as authoritative) is their discussion of numerous meaningless questions, for which there is not even a possible outcome. Their best contribution is in making a number of helpful distinctions which can be used in modern Systematics.

With these characteristics in mind it becomes clear that, while there may be certain outward similarities in the two schools, there are also grave differences. 1) The Protestant orthodox reject the Scholastic elevation of reason to the level of revelation as a source of authority. For the Protestant orthodox theologians, scripture constituted the noetic principle of theology. It was the only reliable source of the knowledge of God.[19] 2) The Protestants of the seventeenth century (particularly at the Westminster Assembly) did not rely on strings of deductions for doctrinal points. The strict rule was "good and necessary consequence." Frankly, the Westminster Divines used this more to stress that <u>implicit</u> meaning is present in Scripture (as

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[19] Geoffrey W. Bromiley, <u>Historical Theology: An Introduction</u> (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), p. 319.

over against explicit) than to deduct into existence a doctrine not clearly taught in Scripture. The Divines followed the rule that if doctrine was not expounded at least two times in Scripture, they would not include it. This is hardly the same as the practice of the medieval schoolmen. It is true that the Divines felt their faith was reasonable (that is, not irrational) and that propositional truth existed. They shared these beliefs in common with their forefathers, the Reformers. Along with these beliefs they also stressed the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible, in hearty agreement with their reforming predecessors. When the modern historical theologian (or theological historian), who is philosophically or theologically committed to a view which denies the inerrancy of scripture, the reasonableness of faith or the existence of propositional truth, attempts to create an historical polemic against men in the seventeenth century who do believe in those things by charging them with being scholastic, he is failing to fulfill his obligation as an historian to accurately portray the thought of his subjects. By relating Protestant orthodoxy to medieval scholasticism many church historians have a specific agenda in mind. That agenda first purposes to separate the Protestant scholastics' thought from the Reformers, who are currently popular in the historical community. Secondly, the agenda serves to connote that the Protestant orthodox theologan's belief in inerrancy and propositional truth are views, peculiar to their thought, which were developed because of the admixture of medieval scholasticism in their theology. However,

we have seen that the Protestant orthodox theologians differed from the medieval schoolmen in their views of the relation of reason and revelation, the source of theological knowledge, and theological methodology. If this brief comparison is correct, then it would be inaccurate to label the Protestant orthodox theologians of the seventeenth century as Scholastics (in the pejorative sense of the word) in view of the significant differences between the content and methodology of their theology and the medieval schoolmen's. In his great work, Historical Theology, William Cunningham has a helpful section of analysis of Medieval Scholasticism in comparison to Protestant Theology. Cunningham comments:

> The scholastic theology was the immediate antecedent, in historical progression, to the theology of the Reformation, and the former exerted no inconsiderable influence upon the latter. The writings of the Reformers not unfrequently exposed the errors and defects of the theology of the schoolmen, which they regarded as one of the bulwarks of the Popish system; and this fact of itself renders it desirable to possess some knowledge of their works. The Reformers themselves do not make very much use of scholastic distinctions and phraseology, as they in general avoided intricate and perplexed discussions; but when, in subsequent times, more subtle disputations upon difficult topics arose among Protestant theologians, it was found necessary, if these topics were to be discussed at all, to have recourse to a considerable extent to scholastic distinctions and phraseology; and it was also found that the use and application of scholastic distinctions and phraseology were fitted to throw some light upon questions which otherwise would have been still darker and more perplexed than they are. In reading the writings of modern divines, who were familiar with the scholastic theology, we are not unfrequently struck with the light which their definitions and distinctions cast upon obscure and intricate topics; while, at the same time, we are sometimes made to

> feel that an imperfect acquaintance with scholastic literature throws some difficulty in the way of our fully and easily understanding more modern discussions in which scholastic materials are used and applied. Take, for example, Turretine's system, a book which is of inestimable value. In the perusal of this great work, occasionally some difficulty will be found, especially at first, in fully understanding its statements, from ignorance of, or imperfect acquaintance with, scholastic distinctions and phraseology; but, as the reader becomes familiar with these, he will see more and more clearly how useful they are, in the hands of a man like Turretine, in bringing out the exact truth upon difficult and intricate questions, and especially in solving the objections of adversaries. These considerations may perhaps be sufficient to show that it is worth while to give some degree of attention to the study of scholastic theology, so far at least as to acquire some acquaintance with the distinctions and the language of the schoolmen.20

Finally, before we leave this brief discussion of the relationship between Medieval Scholasticism and Protestant Orthodoxy there is another passage in Cunningham's Historical Theology which deserves our careful attention. Cunningham is commenting on a series of lectures delivered on the subject of Scholastic Theology. In the midst of this comment Cunningham stresses that there is a possibility for mistaking the outward similarity of the writings of some Protestant theologians and medieval schoolmen as evidence of borrowing from that system of theology. After commending the printed edition of these lectures to his readers, Cunningham warns:

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20 Cunningham, Historical Theology, pp. 418-419.

> The work, however, is one which ought to be read with care and caution, as it is, I think, fitted to exert a somewhat unwholesome and injurious influence upon the minds of young and inexperienced theologians, and to afford to the enemies of evangelical truth materials of which it is easy to make a plausible use. The great leading object of the work is to explain in what ways the philosophical and theological speculations of the schoolmen have influenced the theological opinions of more modern times, and the language and phraseology in which these opinions have been commonly expressed; and in developing this interesting topic, Dr. Hampden has brought forward a good deal that is ingenious, true and useful. But, at the same time, the mode in which he has expounded some of the branches of the subject, has a certain tendency to lead men, who may know nothing more of these matters, to take up the impression, that not only the particular form into which the expositions of Christian doctrine have been thrown, but even the matter of substance of the doctrines themselves, are to be traced to no higher source than the speculations of the schoolmen of the middle ages. There is no ground for asserting that this was the intention of the author, but it is a use which may with some plausibility be made of the materials which he furnishes; and this application of them is certainly not guarded against in the work with the care which might have been expected from one who was duly impressed with the importance of sound views in Christian theology,--a defect, however, which is to a large extent supplied by an elaborate introduction prefixed to the second edition. It is also a defect of this work, and tends rather to increase the danger above adverted to, that it contains nothing whatever in the way of pointing out the advantages that may be derived from the study of scholastic theology, in illustrating and defending the true doctrine of Scripture. (emphasis mine).21

It is extremely significant that Dr. Cunningham counseled against the over-identification of these two schools of theology over fifty years before it was historically in vogue to do so.

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21 Ibid., pp. 424-425.

We noted earlier that seventeenth-century confessions are generally criticized for their Scholasticism. The two most often singled out are the Helvetic Consensus Formula and the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Consensus Formula was Turretin's solution to theological problems in the school of Saumur which were affecting the orthodoxy of the Calvinistic ministry. "Amyraldianism" and lower forms of biblical criticism gave rise to the writings of the Formula (1675). By far the more significant of the two documents was the Westminster Confession of Faith. Previously in this paper, we observed that it is common to view the Confession as a "scholastic" document. A glance at the structure and content of the Confession will quickly dispel such shallow analysis. The Confession's Chapter One deals with the Holy Scriptures. This is a deviation not only from typical scholastic practice but from the patterns of Systematic Theologies and confessions contemporary to the Divines. The normal practice was to begin with "Theology Proper"--the discussion of God. Chapter II-V concern God, His Sovereignty, His Sovereignty in Creation, and Providence. This section actually does not fulfill the scholastic requirement for a "locus" on God. The section is non- technical, pastoral, and does not include a discussion of Christ. Chapter VI describes the Fall and its effects. The remaining chapters of the Confession teach God's solution for the problems man created in Chapter VI. Chapter VII speaks of the Covenant--God's redemptive relationship with man. Chapter VIII talks of the Redeemer. Chapters X-XVIII deal with

God's plan of Redemption; Chapters XIX-XXXI with God's requirement of his covenant people; and XXXII-XXXIII speak of the final glorification and judgment. It becomes very apparent from even such a quick glance that the Confession is not structured according to the traditional "Loci" of theology. Its stucture is indeed theocentric, but also Redemptive. In this sense Warfield is right when he proclaims that "Covenant" is the architectonic of the Westminster Confession.[22] The theology of the Confession is structured by the covenantal, redemptive idea.

As we conclude our analysis of Protestant orthodoxy, let us again consider the possible motivation of church historians to view the seventeenth century as the century of Scholasticism. Cunliffe-Jones, in his analysis of the key components of Lutheran Scholasticism, noted that the clarification of the authority of scripture was one of their major concerns: 1) the Bible is seen as an absolutely infallible doctrinal authority--this authority is intrinsic, 2) the Bible is literally the Word of God in all its parts, 3) the whole of the Bible is from God, 4) the Bible's infallibility does not only cover religion and morals: it applies to history, geography, geology, astronomy, and every other subject, and 5) every part of the Bible has the same authority as

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22 B. B. Warfield, The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, ed. E. D. Warfield, W. P. Armstrong, and C. W. Hodge, vol. 6: The Westminster Assembly and Its Work (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 56.

the other.[23] These views are peculiar in the eyes of Cunliffe-Jones. John Leith, while criticizing the Westminster Confession for Scholastic influences on its doctrine of the Bible, comments: "Those who equated the Bible as the revelation of God with inerrancy were faced with the desperate task of denying that errors were to be found in the Scriptures." Rogers and McKim spend a significant amount of time on scholasticism in their book The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible. They see the Reformed doctrine of scripture best represented in the theology of Karl Barth and they view history from this perspective. After criticizing Turretin (and the Scholastics) for holding to verbal inspiration and inerrancy, they conclude: "Despite the undoubted intention of the Reformed scholastics to present Reformed theology, it cannot be denied that they departed significantly from the stance of Calvin."[24]

Rogers and McKim's bold assertion sounds authoritative but is contradicted by Fuller Seminary faculty member (where Rogers teaches) and renowned historian Geoffrey Bromiley. He concludes his evaluation of Protestant Scholasticism this way:

> . . .it may be accepted without demur that there is a distinction of form and nuance and emphasis between the seventeeenth-century dogmaticians and

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[23] Cunliffe-Jones, Christian Theology Since 1600, p. 13.

[24] Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 186, 187. See also the entire chapter on Post-Reformation Theology.

> their Reformation predecessors. On the other hand, one may legitimately question whether many of the criticisms that are brought against the new and more systematic presentation are justified.

Bromiley continues:

> In these writers (the Protestant orthodox theologians) the doctrine of scripture is no doubt entering on a new phase. Tendencies may be discerned in the presentation which give evidence of some movement away from the Reformation emphases. The movement, however, has not yet proceeded very far. The tendencies are only tendencies. What change there has been is more in style, or, materially, in elaboration. The substance of the Reformation doctrine of scripture has not yet been altered, let alone abandoned.25

It is also quite interesting that Rogers and McKim contradict Leith in their view of the Westminster Assembly. Rogers and McKim, who want to be identified as confessional Presbyterians (in distinction from the Princetonians who Rogers and McKim feel have narrowed the broader views of the Westminster Assembly), try to rehabilitate the Westminster Assembly as representing the "central Christian tradition" concerning the Bible. Leith, however, is not so kind. He classifies the doctrine of the Confession as "modified scholasticism."

Rogers and McKim's views concerning the Scholastic's departure from Calvin's doctrine of scripture are also contradicted by Edward A. Dowey, Jr. (author of the Confession of 1967 and no friend of inerrancy). He has established the essen-

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25 Bromiley, Historical Theology, pp. 327-328.

tial harmony of Calvin and the scholastics' doctrine of scripture.[26]

We conclude this little survey by noting that the Protestant orthodox theologians did not depart substantially from the doctrines of the Reformers, and their theological source and method are more indebted to reformational principles than to medieval scholasticism.

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[26] William S. Barker, "Inerrancy and the Role of the Bible's Authority: A Review Article," Presbyterion VI:2 (Fall 1980), p. 99, citing Edward A. Dowey, Jr., The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 103-104.

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