

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES
Part III: The Modern Church and Post Modern Church

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I. INTRODUCTION.

The Protestant Reformation, as the equally significant Catholic Reformation, was a period of tremendous theological activity in the area of bibliology. The authority sources of the divergent, polarized parties were dogmatized (the quality of the Scriptures had been assumed though the extent of canon had not). In the Post-Reformation era the quality of the sources was questioned as man's world view was dynamically altered; the world became viewed as a "closed-system." The philosophical shift, as well as the effect of that shift on theology (particularly bibliology) is the subject of our study.

II. THE PHILOSOPHICAL SETTING OF THE POST-REFORMATION AGE.

The roots of a philosophic shift from a theistic world view to that of a pantheistic viewpoint was not sudden, nor tragically planned by those opposed to theism. The sources of the shift ultimately were found in the emergence of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century, that give rise to both the rebirth of man in the Reformation and the reconstruction of man in the Enlightenment. Interest in the world and the human mind constituted two currents of thought that became the focus of the Post-Reformation era. Of major importance was Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), the famed mathematician and naturalist, who proposed a strictly empirical approach for the observation of the universe and Francis Bacon (1561–1626), who went beyond Galileo, to conceive of science as a means to rule nature.

N.B. Galileo and Bacon laid the foundation for modern science and technology in the field of natural phenomena without invading the religious sphere. The naturalistic tradition would later apply those concepts to religion with devastating effect.

A. Rene Descartes (1596–1650). Philosophically Descartes was a naive theist of Jesuit training who was deeply influenced by Galileo about whom he expressed surprise that he was condemned for his scientific views by the Roman church. In his search for knowledge, Descartes began in universal doubt (not skepticism for he knew facts existed, the famous 1618 stove and woodshed experience) that became to him a strainer for truth. Since it was impossible to doubt his own existence (self perception being perceived as an accurate judge of reality his only clear and distinct idea), he began there (cogito ergo sum!). The existence of God was sustained from his idea that God exists (an intuitive perception), a given beyond rational inquiry.

The basic problem with Descartes and all those after him, is they presuppose a starting point with man or the “I,” and not with God. This inevitably leads to naturalism and postmodernism.

N.B. Descartes believed that his method defended Orthodox beliefs, but after him philosophers used his system to erect entire systems on reason alone.

N.B.N.B. Deeply influenced by Descartes was Baruch Spinoza (1633–77) who carried Cartesian logic to pantheism and fatalistic determinism. Gottfried Leibnitz (1646–1716) carried Descartes in another direction to reject the possibility of that religious knowledge could be sustained from historical arguments.

B. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). The Scotsman Hobbes sought to construct philosophy on a totally rational basis beginning with sense perception, not ideas the mind discovers within itself (Cartesianism). His epistemological key was induction in the midst of change, hence a changeless God is unrelated to “true knowledge” because he is unknowable; Hobbes was a mechanistic, materialist.

C. John Locke (1632–1704). Although preceded by Bacon and Hobbes, Locke is usually credited with giving British empiricism (sometimes called Sensationalism) its most cogent expression. Locke rejected the concept of “innate ideas” (Cartesianism) and stated that knowledge is acquired through empiricism (revelation is not denied, but it must be experienced).

N.B. A theological expression of Lockeanism is Deism, which went beyond showing the reasonableness of Christianity to demonstrate the rationality of natural religion. David Hume (1711–76) showed the inadequacies of empiricism; he sounded the death for Deism.

D. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). The Konigsberg philosopher proved that Deism, which was flourishing in England, was as rationally questionable as any appeal to

revealed truth. Kant rejected Cartesian innateness and Lockean empiricism for a position between them. He felt that knowledge results from an interplay between incoming sense perceptions (empiricism, sensation) and the mind (ideas). Phenomenal knowledge (things about us) is knowable; noumenal knowledge (spiritual) is not. Religion becomes little else than morality. Truth became an exclusive function of experience.

N.B. The quest for truth without revelation opened the gates for new options to ethics and religion: the so-called Kierkegaardian leap to faith; religious morality as in Ritschl; Anthro-theism as in Schleiermacher and Strauss; or Hegel's vast cosmic mind in the dialectic of progress (Baur, Strauss, Marx, and Darwin).

N.N.B.B. The point of this philosophic survey is to argue that the mind was set free from revelation and developed a world view that left God out (closed system). Man, not God, became the center or focus of meaning.

III. THE GERMAN THEOLOGIANS AND THE SCRIPTURES.

The influence of Kant's philosophy set the framework for the nineteenth century. Kant, at once, elevated both the mind and empiricism that provided the tape root for the theological quest.

A. Frederick Schleiermacher and the Scriptures.

1. His life (1768–1834). Schleiermacher was the son of a Reformed army chaplain who was connected to the Moravians (Pietism). After schooling among Moravians he went to the University of Halle where he became deeply enmeshed in Kantianism. As a Reformed pastor in Berlin, he was deeply influenced by the Romantic Movement. His major work, *The Christian Faith*, was published in 1821.
2. His thought. It was Mackintosh (*Types of Modern Theology*, 100) that summarized Schleiermacher as follows, "It would be roughly true to say that he has put discovery in the place of revelation, religious consciousness in the place of the Word of God, and the mere 'not yet' of imperfection in the place of sin." The concept of an objective, external revelation was lost and a closed system of self-analysis became salvation.
 - a) Schleiermacher distinguished three grades of human consciousness: self, world, and God. The first is super-ceded in normal growth, the second is continuative, and the final state is that of dependence on God ("dependence" being his definition of religion). Scripture is interpreted as a-historical, though an expression of God's consciousness. Sin is a prevention of God-

consciousness in the world. Through grace, sin, which is largely environmental, is annulled.

- b) The Scripture is essentially conceived within a Kantian framework. Orr wrote (*Progress of Dogma*, 314), “Schleiermacher placed the essence of religion wholly in feeling, and subordinated knowledge to that as a secondary product.”
3. Schleiermacher’s first presupposition is that the Scriptures are not authoritative of themselves, but only as the church grants them authority by faith. “The authority of Holy Scripture cannot be the foundation of faith in Christ; rather must the latter be presupposed before a peculiar authority can be granted the Holy Scriptures (*Christian Faith*. II, 519).” He confessed that the integrity of the Bible is not self-authenticating, but reckoned subjectively, though he realized he stood alone in this opinion (*Christian Faith*. II, 591). “The polemical first part of this proposition is solely due to the fact that what we here deny is actually asserted. Possibly as a matter of fact it is more widely held than definitely stated, for all textbooks and Confessions which put the doctrine of Scripture as the source of Christian faith in the foreground seem distinctly to favour this view. Hence it is necessary thoroughly to expose the underlying misconception.”
4. Faith in Christ is antecedent to belief in the Scriptures; indeed, faith authenticates the Scripture. Thus faith comes quite apart from a belief in the Bible (*Christian Faith*. II, 592). “But where the need of redemption is really felt, the faith that makes alive may spring even from a message about Christ which is in no way bound up with the conviction that the books of Scripture possess a special character, but may rest on any other sort of witness that is accompanied by real perception of Christ’s spiritual power—may rest, that is, simply on oral tradition.” Faith results from a direct impression apart from the Bible.
5. The Bible, then, is an imperfect witness to Christ’s person and the preaching of the disciples (*Christian Faith*. II, 593). “On the contrary, faith might arise in the same way though no more survived than testimonies of which it had to be admitted that, in addition to Christ’s essential witness to Himself and the original preaching of His disciples, they also contained much in detail that had been misinterpreted, or inaccurately grasped, or set in a wrong light owing to confusions of memory.”

Again he wrote (*Christian Faith*. II, 596) implying that inspiration continues in each age: “Such authority we do not ascribe uniformly to every part of our Holy Scriptures, but only in proportion as the writers attained to the condition just described, so that casual expressions and

what are merely side-thoughts do not possess the same degree of normativeness as belongs to whatever may at each point be the main subject. Nor is it meant that every late presentation must be uniformly derived from the Canon or be germinally contained in it from the first. For since the Spirit was poured out on all flesh, no age can be without its own originality in Christian thinking. Yet, on the one hand, nothing can be regarded as a pure product of the Christian Spirit except so far as it can be shown to be in harmony with the original products; on the other hand, no later product possesses equal authority with the original writings when it is a question of guaranteeing the Christian character of some particular presentation or of exposing its unchristian elements.”

N.B. It is the individual’s “God consciousness” that sits in authority over and gives credibility to the Word of God! Barth summarized his methodology thusly (*From Rousseau to Ritschl*, 313), “Perhaps after all he transformed pistis (faith) into gnosis (knowledge).”

B. David Strauss and the Scriptures.

1. His life (1808–74). Strauss was educated at Tübingen University after preparatory training at Blaubeuren. He afterwards became a curate at Klein-Ingersheim. As a disciple of Hegel, he went to the University of Berlin where he heard Schleiermacher with discomfort and formed a close friendship with Wilhelm Vatke (the mentor of Julius Wellhausen). Afterwards he lectured at Tübingen and in that context wrote *Leben Jesu* (1835). After his dismissal from Tübingen, he became a private scholar.
2. His *Leben Jesu* (1835) clearly reveals the view of the Enlightenment for the Scriptures—the lofty statements of Orthodox Catholic and Protestant confessionalism are not even dim echoes! Harris wrote (*David Fredrich Strauss and His Theology*, 42): “The presupposition on which the whole life of Jesus was written was a denial of the miraculous and supernatural in the world. The traditional supernatural interpretations of the events of the Gospels had no place in Strauss’ view of the world, and God’s activity was possible only indirectly through laws of nature.” The Scriptures of the New Testament were conceived as myths (legends). Strauss wrote *Leben Jesu*, 46), “We leave the writers in undisturbed enjoyment of their miracles; but we ourselves regard them as mere myths.” The resurrection of Christ is “nothing other than a myth” needing a mythological interpretation. In fact, not only does Strauss find it egotistic of Jesus to insist upon his divine nature, he concluded that if Jesus had really uttered such assertions, then he must have been out of his mind (*Leben Jesu*. III, 255): “But quite apart from any references to an alleged pre-existence, Jesus’ own utterances about himself in the fourth Gospel are of a kind which makes it difficult to determine his own personal self-consciousness from them. Whether a God who had become man would behave as the

Johannine Jesus does, whether in his speeches he would insist upon his divinity so strongly and incessantly, continually challenging the opposition of men to whom a divine ‘I’ speaking out of human lips is intolerable, whether a God who had become man would not find it wiser and more becoming to let his divinity shine forth more indirectly through the radiance of his humanity—about all this nothing definite can be said since the presupposition belongs solely to the sphere of the imagination. But a man, whoever he may be have been, could never have uttered the speeches about himself, as are put into the mouth of Jesus in the fourth Gospel—quite apart from those high-points which even pass over into a pre-temporal, other worldly realm—if his head and heart were sound.”

Therefore, our understanding of Christ is dream fabrication (383): “The more the disciples became convinced of this necessity, the more they made themselves believe that Jesus must have performed miracles . . . And so in their *enthusiastic fancy* (italics mine) without intending to deceive, they began to adorn the simple picture of Christ with a rich garland of miraculous tales, especially applying to him all the characteristics of the Messiah . . . till at length the real history was entirely covered, and in fact, destroyed by the ‘parasitic plants.’”

N.B. Strauss was not the philosophical thinker that Kant and Hegel were; he was practical, revealing the root results of the Enlightenment approach to religion. The Bible was discounted!

3. His influence. *Leben Jesu* had enormous influences upon theological progress in the nineteenth century in that it ushered in an era of the critical evaluation of the Bible in a manner that was not possible earlier. Orr wrote (*Progress of Dogma*, 42): “Three-quarters of a century ago an able and determined *assault* (italics mine) was made upon the Gospels, first by Strauss, in his *Life of Jesus*, then by what is known as the Tübingen school of criticism (under Baur). The result of this assault was, in Strauss’ case, to resolve the whole content of the Gospels into myth, and, in the hands of Baur and his followers, to carry down most of the literature of the New Testament to the second century, and to discredit its historical worth. Then came the reaction, till step by step, the Gospels and Epistles were reinstated in their place of honor, and the Tübingen school and its methods were themselves discredited.”
 - a) Strauss set in motion the famed “quest” for the historical Jesus (a portrait obtained by the so-called scientific method).
 - b) Strauss occasioned a great critical re-examination of biblical sources since they were non-apostolic and a-historical. First the Gospels came under scrutiny and then Baur and his disciples

encompassed the entire N.T. It was because Strauss and Baur rendered the sources so uncertain that theology sought to flee from history and take refuge in ethical or existential categories.

- c) Strauss also plunged the O.T. under the same critical evaluation through his friend Wilhelm Vatke who disciplined Julius Wellhausen (JEPD theory, a source document approach to collecting and dating sources).

N.B. Demythologizing the Scriptures did not begin with Bultmann although he is the twentieth century expression of that approach. Strauss was the first to carry out a consistent demythologization of the Gospels.

Harris concluded (*Strauss*, 281-82): “Strauss’ *Life of Jesus* was the most intellectually reasoned attack which has ever been mounted against Christianity. There have been other assaults more radical and bitter, others expressed in more vituperative language—one needs only to think of Voltaire, Bruno Bauer and Beuerbach, Kalthoff and Drews, Nietzsche and Overbeck, or on the more absurd explanations proposed in our own day, which are usually written either in the hope of gaining public attention, or alternatively, money—but no one since Strauss has so acutely concentrated on the crucial cardinal issues which must be dealt with. Strauss confronted theology with an either/or: either show that the Christian faith is historically and intellectually credible, or admit that it is based on myth and delusion. That was the alternative. Nothing less was and is at stake than the whole historical and intellectual basis of Christianity. If Strauss cannot be convincingly answered, then it would appear that Christianity must slowly but surely collapse.”

N.B. The Bible far from being divine, was trampled in the dust of the nineteenth century religious “rationalism”.

PARENTHESIS: The History of Religions School has a direct linkage to Strauss through Bauer at Tübingen University. Of the importance of the Tübingen School Harris has written (*The Tübingen School*, xvii), “It was the most important theological event in the whole history of theology from the Reformation to the present day.” Its major advocates were Herman Gunkel, Wilhelm Bousset and Adolph von Harnack. Von Harnack is most widely known to American audiences by his *History of Dogma* (7 vols.) and *What is Christianity?* Von Harnack reduced the essence of Christianity to a “kernel” (the central irreducible revelation) which he thought was Jesus in the synoptics—all else in the Bible is errant Hellenism (others argued the mythology of Babylon). From that “kernel,” he deduced things, facts as true revelation.

1. A kingdom of God as taught by Jesus (individualized).
2. The fatherhood of God.
3. The brotherhood of Men.

C. Karl Barth and the Scriptures.

1. His life (1886–1968). Barth was raised in the Reformed Church (liberal wing) and after several universities, sitting under Hermann and Von Harnack, he settled in a small pastorate at Safenwil. There he became increasingly discontent with Liberalism and wrote his *Romerbrief* (1919), the greatest theological shock since *Leben Jesu*. In 1921 he accepted a call to teach at Gottingen, then Munster, Bonn, and Basel.
2. Barth's theological framework or perspective is important to grasp. First, he believed that God is unknown unless he takes the initiative to reveal Himself (He is wholly other). Second, man is without the knowledge of God (even if he has the Bible) until he is directed to the place that God reveals himself (i.e., in the Christ event, Theology of Crisis). Third, the self revelation of God is always in the Christ event. Brown wrote (*Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, 251-52): "Barth's big point was that there was what Kierkegaard called an 'infinite qualitative distinction' between eternity and time, heaven and earth, and God and man. God was Wholly Other. In a sense Barth's position was the exact opposite from John Robinson's in *Honest to God*. Whereas the latter rejects the idea of God 'out there' and wants to find him in the processes of nature and human life, Barth sees God as utterly transcendent. He is not to be identified directly with anything in the world, not even the words of Scripture. Revelation comes to men in the same way as a vertical line intersects a horizontal plane, or as a tangent touches a circle. Because it is contact with the Wholly Other we cannot even describe it. All we can do (and all that the biblical writers can do) is to describe what they felt like after it."
3. Barth and the Bible. Barth was a helpful corrective to the anthro-theism of the nineteenth century, but yet this view of Scripture was not entirely void of the devastating effect of Kant and Ritschl.
 - a) Inspiration. Barth traces the doctrine of inspiration to the Reformers stating that they held to verbal, plenary views (*Doctrine of the Word*, 517f). Barth holds to verbal inspiration, but only in the self-authenticating Christ event. At once (and for a moment) the word of man becomes the Word of God. He wrote (*Doctrine*, 533): "Verbal inspiration does not mean the infallibility of the biblical word in its linguistic, historical and theological character as a human work. It means the fallible and faulty human word is as such used by God and has to be received and heard in spite of its human fallibility."

When asked how his view differs from the fundamentalists, Barth

replied (Godsey, ed. *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 26): "For me the Word of God is a happening, not a thing. Therefore the Bible must become the Word of God, and it does this through the word of the Spirit. Inspiration is not an attribute of Scripture but an event in which God uses the Scripture to communicate revelation."

- b) Fallibility. Barth describes the authors of Scripture as "fallible, erring men like ourselves." This, he argues, presupposes his case for errancy. He wrote (*Doctrine of the Word*, 529), "The prophets and apostles as such, even in their office, even in their functions as witnesses, even in the act of writing down their witnesses, were real, historical men as we are, and therefore sinful in their action, and capable and actually guilty of error in their spoken and written word."

N.B. Barth has no problem living with a fallible Bible because of his view of revelation. Since the Bible is only a witness to revelation, and not revelation itself, errancy makes no difference. The importance of Holy Scripture is its use by the Holy Spirit in an encounter to communicate the Word of God. As long as the Bible becomes the Word of God, the question of errancy remains irrelevant.

- c) Authority, since the Bible is not equated with the Word of God in a strict sense, is not in the Scriptures but broadened to three spheres: "the church, the Bible, and Christ."

IV. THE AMERICAN THEOLOGIANS AND THE SCRIPTURES.

A. Nineteenth Century German Liberalism

1. The Influence of Tübingen biblical criticism became discernible in this country as early as 1850 as New England Congregationalists and Unitarians questioned the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. By the 1890s such views had swept into the major seminaries precipitating the heated Modernist-Fundamentalist clash of the 1920s. Under the leadership of men such as Shailer Matthews (*Faith of a Modernist* and *New Faith For Old*), Walter Rauschenbush, William N. Clarke, and Harry E. Fosdick, the theological fabric of American theology was rent through a manner reminiscent of Strauss and Bauer.
2. The optimism of Old Liberalism was blunted by two world wars, but revived in the 1940s as Neo-Liberal—a somewhat chastened Old Liberalism under Walter Horton (*Liberalism Old and New*), John C. Bennett and H. P. Van Dusen.

B. Twentieth Century German Thought

1. Barthian thought has penetrated America since 1945 through the writings of Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr and (most recently) Dietrich Bonhoeffer; It has allowed many liberal institutions to use of traditional terms, but turns devoid of traditional content.
2. Barthian thought has more recently made large inroads into the Evangelical seminaries of our country leading to a denial of infallibility and inerrancy as integral to the construction and defense of the Faith. Recent example of this struggle in traditionally inerrantist circles.

V. THE POSTMODERN AUTHORITY IN THE EMERGENT CHURCH

The Emergent Church Movement is a reaction to what they see as the marketing of the church to unbelievers, and the failure of the “Modern” Church to communicate to postmoderns who need the gospel. At the very core of this movement is a shift in authority from external authority of the Bible, to an internal authority of mysticism. The Bible, exegesis, biblical, and systematic theology are secondary to mystical insights and the pragmatic needs of reaching postmoderns with a neoChristianity.

In Modernism, the center of authority shifted from outside of Man, to inside. In modernism this authority was based on rationalism, empiricism or a combination of the two. The method used still recognized logical coherence, but the logic was autonomous, divorced from any Scriptural control. In the Emergent Church conversation, Modernism’s method is rejected. The authority is still “internal” to man, but the internal intuition of mysticism. Irrationalism thus replaces logic and reason.

- A. Emergent leaders use traditional terminology which sounds as if they affirm the Bible, but in reality, they treat the Bible as “another book” of revelation alongside “the book of Tradition” or the “book of reason” as did Moderns.

Though Marcus Borg is not a key emergent church leader, he has exerted influence on emergent leaders like Rob Bell. Walter Brueggemann, OT scholar at Columbia theological Seminary call Marcus Borg, “a key force in the emerging “new paradigm” of Christian faith. Borg says of the Bible:

I let go of the notion that the Bible is a divine product. I learned that it is a human cultural product, the product of two ancient communities, biblical Israel and early Christianity. As such, it contained their understandings and affirmations, not statements coming directly or somewhat directly from God... I realized that whatever “divine revelation” and the “inspiration of the Bible” meant (if they meant anything), they did not mean that the Bible was a divine product with divine authority.” Marcus Borg, *The God We Never Knew*, 25

B. Emergent authority looks back to the early medieval mystics. When they use the jargon “ancient-future” they mean going back to an ancient view, but not far enough back to the Scriptures. They see the future in a selective return to early Christian mysticism.

1. In all mysticism truth is determined by an inner experience which cannot be validated or invalidated by objective criteria. This inner experience is assumed to be the Holy Spirit.

Mysticism, once cast to the sidelines of the Christian tradition, is now situated in postmodernist culture near the center... Too many people are nothing, as our shouting to us, because we give them neither an energy-fire experience of Christ nor the Christ of an energy-fire experience. We may help them apprehend reality through the rudiments of mystical speculations, but not the rapture of flow experiences... Mysticism (which Einstein called “cosmic religiousity”) is metaphysic arrived at through mind body experiences. Mysticism begins in experience; it ends in theology.

Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*

Preachers speak of the Bible as an instruction book or as the only data necessary for spiritual living. But this diminishes some critical elements of theological knowledge... Sola Scriptura also tend to downplay the role of God’s Spirit in shaping the direction of the Church.

Will Sampson, *An Emergent Manifest of Hope*;

2. All mysticism rejects the sufficiency of Scripture.

In the EC the Bible is not enough, it cannot stand on its own, but must be adjusted to fit culture, ethnicity, history. In the EC the Bible is merely descriptive rather than prescriptive. The Bible is only a pattern for doing theology, not the exclusive source of theology.

3. In EC the content of the message is changed, however slightly, with the change of medium.

It has been fashionable among the innovative pastors I know to say, “We’re not changing the message; we’re only changing the medium.” This claim is probably less than honest... in the new church we must realize how medium and message are intertwined. When we change the medium, the message that’s received is changed, however subtly, as well. We might as well get beyond our naiveté or denial about this.

Brian MacLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 68

4. Whenever experience is joined with Scripture, experience becomes the interpreter of Scripture rather than Scripture the interpreter of experience.

A spiritual tsunami has hit postmodern culture. This wave will build without breaking for decades to come. The wave is this: People want to know God. They want less to know about God or know about religion than to know God. People want to experience the “Beyond” in the “Within.” Postmoderns want something more than new products; they want new experiences, especially new experiences of the divine.

Leonard Sweet. *Quantum Spirituality*.

Faith is not simply intellectual understanding, or an act of human intention, or following some salvation “how to” manual, or assent to creedal formulations. Faith is not a matter of doing or even being, but an experience of becoming. Experiencing is faith’s most fundamental activity.

Leonard Sweet *Quantum Spirituality*.

The old paradigm taught that if you had the right teaching, you will experience God. The new paradigm says that if you experience God, you will have the right teaching.

Leith Anderson, current president of the NAE.

Post-moderns want a God they can feel, taste, touch, hear and smell---a full sensory immersion in the divine

Leonard Sweet, *Spiritual Tsunami*,

Faith comes not by hearing the Word of God, but by feeling, smelling, tasting and touching God. Empiricism internalized with mysticism becomes the norm for truth.

The power of the preached word is being augmented, and occasionally outpaced, by the impact of the visual. The primacy of music as an essential expression of worship is being challenged by congregations hungry for more direct means of engagement. Chuck Fromm, “The Impact of the Image” *Worship Leader Magazine*, Jan-Feb, 2005

The Word of God alone isn’t a enough, it is being added to and replaced by a sense based spirituality.

The primary source [ed. note: but not the only source!] of spiritual reading is the Bible. But we now recognize that in our love of Scripture we dare not avoid the mystics and the activists. Exposure to the great devotional literature of the church is essential. More and more people are turning to the great work of the mystics. Richard Foster has called us to recover Augustine’s *Confessions*, Bernard of Clairvaux’s *The Steps of Humility*....

Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*

To immerse ourselves in these great works is to allow our vision to be expanded by a great treasure of spirituality.

Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*.

The value of all these books as well as many not mentioned are indispensable to spirituality. Those who neglect these works do so to their harm, and those who read them do so for their inspiration and spiritual growth.

Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*

VI. CONCLUSION.

The purpose of this lesson has been to trace the doctrine of Scriptures in the Post-Reformation era in a setting when the entire philosophical world view has been both secularized and rationalized within the “closed system.” From Schleiermacher to Barth the Bible ceased to be the inerrant, infallible, verbal-plenary, self-authenticating Word of God and has become a subjective witness to religious experience. Barth’s understanding of the Scriptures was an attempt to explain the relationship of a transcendent God to human communication (revelation) but the Word, while elevated, still was subject to existential authentication. The influence of nineteenth century German thought penetrated America precipitating the Fundamentalist clashes of the 1920s while Barth’s influence is now increasingly seen in American Evangelicalism.