

OUR IMAGE OF WARFIELD MUST GO

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When the contemporary evangelical thinks of Old Princeton theology, if ever, the image conjured up is often one of a sterile, unduly cerebral Reformed orthodoxy. Images of ivory-tower scholars defending forgotten and irrelevant Old School Presbyterian doctrines dominate our imagination. Their harsh assessments of much of nineteenth-century revivalism, our own theological forebears, we find disconcerting. We remember that B. B. Warfield, in many ways their greatest teacher, wrote many critical articles on the higher-life movement and perfectionism and sharply criticized many of the central teachings of the young pentecostal and faith-healing movements. Even though we repeat verbatim and rightly value Warfield's views on the inspiration of Scripture, we find much of the rest of his teaching disquieting and largely ignore it.

This image of Old Princeton in general and Warfield in particular is hopelessly unbalanced. His unique contributions on a broad range of topics are forgotten by a generation that knew not Warfield. Yet precisely in these other areas we can learn much from his example. A reassessment is long overdue. In making such a reassessment, however, our concern should be to remain as faithful to our Lord and his Word in our generation as Warfield sought to be in his. Before we can make this reappraisal we must remind ourselves of Warfield's life and contributions to the Church.

In a letter to his mother dated February 19, 1921, J. Gresham Machen described the funeral of Warfield as the end of a theological tradition: "It seemed to me that the old Princeton—a great institution it was—died when Dr. Warfield was carried out."¹ With the advantage of hindsight we note not only that Machen was more correct in his feelings than he knew but also that his observation was literally prophetic of what transpired in 1929 with the reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary. A tradition had ended. The distinctive Princeton theology originating with Archibald Alexander (1772-1851) in 1812 when he founded the seminary, which continued in unbroken succession through only four professors—Alexander, Charles Hodge (1797-1878), A. A. Hodge (1823-1886) and Warfield (1851-1921)—spanning more than a century,² ceased with the death of its greatest

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¹ Cited in N. B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 310.

² Alexander taught theology at Princeton Seminary from 1815 to 1840. C. Hodge held the same chair from 1841 to 1878, teaching more than three thousand students. His son A. A. Hodge succeeded him and taught from 1879 to 1886. Warfield taught almost as many students as

apostle. Warfield's successor, Caspar Wistar Hodge, Jr. (the grandson of Charles Hodge), pledged to "teach the same theology they taught, and give myself wholeheartedly to its exposition and defense."³ But even the younger Hodge conceded that many held that this distinctive "Reformed Faith or Calvinism is dead today or at least about to pass away."⁴ He realized that Princeton theology had reached its highwater mark with Warfield and that now the tide was turning and going out.

Who was B. B. Warfield, and how did he come to embody in his own person so much of the tradition of Old Princeton? At the time of his death Francis L. Patton, past president of Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary as well as a close friend of Warfield, in a memorial address wrote:

Dr. Warfield was one of the three great masters of the Reformed theology who were not only loyal to its teachings but also active in its defense, the other two being the late Dr. Kuyper and his successor Dr. Herman Bavinck, both of Amsterdam.⁵

Patton had ample reason for naming Warfield with Abraham Kuyper and Bavinck in this Reformed triumvirate. Warfield enthusiastically promoted the works of Kuyper and Bavinck to American readers. While Warfield was at Princeton, Kuyper was invited to give the Stone Lectures in 1898, and Bavinck followed in 1908. These were published respectively as *Calvinism* (1899) and *The Philosophy of Revelation* (1909). Warfield also wrote introductions for the English editions of Kuyper's *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* (1898) and *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (1900). Another reason for thinking of these three together is that Warfield regularly wrote reviews of their works in which he recommended them to the American reading public—especially remarkable considering that, unlike Warfield, few Americans read Dutch and not many of their works were available in English translation. After the publication of Bavinck's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1911) Warfield cited it in several of his articles on perfectionism.⁶

C. Hodge during the years 1887-1921. Another son of C. Hodge, C. W. Hodge, Sr., also taught Warfield at Princeton and welcomed his former pupil to the chair held by his father and brother in 1887. Warfield was in turn succeeded by C. W. Hodge, Jr., in 1921.

³ C. W. Hodge, Jr., "The Significance of Reformed Theology Today," *Princeton Theological Review* 20 (1922) 2.

⁴ *Ibid.* 13.

⁵ F. L. Patton, "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield—A Memorial Address," *Princeton Theological Review* 19 (1921) 385. H. E. Dosker drew a similar parallel the following year in "Herman Bavinck," *Princeton Theological Review* 20 (1922) 448. H. Beets also numbers Warfield with Kuyper and Bavinck as among the outstanding Reformed theologians of his time in his article on Warfield in *Christelijke Encyclopaedia voor Het Nederlandsche Volk* (ed. F. W. Grosheide; 1931), 6. 432.

⁶ See "'Miserable-Sinner Christianity' in the Hands of the Rationalists," *Perfectionism*, vol. 1, 297 ff.; "'Die Heiligungsbewegung'" (New York: Oxford University, 1931), 1. 327 ff.; "The Victorious Life" (1932), 2. 569 ff. G. Marsden provides an illuminating sidelight to Warfield's relationship with Kuyper and Bavinck: "Warfield . . . was utterly mystified by [their] approach to apologetics which he described as 'a standing matter of surprise.'" Warfield's adherence to Scottish common-sense philosophy made it virtually impossible for him to understand the Dutch

After reading the ten thick volumes of his collected works, no one can doubt that Warfield was a master and defender of the Reformed faith.⁷ When the volumes were first issued by the American division of Oxford University Press beginning in 1927, however, there was so little interest in his works in the United Kingdom that no publisher brought out a British edition. This explains why his works are virtually unobtainable in that country. At the present time, however, they are sold and read far more extensively than when he was alive. The growing interest indicates the value and relevance of his contributions for today.⁸

These evaluations of Warfield's contributions and value, however, come from his friends and others sympathetic to his positions. Anyone wishing to be more objective could accuse them of bias or prejudice. As someone not identified with Princeton theology, John Vander Stelt provides a more critical assessment of Warfield's worth. "As professor, author, and editor, he perpetuated and in a certain sense, culminated the Old Princeton tradition. . . . In a period of great cultural restlessness and frequent attacks on Princeton orthodoxy, Warfield came to the defense of a number of key doctrines of Christianity."⁹

With these observations in mind it is remarkable that no biography of Warfield has been written. Mark Noll notes that the interest in the makers of Old Princeton theology has been largely ahistorical—that is, people are more interested in the writings and ideas than in the lives that produced the writings and ideas. Why is this true? The first reason is that their spiritual successors, American evangelicals, are more interested in their ideas than in their methodology or historical circumstances. A second reason is that their "institutional" successors, normally expected to show greater interest in methodological and historical questions, were unsympathetic to the theology they considered long out of date.¹⁰ Both factors have contributed to the neglect of the lives of the Princetonians.¹¹ In a small way this article seeks to remedy that neglect in the case of Warfield.

Calvinists' emphasis on the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian thought; *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University, 1980) 115.

⁷ B. B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield* (New York: Oxford University, 1927). This is an abridged selection of his publications. A more extensive bibliography of his diverse writings is found in J. E. Meeter and R. Nicole, *A Bibliography of B. B. Warfield: 1851-1921* (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974).

⁸ I. Murray, "Anglo-American Spiritual Unity," *Banner of Truth* 89 (Fall 1971) 1-2.

⁹ J. Vander Stelt, *Philosophy and Scripture: A Study in Old Princeton and Westminster Theology* (Marlton: Mack, 1978) 166. See the literature cited in this well-documented study.

¹⁰ M. A. Noll, *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) 11. Noll's introduction and anthology contain extensive bibliographical references on the major Princeton figures. The most complete biographies of the members of the Princeton School, A. Alexander and C. Hodge, were written by their sons; cf. J. W. Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander, D. D.* (New York, 1854); A. A. Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge* (New York, 1880).

¹¹ As a corrective see W. A. Hoffecker, "The Devotional Life of Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield," *WTJ* 42 (Fall 1979). For Warfield see pp. 124-129. See also his *Piety and the Princeton Theologians* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1981) 95-155.

I. EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield was born near Lexington, Kentucky, on November 5, 1851. His father William enjoyed wealth as a horse breeder. His maternal grandfather, Robert Jefferson Breckinridge, was a noted preacher, Old School Presbyterian theologian and educator who had served as president of Jefferson College, Pennsylvania, and was founder and president of the theological seminary at Danville, Kentucky. He was elected moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly and was temporary chairman of the Republican convention, renominating Abraham Lincoln as president in 1864. He authored a systematic theology entitled the *Knowledge of God Objectively and Subjectively Considered*.¹²

Those knowing Warfield only from his critics would be surprised to learn that as a boy he showed an early interest in the physical sciences, collecting "eggs, butterflies and moths, and geological specimens, . . . read Darwin's newly published books with enthusiasm; and counted Audubon's works on American birds and mammals his chief treasure."¹³ He maintained this interest in the sciences and his openness on the question of biological evolution throughout his life. Intent on pursuing a scientific profession, he saw no need to study Greek—but his protests went unheeded.

We know almost nothing about his spiritual development. Everyone in his family memorized the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, the accompanying Scripture proofs and later the *Larger Catechism*. At age sixteen he professed his faith and joined the Second Presbyterian Church in Lexington.¹⁴ Even though he was raised breathing the air of warm evangelical piety he had no interest in studying theology. His mother often shared her wish that her sons would preach the gospel. From his father he apparently inherited a reluctance to speak of personal spiritual matters. There was never a hint to his family that he was interested in studying theology, and later, after he announced his decision to do so, it came as a "surprise to his family and most intimate friends."¹⁵

The young Warfield was prepared for college in private schools in the Kentucky area, entering Princeton College with the sophomore class in 1868 and graduating in 1871. He was exceptionally outstanding in mathematics and the sciences. In February 1872 he began scientific studies at the universities of Edinburgh and Heidelberg. While at Heidelberg he made a decision that changed the direction of his life: He decided to enter the ministry. Naturally, he wished to enroll in Princeton Seminary. When he returned to America he worked briefly as editor of the *Farmer's Home Journal* of Lexington. Ironically the man so widely known as an editor of

¹² E. D. Warfield, "Biographical Sketch of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield," in *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Oxford University, 1927) v.

¹³ Ibid. vi. For Warfield's view on biological evolution see "On the Antiquity and the Unity of the Human Race," *Princeton Theological Review* 9 (1911) 1-25; *Studies in Theology* (New York: Oxford University, 1932) 235-258.

¹⁴ J. R. Mackay, "Benjamin B. Warfield—A Bibliography," *The Expositor* 24 (1922) 26.

¹⁵ E. Warfield, "Biographical Sketch" vii.

conservative theological journals began his career as an editor of a journal devoted largely to livestock. He kept this interest for the remainder of his life.¹⁶

Enrolling in the seminary in September 1873, he graduated in 1876. Already licensed to preach, he returned to Europe for further study. Before sailing he married Annie Pearce Kinkead on August 3, 1876. He studied that winter at the University of Leipzig. While there he was offered an appointment in the OT department at Western Theological Seminary in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, where A. A. Hodge had taught theology before succeeding his father at Princeton. Warfield declined. Despite his early reluctance to study Greek, he had now decided to concentrate in NT studies. He returned to America in 1877 and became assistant pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, Maryland.

II. WARFIELD AS A PROFESSOR

Not to be discouraged by their lack of success the preceding year, Western Seminary offered Warfield the position of instruction in NT language and literature. He was appointed professor and ordained the following year. During his nine years at Western he quickly attracted attention as a competent and rising young scholar. While there he published a joint article with A. A. Hodge entitled "Inspiration" (1881) as well as his acclaimed *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (1886). Francis Patton wrote that when A. A. Hodge died and the "question of his successor arose, our minds turned naturally to Dr. Warfield. . . . I recall today the delight with which Dr. C. W. Hodge welcomed his former pupil to the chair which his father and his brother had successively filled."¹⁷

Warfield was called to succeed Hodge in the chair of theology at Princeton at the age of thirty-six. After showing such promise as a NT exegete, some friends questioned the wisdom of accepting this direction. Remembering that Charles Hodge had concentrated first in NT exegesis before turning to systematic theology, however, Warfield followed his example and in 1887 assumed the duties at Princeton Seminary that occupied him for the next thirty-four years.

Patton also recalled the impression Warfield made on his associates at the time:

In his young manhood of those days Dr. Warfield was an imposing figure. Tall, erect, with finely molded features and singular grace and courtesy of demeanor, he bore the marks of a gentleman to his finger-tips. . . . His voice . . . had the liquid softness of the South rather than the metallic resonance which we look for in those who breathe the crisp air of a northern climate.¹⁸

¹⁶ W. J. Grier, "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield," *Banner of Truth* 89 (Fall 1971) 3.

¹⁷ Patton, "Memorial Address" 370.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Twenty years later as a pupil, O. T. Allis (who would later teach at Princeton and Westminster) remembered Warfield as "a tall, dignified, and impressive figure, ruddy cheeks, hair parted in the middle, sparkling eyes, and a graying full beard."¹⁹

As a professor, Warfield's favorite teaching device was the quiz used in a question-and-answer, Socratic dialogue. In this way he discovered the student's mastery of the assigned reading and his understanding of it. He sought to instill thoroughness in preparation and the ability to think under questioning. Allis recalled a session covering the subject of the miraculous. The responses of the students showed confusion and doubt. Warfield gently chided, "Gentlemen, I like the supernatural."²⁰

Among his colleagues Warfield was known for his warm sense of humor. One day as Patton and Warfield stood outside his house they saw a woman approaching. Since Patton was very nearsighted, he asked Warfield whether he should greet the woman. Warfield answered, "I think I would if I were you. It is Mrs. Patton."²¹

He served faithfully as a professor, almost never missing a class even under the most trying circumstances. Quite unexpectedly Warfield became seriously ill on Christmas eve of 1920. Until the Christmas vacation he had been actively at work and had met all of his classes with his usual punctuality. During the following weeks he recovered rapidly and by February 16, 1921, he felt strong enough to meet his afternoon classes. He seemed to suffer no ill effects from this strain. In the evening, however, he became quite ill and died about ten o'clock from acute heart failure.

III. PRINCIPAL WORKS AND HONORS

Though an outstanding lecturer, Warfield's chosen method of communication was his writing. "He was pre-eminently a scholar and lived among his books," observed Patton. With Ethelbert Warfield, Patton alluded to his retiring personality, which led him to reach his public through his writings.²² Among his major books were *The Gospel of the Incarnation* (1893), *The Lord of Glory* (1907), *The Plan of Salvation* (1915) and *Counterfeit Miracles* (1918).

In 1889 he succeeded Patton as one of the editors of the *Princeton Review*. A year later he became the chief editor of its successor, the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*. In these journals many of his works were first published. After he died, his will made provision for the collection and publication of these works. Ten hefty volumes were published, among them *Revelation and Inspiration* (1927), *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (1930), *Calvin and Calvinism* (1931), *The Westminster Assembly and Its*

¹⁹ O. T. Allis, "Personal Impressions of Dr. Warfield," *Banner of Truth* 89 (Fall 1971) 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 11.

²¹ *Ibid.* 13.

²² Patton, "Memorial Address" 370-371; E. Warfield, "Biographical Sketch" viii.

Work (1931), and *Perfectionism* (two volumes, 1931-32).²³ During the period from 1902 to 1921 he wrote more than one hundred lengthy book reviews. Feeling that he must keep his readers abreast of all movements in theology, he reviewed not only American and British works but also those in German, Dutch and French. Very rarely he would employ a pen name, as when he contributed an article entitled "Singing and Believing" to *The Presbyterian* and signed it O. L. D. Fogy.²⁴

Warfield's work was recognized by other institutions in America and Europe. He received the doctor of divinity degree from Princeton College in 1880 and the doctor of laws degree from there in 1892. He was awarded additional doctorate degrees from Davidson College in 1892, Lafayette College in 1911, and the University of Utrecht in 1913.²⁵ The theological faculty of the Rijksuniversiteit in Holland wished to recognize his contributions to theology on the centenary of the restoration of the university after its repression by the French during the Napoleonic Wars. This honor was all the more significant in light of the fact that this was a national celebration. According to the minutes of the faculty senate, when H. Visscher proposed the name of Warfield to receive the degree the motion was opposed vigorously by G. W. Kernkamp. He questioned the propriety of bestowing an honorary degree on a foreigner at a national memorial service. Following the discussion, the minutes record that the motion of Kernkamp "found no support."²⁶ Because of his wife's ill health, attending the ceremony was out of the question for Warfield, who wired and asked whether the degree could be conferred *in absentia*.

Abraham Kuyper wrote to congratulate him on the honor. Warfield with characteristic humility replied expressing his thanks to Kuyper: "I am, of course, very deeply sensible of the honor done me by the University of Utrecht in conferring this degree upon me. But I am not sure I am not even more honored still by the pleasure you express in it. I would almost rather you be pleased than I were honored."²⁷

Warfield was known primarily as a champion of orthodox Reformed theology defining Calvinism as the essence of Christianity. He vigorously opposed diluting the truth to make it more palatable to a majority. He once met the wife of the seminary president, Mrs. Stevenson, on a Princeton street, and she implored him: "Dr. Warfield, I hear there is going to be trouble at the General Assembly. Do let us pray for peace." To this he

²³ R. H. Nichols, "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield," in *Dictionary of American Biography* (ed. D. Malone; New York, 1936), 19. 454.

²⁴ Allis, "Personal Impressions" 12. The article is found in *Selected Shorter Writings of B. B. Warfield* (ed. J. Meeter; Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 1. 379-380. For a listing of his other publications during this period see Meeters and Nicole, *Bibliography*.

²⁵ E. Warfield, "Biographical Sketch" ix.

²⁶ "*Het voordeel van de Herr Kernkamp geen ondersteuning vindt*" (my translation). Found in the Minutes of the Faculty Senate of the Rijksuniversiteit, Utrecht (November 14, 1913) 314. The records are deposited in *Het Rijks-Archief Utrecht*.

²⁷ Unpublished letter of Warfield to Kuyper, December 2, 1913. Found in the *Kuyper Archief* at the Free University of Amsterdam.

replied, "I am praying that if they do not do what is right, there may be a mighty battle."²⁸

His name was linked inseparably with that of A. A. Hodge in refining the doctrine of the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture.²⁹ An article published in 1881 in the *Presbyterian Review* sought to define precisely what is meant by the term "inspiration." Furthermore it attempted to answer the objections raised to this doctrine in the areas of the authenticity of the books of the Bible, the accuracy of the Bible in incidental details, and its historical and geographical reliability, as well as the claim that the books and theologies of the Scriptural writers are contradictory. These matters occupied Warfield's attention much of the rest of his life. In fact, the articles found in the volumes *Revelation and Inspiration* and *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* secure his importance and interest for us. Even a cursory glance at the secondary literature dealing with Warfield indicates that we confine our scholarly interests to his views on Scripture, its inspiration and its authority. In at least one sense, however, this is most unfortunate. By concentrating only on Warfield's contributions to the doctrine of Scripture we neglect the richness and breadth of his views in other areas. As will be apparent later in this article, it is in these other areas that Warfield's example can help us greatly today.

Since he taught systematic theology for so many years, one other matter has posed an intriguing question for later scholars. He never considered writing his own systematic theology. He preferred, instead, to treat the great doctrines of Christianity common to all traditions. As a text for his own classes he used the three-volume *Systematic Theology* of his own professor, Charles Hodge. Warfield felt that "the time was not right for another effort in that direction because of the critical rather than constructive nature of the period in which we were living."³⁰

Patton recalled several reasons why Warfield never wrote a systematic theology text. In his teaching he employed the Socratic method based upon readings in assigned texts. He never wrote out his lectures in such a way that they could be the basis for a comprehensive systematic theology. In agreement with Samuel Craig, Patton wrote that Warfield "was less interested in the system of doctrine than the doctrines of the system." He was content to discuss particular doctrines across the whole range of systematic theology in lengthy articles that would not be convenient in a systematic theology as such. In addition he had little interest in philosophy and had not studied widely in the area. Such a knowledge is indispensable for constructing a theological system. With the wide diversity in philosophical

²⁸ Grier, "Warfield" 8.

²⁹ C. van Til, "Introduction," in *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948) 3-6. The joint article with A. A. Hodge is "Inspiration," *Presbyterian Review* 2 (April 1881) 225-260. For an early critical response from someone sympathetic with their concerns see T. M. Lindsay, "The Doctrine of Scripture: The Reformers and the Princeton School," *The Expositor* 1 (1895) 278-293.

³⁰ S. G. Craig, "Benjamin B. Warfield," in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952) xlii.

thought in Warfield's day, it would be much more difficult and demanding to build a truly systematic dogmatics than in the time of Charles Hodge. At the same time, more than one writer has pointed out how Hodge himself was not thoroughly familiar with philosophical movements in Europe or even aware to what extent philosophical presuppositions had influenced his own thought.³¹ Finally, perhaps the most important reason was Warfield's reverence for Hodge's achievement. Hodge had stated, explained and defended the Princeton position thoroughly. Warfield saw his task as defending, updating and extending Hodge's treatment. "Forty and six years was this temple in building [referring to Hodge's *Systematic Theology*], and Dr. Warfield was not the man to turn the key in the door of that temple and leave it to the moles and bats."³²

IV. WARFIELD AND THE SMYTH LECTURES

Warfield's admiration for Hodge's *Theology* helps to explain why he never thought it necessary to write his own. But this was not the only factor that limited his influence in his lifetime. Friends and relatives also noted his retiring personality, "a certain intellectual austerity . . . and aloofness" confining his attentions to a few intimate friends.³³ He rarely traveled outside the Princeton area. He did not participate in the work and deliberations of the Church courts as his predecessors had. Even his preaching was heard infrequently outside the Princeton community.

J. Gresham Machen, in commenting on the fact that students hardly saw him outside the classroom, drew attention to his devoted care of his invalid wife. Her illness began during his studies at Leipzig (1876-1877), which was also their honeymoon. While taking a walking tour in the Harz mountains they were caught in a terrific thunderstorm similar to that which so alarmed Martin Luther centuries before, causing him to become a monk. For Annie Warfield the experience was such a shock that she never fully recovered, and she was incapacitated the rest of her life.³⁴ She died in 1915.

Warfield seldom left her side except for his university duties and for never more than two hours on any occasion. He left Princeton only once in the ten years prior to her death. That trip had been a vacation that he hoped would benefit and in some measure restore his wife, but the attempt failed.³⁵ With his excellent health and varied interests he must have felt this restriction to be a handicap, but he continued his work with his pen. For conferences he prepared speeches or papers to be read *in absentia*. Only after she died did Warfield feel at liberty to travel. One of these trips

³¹ Vander Stelt, *Philosophy* 120-147; R. J. Danhof, *Charles Hodge as a Dogmatician* (Goes: Oosterbaan and Le Cointre, 1929) 172-193.

³² Patton, "Memorial Address" 386-387. For a description of how Warfield expanded the treatments of Hodge see Danhof, *Charles Hodge* 154-162.

³³ E. Warfield, "Biographical Sketch" viii.

³⁴ Allis, "Personal Impressions" 10.

³⁵ Stonehouse, *Machen* 66, 220. Machen described her trouble as "partly nervous."

was to deliver the Thomas Smyth Lectures at Columbia Theological Seminary in South Carolina. Ironically, the subject was the cessation of the *charismata* and the complete rejection of divine healing and miraculous cures for the Church after the apostolic age.³⁶ "A certain poignancy attaches to Warfield's work in view of the debilitating illness of his wife throughout their married life."³⁷ Over the years Warfield must have spent many hours reflecting on the question of divine healing and whether miracles were for the contemporary Church. The lectures offer a penetrating analysis of the claims to the miraculous in the Church and demonstrate the depth of his scholarship. With his high view of inspiration, Warfield was horrified at the presumption of those claiming direct inspiration from God for their prophecies. With his emphasis on pure doctrine and his untiring defense of orthodoxy, Warfield was dismayed at the attempt to prove trivial doctrines by appealing to spurious and equally trivial patristic and Roman Catholic miracles. With his rigorous logic he demonstrated the contradiction of the Christian Scientists' claim of divine healing and then visiting the dentist. After long years of lovingly caring for his wife, he pronounced the age of miracles closed—not because God could not perform them, but because his purpose was otherwise.

Unfortunately Warfield died before seeing the full impact of the pentecostal movement, not to mention the charismatic renewal in the churches. We can only speculate what his reaction would have been. It could only be simplistic, however, to assert as some do that his written critique is the "Reformed" answer to the charismatic movement.

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF WARFIELD'S EXAMPLE FOR TODAY

A complete assessment of Warfield's significance for evangelicals today is beyond the scope of this article. Many others have already put their hands to the task, as the literature already cited indicates. To illustrate his importance for evangelicals, however, I would like to draw attention to several areas of his work either ignored or deemphasized by contemporary scholars. The purpose here is not to examine in detail Warfield's treatment of any issue. It is, rather, to draw attention to little-known aspects of his work and in that way seek to stimulate further research.

The first contribution is his concern for the advance and progress of scholarship. The immediate objection we hear is that, at least, everyone does emphasize this aspect of his work. This is certainly true. The breadth and depth of his scholarship, however, is largely hidden. When we note his views on Scripture or the *charismata* we see only the tip of the iceberg. For example, in "On the Emotional Life of Our Lord"³⁸ Warfield mines a mother lode of exegetical nuggets on the human nature of Jesus. The

³⁶ B. B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (London: Banner of Truth, 1972 [1918]).

³⁷ C. Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 199.

³⁸ From *Biblical and Theological Studies* (1912) by the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary; reprinted in *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950) 93-145.

article contains no sloppy sentimentality, but no one reading it can look away without changing his conception of the man Jesus Christ. Another example, this time from the Oxford series, is the volume *Critical Reviews*. All of these are models of sharp, theological analysis and genuine wit. In a review of the *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* he chides the editor, James Hastings, for including the subapostolic fathers. "It is a true saying of a great man long ago that they would be better named subapostolic babies."³⁹

A third example, also from this volume, is the review of W. K. Fleming's *Mysticism in Christianity*. Warfield's assessment of "pantheizing mysticism" is particularly relevant today with the explosion of the practices of eastern religions, new age thought, and other aberrant forms of spirituality, including many within the evangelical Church. In this review he scores both the mystic and the rationalist:

The difference between them is very much a matter of temperament, or perhaps we may even say of temperature. The Mystic blows hot, the Rationalist cold. Warm up a Rationalist and you inevitably get a Mystic; chill down a Mystic and you find yourself with a Rationalist on your hands.⁴⁰

Similar examples are too numerous for counting. The point is not so much that he studied and wrote, or even that he did this so well. He is an example to us in that he published so much of such high quality. We in the Evangelical Theological Society need to take note.

A second area where Warfield could be of great practical help to evangelicals today concerns his advice on controversial issues that still trouble us. In 1887 and 1888 Warfield wrote two articles dealing with racial separation in the churches and society.⁴¹ In the first article Warfield, as a concerned southerner, traces the rise of segregation in the Church and shows the damage to a people caused by such a caste system: "It kills hope; it paralyzes effort; it cuts away all those incitements to endeavor that come with intimacy with those above us." Warfield called the Presbyterian Church to active programs to eliminate this injustice, maintaining that "simple preaching of the gospel does not reach deep enough."⁴² In the second article he argued that maintaining separate presbyteries for black Presbyterians was too high a price to pay for reunion with the Southern Presbyterian Church. He pointed out the contradiction inherent in the southern position:

An ecclesiastical body which proclaims itself the champion of the exclusively spiritual functions of the church demands, as the price of reconciliation with a sister body, the reorganization of the whole church on the lines of political and social cleavage.⁴³

³⁹ *Critical Reviews* (New York: Oxford University, 1932) 454.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 366.

⁴¹ These are reprinted in the sadly neglected *Selected Shorter Writings*, 2, 735-742, 743-750. This two-volume selection contains many of the shorter, more popular (but no less valuable) works of Warfield.

⁴² *Ibid.* 741-742.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 748.

Warfield would have none of the claim that the "spirituality of the church" prevents her from condemning sin of whatever kind in the social or political spheres of life. He predicted wisely the increasing alienation of the races and its harmful effects on American life. Our forefathers would have been wise to heed his advice—and we also. The implications for an evangelical response to the thorny problems of any place where racism is sanctioned are obvious.

Another problem vexing evangelicals today is the role of women in the Church. Warfield addressed the ordination of woman deacons in a little-known article, "Presbyterian Deaconesses," in 1889. This article is so little known for at least two reasons. It has not been reprinted in any of the collected editions of his works. More importantly, his view might come as an embarrassment to many of his conservative followers. "For it need not be denied that the office of deaconess is a Scriptural office, although it must be confessed that the Biblical warrant for it is slenderest."⁴⁴ Warfield finds the natural meaning of Rom 16:1 as warrant enough. His regard for the authority of Scripture was such that it would not allow him to explain away the meaning of the text. Any doctrine is established if only one verse teaches it. This does not answer all our questions concerning the role and ordination of women. Warfield's example for us, however, is to be open to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture.

A third question perplexing evangelicals is that of biological evolution. While emphatically teaching a Biblical creation and opposing a pervasive evolutionary philosophy, he was quite undogmatic about the origin of man. Warfield maintained a lifelong interest in the physical sciences in general and Darwinism in particular. We see this in three articles. "Charles Darwin's Religious Life" sketches the withering of Darwin's aesthetic appreciation as he moved from a theistic to a naturalistic position.⁴⁵ "Darwin's Arguments Against Christianity and Against Religion"⁴⁶ argues that science and faith are not incompatible. Darwin was not driven to unbelief by "science" or "logic." On the contrary: Darwin's "logic" makes science impossible.

In another vein altogether, "On the Antiquity and Unity of the Human Race" is required reading for any evangelical interested in the question. Warfield baldly asserts that "the question of the antiquity of man has of itself no theological significance."⁴⁷ For him the main question is the organic unity of the human race on which the whole Biblical plan of salvation is predicated. This position too may prove an embarrassment for some of Warfield's followers, but it nevertheless must be weighed and considered.

It is of more than passing profit to reflect seriously on one nonacademic aspect of Warfield's life. In contemporary America, where the evangelical

⁴⁴ *Presbyterian Review* 10 (1889) 283.

⁴⁵ *Presbyterian Review* 9 (1888) 569-601; reprinted in *Studies in Theology* (New York: Oxford University, 1932) 541-582.

⁴⁶ *Selected Shorter Writings*, 2, 132-141.

⁴⁷ *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968).

family all too closely follows its secular counterpart in the headlong rush into the abyss, we could profit from the example of his faithful and loving care for his wife over a period of thirty-nine years. Today we practice serial polygamy with reckless abandon, leaving any relationship in our quest for fulfillment or desire for "space." Granted that the Bible gives valid grounds for divorce, today we break up families for any or no reason. The evangelical Church needs to recover the Biblical idea and ideal of marriage. O. T. Allis observed:

I used to see them walking together and the gentleness of his manner was striking proof of the loving care with which he surrounded her. . . . Mrs. Warfield required his constant attention and care.⁴⁸

Warfield's example is important because it is so near to us in time. Our culture values youth and vigor, and those who do not meet these tests are euphemistically "put away for their own good" when we sometimes mean "for our own convenience." As we consider the merits of active and passive euthanasia, perhaps we should recall the gentler feelings of Warfield.

VI. SUMMARY

This article began with a call to remember a forgotten heritage. As it has sketched in rough outlines Warfield's career and accomplishments, we see a bit more clearly the necessity for honoring Warfield's memory. We also see that these efforts were not limited to those most familiar to us today—his defense of Scripture's infallibility, his criticism of the continuation of the *charismata* in the Church. As significant as these contributions are, it is also important to remind our generation that there was much more to Warfield. These other areas are striking, for they show us a man committed to serving his Lord in all areas of human existence. Warfield taught that salvation belongs to all of life and not only to academic theology or to the soul. Before we can recover his legacy we should remind ourselves, by way of paraphrase, of the words of John A. T. Robinson that he wrote in an altogether different connection: Our image of Warfield must go.

⁴⁸ Allis, "Personal Impressions" 12.