

THE PROTESTANT DOGMATICIANS AND THE LATE PRINCETON SCHOOL ON THE STATUS OF THE SACRED APOGRAPHA

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I. DEFINITIONS

A. Protestant Dogmaticians

By Protestant dogmaticians I mean those much maligned heirs of Luther and Calvin from the post-Reformation era of the seventeenth century.¹ They have been discounted since the Enlightenment for two reasons: 1) they resorted to system building beyond what is considered the dynamic genius of the sixteenth century Reformers. This, in turn, prompted the formulation of creeds and confessions, considered by most today to reflect a propensity for over-definition. 2) They resorted to the Aristotelian method of the medieval schoolmen in their post-Tridentine battles with Rome. 2

What we sometimes fail to realize is that their era demanded such response. Theirs, after all, was a different age requiring a different response to the freshly articulated Romanism of Trent, rather than that of the medieval schoolmen with whom Erasmus, Luther and Calvin had to contend. It was the special burden of the seventeenth century Protestants to make certain the Reformation experiment of the sixteenth century continued to thrive within the new context of a now militant counter-Reformation age.

Most of the Protestant theology written at this time, along with the confessions and creeds, was prefigured by the systematic challenges presented to them by counter-Reformation theologians

¹ The best treatment of the Lutheran dogmaticians on Scripture is Preus (1957). For Reformed scholasticism in general the most recent treatment is Muller (1987).

² For a survey of recent literature on this as well as a fresh assessment of Protestant scholasticism see Muller (1986).

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fighting for the very life's breath of the Latin Church.³ If we fail to sympathize with what Frederic Farrar characterized in his Bampton Lectures in 1885 as,

a period in which liberty was exchanged for bondage; universal principles for beggarly elements; truth for dogmatism; independence for tradition; religion for system... (Farrar 1886:358)

perhaps it is because we need to reacquaint ourselves with *their* age and its peculiar demands.

B. Late Princeton School

By late Princeton School, I have in mind specifically the legacy of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921). Warfield taught at Princeton Seminary from 1887 until his death in 1921. I focus directly on Warfield because it is my belief, as I have argued elsewhere,⁴ that he marks a distinct departure from the earlier Princetonian tradition of Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge by introducing German N.T. criticism at Princeton.

C. The Sacred *Απογραφα*

By sacred apografa I mean the final referent of Biblical authority in the opinion of the Protestant dogmaticians—both Lutheran and Reformed. These are the faithful copies of the originally inspired *αυτογραφα*. The latter word is derived from the Greek noun *αυτογραφα*, original manuscripts written with one's own hand; the former word is derived from the Greek noun *απογραφα*, meaning transcripts, copies from an original manuscript. By sacred *απογραφα* I mean those copies the Protestant dogmaticians regarded

³ Regarding the Lutherans, Preus maintains, 'It is worth remembering that scholastic method was to some extent thrust upon the Lutheran dogmaticians of the seventeenth century. Tholuck has pointed out that a scholastic method was first used by the Wittenberg theologians in an effort to fight the Jesuits with their own weapons' (Preus:xvi). Muller remarks regarding the Reformed, 'Note also that many of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century systems devote considerable energy to developing a theology technically capable of refuting Bellarmine' (Muller 1986:194, n.6).

⁴ 'B.B. Warfield's Common-Sense Philosophy and New Testament Text Criticism,' a paper delivered before the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, December 9, 1987. (The author is not a member of this society.)

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as faithful and authoritative copies of the original as opposed to
corrupted or unauthentic copies.⁵

It is not my intention to address to what extent the dogmaticians
fairly reflect the position of the Reformers since that is quite another
issue, though an important one.

I will begin with the Lutheran dogmaticians. I will then treat the
Calvinists, establishing that on the point of the sacred *απογραφα*
we have one more rare category that finds near complete agreement in
both families of the Reformation. I will then move briefly to the
early Princetonians, establishing a line of continuity. Finally, I will
conclude with Warfield, showing a significant break with the earlier
consensus.

II. THE LUTHERAN DOGMATICIANS

If the first generation of Lutheran reformers could be called 'ink
theologians,' to use Eck's words (Preus:207), because they believed
all Christian doctrine should be derived from Scripture alone, the
Lutheran dogmaticians must be seen as those who appended a
Protestant '*traditio*' onto *sola Scriptura*.⁶

⁵ For an excellent definition of these terms see R. Muller (1985)
under *autographa*. *Apographa* does not pertain to translations.
Translations were regarded as inspired to the extent they reflected
faithfully the content of the sacred *apographa*. Because, however,
only Scripture in the original languages can be the norm for theology,
the Lutheran Quenstedt argues, 'Versions of the Bible are the Word
of God in content and words, but the apographa are the Word of God
in content, words and very idiom.' (Preus:138). The Reformed
Turretin says, 'Although they are of great value for the instruction of
believers, no other version can or should be regarded as on par with
the original, much less as superior. Because no other version has any
weight which the Hebrew or Greek source does not possess more
fully, since in the sources (*apographa*) not only the content (*res et
sententiae*), but also the very words, were directly spoken (*dictata*)
by the Holy Spirit, which cannot be said of any version.... Although
a given translation made by human beings subject to error is not to be
regarded as divine and infallible verbally, it can be properly so
regarded in substance if it faithfully renders the divine truth of the
sources (*apographa*)' (Turretin:152;154).

⁶ Ladd has observed, 'Protestantism thus came very near to adopting
substantially the same false principles of hermeneutics, and of the
nature of scriptural authority, as the Roman Catholics themselves.
To a large extent in theory, and to a yet larger extent in practice, the

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The most valuable study of the Lutheran dogmaticians on Scripture is still probably Robert Preus's, *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians*.⁷ The first to respond to the Council of Trent, however, and so begin Protestant scholastic tendencies, was Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586) who is not treated by Preus. This is because for Preus, the dogmaticians do not emerge in their fullest expression until the seventeenth century. Therefore, we will return to Preus's study after a look at Chemnitz.

A. Chemnitz (1522-1586)

Chemnitz's statement on Scripture is critical, appearing in his exhaustive four volume *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, which appeared during the years 1565-1573.⁸ As a tribute to the importance of this work it is said in Lutheran circles, 'if the second Martin (Chemnitz)

Protestant theologians set up the tradition of dogma in the place of the fictitious tradition of unwritten apostolic doctrine, as a supreme authority through its influence upon the interpretation of the Bible' (Ladd 1883 vol.2:180-181). The key words here are *very near*. Regarding the Lutheran dogmaticians Preus is careful to note, 'Only Scripture in the original languages is the *norma normans* of theology' (Preus:138). The important parallel between Rome and the Protestants, however, is found in their both making *ecclesiastical* determinations as to the exact locus of Biblical authority. Specific ecclesiastical recensions of the Biblical texts were sanctioned. The Reformed did this by way of their confessions, e.g. the Westminster Confession (1646), The Savoy Declaration (1658), The Helvetic Consensus Formula (1675), as did Rome in The Decrees of Trent (1564). The Lutherans, however, made such determinations in the persons of their dogmaticians and their published statements on the texts of Scripture. On this see the accompanying chart. As with the canon of Scripture, however, Protestants maintained that they were recognizing God's providence working in and through the Church, while Roman Catholics maintained it was the Church's authority itself which gave the texts their authority and sanction.

⁷ This was a Ph.D. dissertation, *The Inspiration of Scripture as Taught by the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians*, 1952, written under the direction of Professor Thomas Torrance at New College, the University of Edinburgh. It was then published in Edinburgh in 1955. A second edition appeared in 1957 and this was reprinted by the Concordia Heritage Series, St. Louis, 1981 and is still in print, so far as I know.

⁸ I will be referring to the English translation, (Kramer 1971).

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had not come, the first Martin (Luther) would scarcely have endured' (Kramer 1971:24).⁹

In Chemnitz's treatment of the Decrees of Trent, he recorded the Council's statement on a given tenet and then responded accordingly. On Scripture, Trent set forth its case in the First and Second Decrees of the Fourth Session, on April 5, 1546. In the Second Decree, the *Vulgata Latina* was asserted to be the only authoritative edition of Scripture. The newly restored Greek text of Erasmus was officially put on the index of forbidden books even though the first edition had been dedicated to Pope Leo X and was commended by him.

Chemnitz spent most of his effort refuting the claims of Trent regarding the Roman Catholic Church's prerogative to be the sole interpreter of Scripture. This also included the claim that the Church had a fuller body of authoritative teaching beyond Scripture alone, as found in the on-going oral tradition. Hence, for Chemnitz, the issue at stake is still the Reformation tenet of *sola Scriptura*.

In section seven, however, he begins to address the issue of translations and their relationship to the original language texts:

But what if that common edition [the *Vulgata Latina*] has not rendered what is in the sources, whether it be Hebrew or Greek, correctly, suitably, and adequately.... Will one be allowed to prefer the fountainheads to the brooks (Chemnitz:201)?

The answer that Chemnitz derives from the Decree of Trent is 'no,' to which he replies:

Truly, this must not be tolerated in the church, that in place of the things which the Holy Spirit wrote in Hebrew and Greek sources something should be foisted onto us as authentic which has been badly rendered... and that in such a way that one may not reject them even after he has examined the sources (Chemnitz: 202).¹⁰

⁹ A good monograph treating Chemnitz's view of Scripture as compared with Luther's is Klug (1971). Klus sums up their relationship on Scripture as follows: 'Chemnitz stands between Luther and the theologians who followed after him as a true bridge over which Luther's theology, especially of the Word, was carefully carried, and not as an evolutionary rung in the ladder that led to a structuring of a theology of the Word quite different from that of the Reformer.... There is no real advance or development, other than a sharpening of thought and formulation.' (247)

¹⁰ There has been much controversy over the years as to just what the Council of Trent meant by, 'precisely the ancient and widely current (*vulgata*) edition that had been approved by long use within the Church for so many centuries ... should be held as *authentic*'(emphasis mine). There can be little doubt that the

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Chemnitz then refers to the findings of the Renaissance humanists, Erasmus and Valla, on the many problems with the Vulgate. He lists examples of distortions in the Vulgate that seem to support various distinctives in the belief and practice of the Roman Church.

Up to this point it looked as though the Protestants had everything their way. This was short lived. A very important shift was precipitated by a new debate concerning the pointing of the Hebrew text. I will not go into detail on this controversy, but allow me to sum up what was at stake. ¹¹

Protestant dogmaticians understood the post-Tridentine theologians' interpretation of *authentica* as referring to the Vulgate as superior to extant Greek and Hebrew texts when these sources differed. In September of 1943, however, Pope Pius XII released an encyclical, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, defining 'authentic' as applying 'only to the Latin Church and to its public uses of the Scripture; that it diminished in no way the authority and value of the original texts, Hebrew and Greek; that the decree in effect affirmed that the Vulgate was free from any error whatever in matters of faith and morals and so could be quoted with complete authority in disputations, lectures, and preaching — that, in short, the term had been used primarily in a juridical rather than a critical sense; and that there had been no intention to prohibit the making of vernacular versions from the original texts rather than from the Vulgate.' (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* s.v. 'Bible,' :454) Nevertheless, the first Roman Catholic English translation, the Rhemes New Testament, 1582 (Old Testament translated at Rhemes but published at Douay, 1609), reads on the title page, *The New Testament of Jesus Christ, translated faithfully into English, out of the authentical Latin... diligently conferred with the Greeke and other editions in divers languages*. This would have left the impression that priority was given to the *Vulgata Latina* over the Greek. Furthermore, even Bellarmine did not originally possess the clarity on just what *authentica* meant, as finally provided by the later encyclical (Brodrick:47). This all seems to indicate development on the interpretation of Trent's decree as found in the later papal encyclical, not unlike Warfield's *reinterpretation* of the Westminster Confession (on this last point see below under the heading **Late Princeton and B.B.Warfield**). Both Warfield and the Pius XII's 1943 Encyclical appealed to Providence for an explanation for this development.

¹¹ On this debate see Ladd (189-191); Bruce (1970:154-62); Freiday (1979:9-11;89-95); Bowman (1948); Gundry (1967); Muller (1980); Letis (1987A:35-70).

B. The Hebrew Vowel Points.

Both Luther and Calvin had admitted the pointing in the accepted Hebrew text of their day could be wrong at times and so felt nothing crucial was at stake (Muller 1980:53-54). When once it was suggested, however, that the system of pointing was the result of the Massorettes and not Moses or Ezra; and because of Jewish hostilities towards the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament the pointing had been adversely influenced by the Jews, *sola Scriptura* began to look tenuous. John Bowman has provided a good assessment of the debate:

It would be quite erroneous...to form the opinion that the Protestants and Roman Catholics held opposing views on the points, merely to be consistent in their opposition to one another. The skein is more tangled than that. In claiming the late origin of the vowel-points, the Roman Catholics saw a way of championing the Vulgate translation as more reliable than the present Massoretic Hebrew text, which latter was regarded by Protestants as the very Word of God. Further, if the introduction of the Massoretic points was late, no one could have learned the Scriptures without the oral tradition of the Jewish church. The Protestants were professed antitraditionalists; they refused to accept the tradition of the Church of Rome, yet accepted the results of the tradition of the Jewish church. In this way the Catholics sought to show Protestant inconsistency (Bowman:47).

In fact, John Morinus, a former French Protestant turned Roman Catholic priest argued, 'God gave the Old Testament without vowels because he desired men to follow the church's interpretation, not their own, for the Hebrew tongue without vowels as it was given is a 'very nose of wax'' (Bowman:51-52).

It was the Jesuit Bellarmine who used this argument with the most force. He argued that an earlier, authentic and uncorrupted form of the Hebrew text was employed by Jerome and for that reason only the *Vulgata Latina* can now be trusted (Muller 1980:56).¹² As Richard Muller has recognized, this lifted the issue of the *correct edition* of the original language texts 'to doctrinal status' (Muller 1980:63). For Protestants this was the ecclesiastical recension of the medieval Greek Church; for the Roman Catholics it was a theoretical textual base underlying the medieval Latin recension.

¹² Bellarmine's biographer assessed Bellarmine as 'only an amateur Hebraist.' (Brodrick 1961:46)

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C. Gerhard (1582-1637)

In response to this claim of Bellarmine and others, Gerhard argued for the providential preservation of the *απογραφα*:

Divine Providence did not permit those books to be corrupted and perverted; otherwise, the foundation of the church would totter and fall.... Were one to grant that something in Holy Scripture was changed, most of its genuine authority would disappear. On the other hand, however, Christ declares, Matt. 5:18 'Until heaven and earth pass away, not a iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.' Also Luke 16:17: 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.'... Just as Paul testifies that 'the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God,' namely, those described in the books of the Old Testament, Rom. 3.2; so too, we can say in regard to the primitive Christian Church that it is entrusted with the oracles of God described in the books of the New Testament. You see, it has received the autographs from the very evangelists and apostles and has faithfully preserved them in the patriarchal churches so that they could correct the copies [*apografa*] and other versions according to the tenor of the autographs (Gerhard:505; 502).¹³

D. Quenstedt (1617-1688)

Quenstedt took up the theme of preservation of autographic quality in the *απογραφα* and gave it further specificity:

Our argument runs as follows: every holy Scripture which existed at the time of Paul was *theopneustos* (2 Tim. 3:16) and authentic. Not the autographic (for they had perished long before), but the apographic writings existed at the time of Paul. Therefore the apographic Scripture also is *theopneustos* and authentic.... For although inspiration and divine authority inhered originally in the *αυτογραφα*, these attributes belong

¹³ I believe J.S.K.Reid misses Gerhard's meaning when he argues, 'Gerhard, on the other hand, is rather stricter, holding that only the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts are authentic.' Rather, Gerhard quotes with approval Sixtus of Sena who said, 'We say that this Greek codex which we are now reading in the church is the very same one which the Greek Church used at the time of Jerome and all the way back to the days of the apostles; it is true, genuine, faithful and contaminated by no fault of falsehood, as a continual reading of all Greek fathers shows very clearly' (Gerhard:553). It appears Reid has confused the Lutheran dogmatician's arguments in favour of the exclusive authority of the original *language* texts against versions, with an argument for the exclusive authority of the original *autographic* texts, a decidedly later position.

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to the *απογραφα* by virtue of their derivation [radicaliter], since they were faithfully transcribed from them so that not only the sense but also the words were precisely the same (Preus:48).¹⁴

Elsewhere, Quenstedt was even more detailed:

Not only the Canonical books of the sacred volume themselves, but even the letters, points, and words of the original text survive without any corruption, that is, the Hebrew text of the O[ld] T[estament]...and also the Greek text of the N[ew] T[estament]...have been preserved by the divine providence complete and uncorrupted (Piepkorn 1965:589).

E. Baier (1647-1695) and Musaeus (1613-1681)

Preus records of these two,

Baier, following Musaeus, maintains that the *απογραφα* can rightly be called inspired since they possess the same *forma*, or content, as the autographic Scriptures. All the *απογραφα* have been either mediately or immediately copied from the *αυτογραφα*. Hence to day, in spite of the many codices extant with their many material variations, the meaning or the inspired sense of the *αυτογραφα* is with us (Preus:48).

F. Hollaz (1648-1713)

Hollaz 'seems to go further. He asserts that the very words as well as the content of the autographic texts are today in the *απογραφα*. A good copy of an inspired writing is inspired like the original writing' (Preus:48).

G. The Status of the *Αυτογραφα*

Preus notes that the decisive issue for Lutherans in this debate with Rome never centred around the nature of the theoretical

¹⁴ Reid also misses Quenstedt's meaning, asserting, 'Quenstedt holds ... inspiration applies to original manuscripts or autographa, not properly to the apographa' (Reid 1957:88). Yet a few lines later he admits that for Quenstedt, 'a good copy is inspired like the original writing' (?) (89). G.W. Bromiley agrees with Preus and myself: 'Quenstedt, however, took the even more difficult position that the apographs are fully inspired because the words as well as the content of the autographs are substantially retained in them' (Bromiley 1978:320).

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autographic text; ¹⁵ this would grant precious ground to the Roman theologians:

Most Catholic teachers would have granted that the ancient Greek and Hebrew *αυτογραφα* were authentic. They argued that the MSS which we have today, however, cannot be regarded as authentic because, after many years of copying, they have become corrupt and impure. This thought naturally led back to a discussion regarding the integrity of the contemporary text...Bellarmine contended that the Vulgate could not err because it enjoyed the approbation of the Church (Preus:139).

One of the major criticisms directed at Erasmus by Roman Catholic dogmaticians was that he was returning to the corrupted Bible of the schismatic Greek Church. Rome's theologians believed, based on the unerring authority of the Papal Church, that the *Vulgata Latina* alone preserved the original content of the autographic texts. In response to this clear-cut position of Rome Quenstedt offered the definitive Protestant response, aptly capturing both the Lutheran and Reformed sentiment in the seventeenth century:

We believe, as is our duty, that the providential care of God has always watched over the original and primitive texts of the canonical Scriptures in such a way that we can be certain that the sacred codices *which we now have in our hands* are those which existed at the time of Jerome and Augustine, nay at the time of Christ Himself and his apostles [emphasis mine]¹⁶ (Preus:48).

¹⁵ 'Dannhauer says that it is as needless and foolish to suppose that we must have the autographa today as to think that we need the cup from which Christ drank before the eucharist can be rightly celebrated' (Preus:49).

¹⁶ There were minority positions. Preus mentions that Huelsemann relegated inspiration 'properly spoken of only in reference to the original manuscripts' (Preus:48). Also, in the Reformed camp Curcellaeus, Cappelus, and Usher argued that while we could not always be certain of the integrity of the apographic text, no fundamental tenet of the Christian faith was disturbed by textual variants. Curcellaeus seems to be the author of this perspective (although most attribute it to Bentley in his response to Anthony Collins) that would eventually undermine the position of the Protestant dogmaticians. Bentley again takes up the position in England, Bengel does so in eighteenth century Germany and Tregelles employs it again in England in the mid nineteenth century. By the time of Westcott and Hort it has become a moot point.

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To this, Preus adds, after surveying eighteen of the most important Lutheran dogmaticians of the seventeenth century, 'This was the Lutheran position in a nutshell.'¹⁷

However, because the Lutheran dogmaticians also shared the seventeenth century with a developing, independent, philological tradition—the seeds of which were in Erasmus—the argument that 'the text of the Bible has gone through essentially the same changes which belong to all other ancient writings,' (Ladd:188) began to take its toll. G. T. Ladd argued that with the arrival of John Gottlob Carpzov, 'The necessity...for transferring the quality of verbal infallibility from any extant manuscript or manuscripts to an ideal non-existent text, became more and more apparent.'

III. THE REFORMED DOGMATICIANS

A. John Owen (1616-1683)

The publishing of Brian Walton's London Polyglot (1657) provided the occasion for the most systematic defense of the *απογραφα* by a Reformed dogmatician. John Owen, the leading Puritan theologian at the time of the publishing of the Polyglot was distressed at Walton's naked display of every variant to the N.T. text—sometimes with a significant degree of redundancy—known at

¹⁷ Preus is understandably a bit apologetic about the dogmatician's arguments for the absolute authority of the apographic texts: 'He (Quenstedt) would hardly have considered the apographa of his time in the same category as those which Paul and Timothy used. However, his statement indicates that he is not alive to the significance of the fact of variant readings' (Preus;49). I believe, however, that this position of the dogmaticians was in fact fashioned as a specific response to textual variants — those textual differences between the *Vulgata Latina*, which Roman Catholic theologians claimed came from superior editions of the original Hebrew and Greek texts, and the apographic texts employed by the Protestants and given to them by the Greek Church. Someone as early as Gerhard (d.1637) spends time treating these and other textual variants raised by Bellarmine (Gerhard:555-564). Furthermore, from Erasmus, Grotius and the London Polyglot, Quenstedt knew of an entire plethora of textual variants. I believe the arguments in favour of the absolute quality of the *apographa* were arguments in favour of ecclesiastical *traditio* (the Greek Church) preserving the correct recension of the Greek text (Erasmus also believed this but perhaps not with the same specificity as the dogmaticians) in deliberate response to textual variants.

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that time. Owen bemoaned Walton's list of textual variants that took up as many pages in Walton's Polyglot as did his entire N.T. text. To Owen, this constituted both a crisis and a scandal: a crisis because this left the impression that the very wording of the N.T. was greatly in doubt, a scandal because Walton had so indiscriminately published this for the world to see. Owen responded to Walton in his essay, *Of the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scriptures, 1659*. In this work, Owen argued the Polyglot gave material support to the Roman Catholic position by leaving the impression,

the original [language] copies of the Old and New Testament are so corrupted ('ex oro tuo, serve nequam') that they are not a certain standard and measure of all doctrines, or the touchstone of all translations.... Of all the inventions of Satan to draw off the minds of men from the Word of God, this *decrying the authority of the originals* [the ἀπογραφα] seems to me the most pernicious (Owen 1850-53:285).

Owen clearly understood the implications for Protestant authority in this threat from the Polyglot:

Besides the injury done hereby to the providence of God towards His Church, and care of His Word, it will not be found so easy a matter, upon a supposition of such corruption in the originals as is pleaded for, to evince unquestionably that the whole saving doctrine itself, at first given out from God, continues entire and incorrupt [sic] (Owen:302).¹⁸

In response to the claims of the editors employed in the Polyglot, that certain translations had greater authority at times than did the common Greek and Hebrew texts, Owen defended the ἀπογραφα:

Let it be remembered that the vulgar copy we use was the public possession of many generations that upon the invention of printing it was in actual authority throughout the world with them that used and understood that

¹⁸ Here Owen is addressing the more moderate position of Capellus, Usher, *et al.* which is while the traditional apographic text is not a near perfect replication of the *autographa*, no doctrine is at stake. Ladd notes correctly, however, the rationale of the dogmatists who argued contrariwise, 'the Bible is throughout the infallible Word of God, and that, if its text do (*sic*) not lie before us in autographic integrity, it cannot be the medium for this infallible Word.... It was urged...that, if a single concession were once made to the critics, they would not stop in their discoveries and demands until they had captured the entire field' (Ladd:188).

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language, as far as any thing appears to the contrary; let that, then, pass for the standard, which is confessedly its right and due, and we shall, God assisting, quickly see how little reason there is to pretend such varieties of readings as we are now surprised withal (Owen:366).¹⁹

Against the claim that there is a superior original language text underlying certain translations, Owen argues for,

the purity of the *present original copies* of the Scripture, or rather copies [*απογραφα*] in the original languages, which the Church of God doth *now* and hath for many ages enjoyed as her chiefest treasure (Owen:353). [emphasis mine]

B. Francis Turretin (1623-1687)

Moving to the Continent, a contemporary of Owen's, Francis Turretin, was making the same point in his *Institutio theologiae elencticae* (1688). From his post as Professor of Theology at the University of Geneva, where he was appointed in 1653, Turretin argued in his chapter 'The Purity of the Original Text,'

This question is forced upon us by the Roman Catholics, who raise doubts concerning the purity of the sources in order more readily to establish the authority of their Vulgate and lead us to the tribunal of the church (Turretin 1981:113).

Like Owen, Turretin refers to the 'original texts' as a *terminus technicus*:

By 'original texts' we do not mean the very autographs from the hands of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, which are known to be nonexistent. We mean copies (*απογραφα*), which have come in their name [*αυτογραφα*] because they record for us that Word of God in the same words into which the sacred writers committed it under the immediate inspiration²⁰ of the Holy Spirit.... Faithful and accurate copies, not less

¹⁹ Note the parallel in language between Owen's appeal to the common tradition of the Greek Church and that of the Council of Trent's appeal to the common Latin tradition in the Western Church: 'precisely the ancient and widely current (*vulgata*) edition that had been approved by long use within the Church for so many centuries...should be held as authentic.'

²⁰ The words 'immediately inspired' are important for Warfield in his reinterpretation of the Westminster Confession. It is his argument that by this the authors of the WCF meant only the autographs were inspired and authoritative. Whereas, while Turretin

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than autographs, are norms for all other copies...and for translations (Turretin:113; 128).

C. Reformed Confessions

While the Lutherans never codified this position on the sacred *απογραφα* in a confessional statement, the Reformed did. Thirteen years before Owen published his response to Walton, the Westminster Confession was drafted (1646) affirming,

The Old Testament in Hebrew...and New Testament in Greek...being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical. Chapter one, Section eight (Leith 1973:196).

Note that by using the word *authentical*, the Westminster Divines were sanctioning the Greek Church's recension of the New Testament and the common Jewish, Massoretic text in response to Trent which referred to the *Vulgata Latina* as *authentica*.

Later, in 1675, Turretin of Geneva, Lucas Gernler of Basel and John Henry Heidegger of Zurich, composed the *Formula Consensus Helvetica*, which stated:

God, the supreme Judge, not only took care to have His Word, which is the 'power of God unto Salvation to everyone that believeth' (Rom. 1:16), committed to writing by Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care ever since it was written up to the present time, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore the church justly ascribes it to His singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world, a 'sure word of prophecy' and 'holy Scriptures' (2 Tim. 3:15), from which, though heaven and earth perish, 'one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass' (Matt. 5:18). Chapter one (Leith:309-10).

Since the late nineteenth century there has been considerable debate about the authorial intent of the Westminster Confession on this

uses the same language as the WCF, for him the *apographa* also share this quality. Thus Turretin stands in direct opposition to Warfield's reinterpretation of the meaning of these words as they are used by the authors of the WCF. Furthermore, John Owen, like Turretin, also affirmed explicitly the inspiration and authority of the *apographa* and so recognized no distinction in the language in the WCF between immediate inspiration and the providentially preserved copies when adopting this exact language in his own Savoy Declaration. I am indebted to Doug Madden for bringing the point of the Savoy Declaration to my attention.

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point.²¹ However, we know for certain that the *Formula*, just quoted, was directed against developments at the University of Saumur regarding the authority of the Hebrew vowel points. Moreover, considering all the previous testimony surveyed thus far it must be evident that the Westminster Confession is but reflecting what was in the theological air at that historical moment, within both confessional Lutheranism as well as confessional Calvinism. Ladd well summed up the Protestant dogmaticians and their confessions on the status of the sacred *απογραφή*:

No relief was allowed to the dreadful pressure of the post-Reformation dogma by way of attaching the quality of infallibility only to the original text; for, to maintain the dogma in its efficiency, it was further claimed that the biblical text had been supernaturally preserved in infallible form (Ladd:182).

Why the Westminster Confession was subject to a new and different interpretation brings us to the Princeton Seminary of the late nineteenth century.

IV. THE PRINCETON SCHOOL

The Lutheran, Arthur Carl Piepkorn, in an essay written in 1965 treating the history of the recent use of the word 'inerrancy' in reference to Scripture, said of the position held by the Lutheran dogmaticians outlined above, 'This is a position which modern textual criticism renders untenable. As this has become more and more apparent, the claim of inerrancy has increasingly been posited only of the originals [*αυτογραφή*]' (Piepkorn 1965:589). B.B. Warfield provided the fundamental paradigm for this shift in Reformed circles and by the mid-twentieth century his influence began to make its impact on Lutherans as well.

A. Early Princeton

1. Archibald Alexander (1772-1851)

When the dogmaticians encountered a difficulty in the text occasionally they would ascribe this to an error in transcription. Because, however, for them the sacred *απογραφή* were authoritative, more commonly such problems, tended to be brushed aside. Verbal peculiarities and the well-known discrepancies

²¹ On this see Rogers (1966).

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continued to be ascribed to the accommodation of the Holy Spirit (Vawter 1972:81).²²

This reflected the feeling that all the phenomena found in the sacred *απογραφα* had to be taken seriously. Archibald Alexander, the first instructor at Princeton Seminary (1812), and heir of the dogmatic tradition of Francis Turretin, goes so far as to admit that minor errors in the text may have arisen not from scribal transmission but at the original time of composition, since the amanuenses of the apostles did not compose by inspiration. (Loetscher 1983:228)²³

2. Charles Hodge (1797-1878)

Regarding Charles Hodge, I agree completely with the judgement of Ernest Sandeen in an earlier treatment of the Princeton theology when he highlighted a controversial passage in Hodge's *Systematic Theology* (1872-73). Here, Hodge admits to small, unimportant errors in Scripture.²⁴ Again, this reflects an attempt to take

²² On this score Ladd cites the following example: 'The difference of readings, for instance, between 2 Sam.xxii and Ps.xviii was explained by assuming a double purpose of the Holy Spirit: differences in the spelling of proper names showed the freedom of the same Spirit'(Ladd:188). Preus also points out that Pfeiffer responded by saying contradictions 'simply do not exist. If Scripture seems to contradict itself we must confess our ignorance and say, 'Thus it has pleased the Lord to say much which seems wrong and impossible.'(Preus:85).

²³ Preus notes that, 'Some theologians at the time of the orthodox period had maintained a distinction between errors of the inspired writers themselves and occasional slips of the pen on the part of their secretaries, opposing the possibility of the former while granting the possibility of the latter, but to the dogmaticians neither possibility could be conceded' (Preus:78).

²⁴ The passage reads as follows: 'The errors in matters of fact which skeptics search out bear no proportion to the whole. No sane man would deny that the Parthenon was built of marble, even if here and there a speck of sandstone should be detected in its structure. Not less unreasonable is it to deny the inspiration of such a book as the Bible, because one sacred writer says that on a given occasion twenty-four thousand, and another says that twenty-three thousand men were slain. Surely a Christian may be allowed to tread such objections under his feet.... The universe teems with evidence of design, so manifold, so diverse, so wonderful, as to overwhelm the mind with

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seriously all the phenomena of the *απογραφα* as a final and authoritative expression of the Word of God.

B. Late Princeton and B.B. Warfield (1851-1921)

On October 20, 1880, A.A. Hodge wrote B.B. Warfield, then professor at Western Theological Seminary (today it is Pittsburgh Theological Seminary). Hodge pleaded with Warfield to co-author an essay with him in the young *Presbyterian Review* on the Princeton doctrine of inspiration in light of modern scholarship. Hodge confessed,

I can after a fashion restate the old orthodoxy *common*-place as to inspiration and fence it somewhat on the *a-priori* or metaphysical side, but I can do nothing on the side of stating or answering the positions of the hostile criticism, as to the alleged contradictions of detail (Hodge 1880A).

Hodge directed Warfield specifically to address 'the state of actual facts (as to the *New Testament*) in regard to the asserted inaccuracies—or contradictions' (Hodge).

In November of that same year Hodge posed the problem as he saw it with an explicit reference to his father's controversial statement in the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*. This is a particularly important letter because it provides us with A.A. Hodge's exegesis of his father's statement:

the conviction that it has had an intelligent author. Yet here and there isolated cases of monstrosity appear. It is irrational, because we cannot account for such cases, to deny that the universe is the product of intelligence.' By his metaphor it is obvious that Hodge allows for the presence of unexplainable phenomena in the apographic text which at one point he calls 'errors' (although he does seem to hold out the possibility that these may be resolved in the future). Since no other ideal universe (*autographa*) which is without such *monstrosities*, is referred to in his argument, unlike Warfield he thus concedes this element as part of the phenomena of Scripture itself since it is part of the sacred *apographa*. E.D. Morris came to the same conclusion in his major study of the Confession: 'Still it may be necessary, after all such explanatory processes, to admit that there may remain in the Scriptures as we now possess them what has been well described, (Hodge, Syst. Theol.) as here or there a speck of sand-stone showing itself in the marble of the Parthenon — an occasional variation, difference or even discrepancy of statement which, so far as we can see, may have been in the original text as written by holy men moved by the Holy Ghost.' *Theology of the Westminster Symbols* (Columbus: n.p., 1900):88.

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But the question remains was this book [the Bible] with its (1) human (2) oriental & (3) Hebrew characteristics *intended to stand the test of microscopic criticism as to its accuracy in matters of indifferent detail?* It appears that my father [Charles Hodge] was speaking of the possibility of infinitesimal inaccuracies of no importance relating to the end designed, in *Systematic Theology* Vol. I, p. 170. I say so too—very heartily. But the question remains what degree of minute accuracy do the facts prove that God designed to effect? That is for you critics and exegetes to determine (Hodge 1880B).²⁵

This invitation and challenge to Warfield placed an immense burden of responsibility on his shoulders. When Sandeen judges that 'Princeton Theology, especially in its latter days, continually fell victim to this besetting sin of pride, unable to make any distinction between Paul and Princeton' (Sandeen 1962:313), I am tempted to alter his words. They seemed not to be able to make out the difference between the Westminster Divines and the Protestant scholastic tradition they represented, and B.B. Warfield.

In order to answer this call to come to the rescue of Princeton, Warfield found it necessary to demythologise the Westminster Confession of Faith. Furthermore, when he accomplished his mission he looked back over his shoulder to discover he single-handedly converted to his perspective most of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1893. (Rogers: 396).

In the process, however, he destroyed forever the dogmatician's view of the sacred *απογραφα*. For Warfield, the Westminster Confession no longer taught providential *preservation* of the text

²⁵ A.A.Hodge's instincts as reflected in this assessment seemed to be quite good. Were it not for Warfield's influence he may have carried on the Old Princeton tradition with but slight modification as opposed to Warfield's radical new agenda. Sandeen noted that A.A.Hodge made no reference to original autographs in his first (1860) edition of his *Outlines of Theology*, but added these words to his 1879 edition. (Sandeen:316) Whether this was a result of Warfield's influence, or that of Francis Patton, who argued in a similar vein (1869:112-115), I have not yet been able to determine. Patton differed from Warfield, however, in acknowledging that the *apographa* were inspired to the extent that they reflected autographic content. Furthermore, he did not feel the common text needed to be replaced with an earlier recension, as did Warfield. For Patton, the common text represented 'an infallible autograph' that 'has been perpetuated by the industry of transcribers, and has been changed only in some unimportant details through the mistakes of copyists.' (115)

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but rather its providential *restoration* in the latter part of the nineteenth century. ²⁶

In his treatise on inspiration, co-authored by A.A. Hodge, he felt himself completely in keeping with the authentic teaching of the Confession when he argued,

We do not assert that the common text, [απογραφα] but only that original autographic text was inspired. No 'error' can be asserted, therefore, which cannot be proved to have been aboriginal in the text (Warfield/Hodge 1881:238).

With this strategy, Warfield won the battle but he may have lost the war that seemed so critical to the Protestant dogmaticians. As perhaps the leading American authority on the state of New Testament text critical matters in the late nineteenth century, he thought it necessary to then go on a crusade against the uninspired *απογραφα*.

On December 2, 1882, he demonstrated how serious he was about his agenda. In the lay publication, *Sunday School Times*, he asserted to the reading Christian public that Mark's long ending was 'no part of God's word.' Therefore, 'we are not then to ascribe to these verses the authority due to God's Word' (Warfield 1882:755-56). No Princetonian prior to this had ever doubted the canonical authority of these verses. This is all the more provocative in light of Bruce Metzger's recent judgement on these verses in his monograph treating the canon. Here, Metzger accords the long ending canonical status, even though it is not Markan (Metzger 1987:269-270). ²⁷

²⁶ He did so by arguing, 'In the sense of the Westminster Confession, therefore, the multiplication of the copies of the Scriptures, the several early efforts towards the revision of the text, the raising up of scholars in our own day to collect and collate MSS., and to reform the text on scientific principles — of our Tischendorfs, and Tregelleses, and Westcotts and Hort — are all parts of God's singular care and providence in preserving (=restoring) His inspired Word pure' (Warfield 1931:239).

²⁷ 'Already in the second century, for example, the so-called long ending of Mark was known to Justin Martyr and to Tatian, who incorporated it into his *Diatesseron*. There seems to be good reason, therefore, to conclude that, though external and internal evidence is conclusive against the authenticity of the last twelve verses as coming from the same pen as the rest of the gospel, the passage ought to be accepted as part of the canonical text of Mark.'

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However, all was not gloom and doom. Warfield held out hope, promising,

The inerrant autographs were a fact once; they may possibly be a fact again, when textual criticism has said its last word on the Bible text. In proportion as they are approached in the processes of textual criticism, do we have an ever better and better Bible than the one we have now (Warfield 1892:557).²⁸

Warfield's new proposal did not go unanswered.

C. Some Responses to Warfield

1. Preserved Smith (1847-1927)

The American church historian, Preserved Smith, protested Warfield's reinterpretation of the Westminster Confession in the following terms:

Warfield in an article in the *Presbyterian Review* stated the doctrine [inerrancy] is not concerned with the accuracy of our present Bible, but interests itself in affirming a perfection of the original autographs which has in some cases at least been lost in transmission.... None the less does the new theory depart widely from the confessional doctrine. That the Word of God as we now have it in Scripture is infallible...this is the affirmation of the Confession. Its interest is in the present Bible for present purposes, and those purposes are practical purposes. That an inerrant autograph once existed is a speculative assertion, interested in establishing a supposed perfection which no longer exists, and which may conceivably (and even probably) never be recovered (Smith 1893:144).

2. Thomas Lindsay (1843-1914)

The Scotchman, Thomas Lindsay, was even less forgiving:

But when all is said they are bound to admit [Warfield and his advocates] that the attribute of formal inerrancy does not belong to the Scriptures which we now have, but to what they call...the original autographs of Scripture.... It follows that the Scriptures as we now have them are neither infallible nor inspired in their use of these words. This is not an inference drawn from their writings by a hostile critic. It is frankly and courageously said by themselves, 'We do not assert that the common text, but only that the original autographic text was inspired.' The statement is deliberately made by Dr.Hodge and Dr. Warfield. This is a very grave assertion, and shows to what lengths the School are driven to maintain their theory, and it is one which cannot fail, if seriously believed and thoroughly acted upon, to lead to sad conclusions both in the theological doctrine of Scripture and

²⁸ Note by contrast Dannhauer's remark from the seventeenth century in footnote fifteen.

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in the practical work of the Church.... Where are we to get our errorless Scripture? In the *ipsissima verba* of the original autographs? Who are to recover these for us? I suppose the band of experts in textual criticism who are year by year giving us the materials for a more perfect text. Are they to be created by-and-by when their labours are ended into an authority doing for Protestants what the 'Church' does for Roman Catholics? Are they to guarantee for us the inspired and infallible Word of God, or are we to say that the unknown autographs are unknowable, and that we can never get to this Scripture, which is the only Scripture inspired and infallible in the strictly formal sense of those words as used by the Princeton School? I have a great respect for textual and historical Biblical critics, and have done my share in a humble way to obtain a recognition of their work, but I for one shall never consent to erect the scholars whom I esteem into an authority for that text of Scripture which is alone inspired and infallible. That, however, is what this formalist theory is driving us to if we submit to it. I maintain, with all the Reformers, and with all the Reformed Creeds, that the Scriptures, as we now have them, are the inspired and infallible Word of God, and that all textual criticism, while it is to be welcomed in so far as it brings our present text nearer the *ipsissima verba* of the original autographs, will not make the Scriptures one whit more inspired or more infallible in the true Scriptural and religious meanings of those words than they are now (Lindsay 1895:291-293).

3. Henry Grey Graham (1874-1959)

I conclude my account of some responses to Warfield with a statement by an early twentieth century Roman Catholic bishop. While the bishop's remarks are not directed at Warfield specifically, they offer a cogent testimony to the fact that Warfield's appeal to the *αυτογραφα* brought the Protestant view of Scripture, as Lindsay argued, closer to the Roman Catholic view. The following quotation is all the more important because it came from the pen of a former Church of Scotland minister who holds the distinction of being the only convert to the Roman communion from the Scottish Presbyterian Church ever to be made a bishop.²⁹ The Rt. Rev. Henry Grey Graham wrote the following in his popular essay on *Where We Got the Bible* (1911):

Pious Protestants may hold up their hands in horror and cry out, 'there are no mistakes in the Bible! it is all inspired! it is God's own book?' Quite true, *if you get God's own book*, the originals as they came from the hand of the Apostle, Prophet, and Evangelist. These, and these men only, were inspired and protected from making mistakes.... The original Scripture is free from error, because it has God for its author; *so teaches the Catholic*

²⁹ For a brief treatment of Graham see my forth-coming entry on him as it will appear in the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*.

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Church;...but that does not alter the fact that there are scores, nay thousands, of differences in the old manuscripts...and I should like any enquiring Protestants to ponder over this fact and see how they can possibly reconcile it with their principle that the Bible alone is the all-sufficient guide to salvation. Which Bible? Are you sure you have got the right Bible?... You know perfectly well that you must trust to some authority outside of yourself to give you the Bible.... We Catholics, on the other hand, glory in having some third party to come between us and God, because God Himself has given it to us, namely, the Catholic Church, to teach us and lead us to Him (Graham 1924:64-65).

V. CONCLUSION

There was a general consensus among the Protestant dogmaticians of the seventeenth century that the *απογραφα* were inspired and authoritative. This position was a deliberate response to the Council of Trent and the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation theologians.

While the dogmaticians held to a verbal view of inspiration and regarded the *απογραφα* as infallible³⁰ this view was generally held in tension with all the phenomena in the *απογραφα* exhibiting a conflict with this notion. To appeal to a superior autographic text would have meant playing into the hands of the defenders of the Vulgate who argued that it was based on superior original language texts, closer to the original text.

In order to rescue Princeton, at the invitation of A.A. Hodge, Warfield shifted authority from the *απογραφα* to the *αυτογραφα*. To do this he demythologized the Westminster Confession, arguing that it taught the *αυτογραφα* alone were inspired and authoritative. In so doing, he made an important departure from not only the position of the Westminster Divines but from the paradigm of Biblical authority advanced by nearly all the

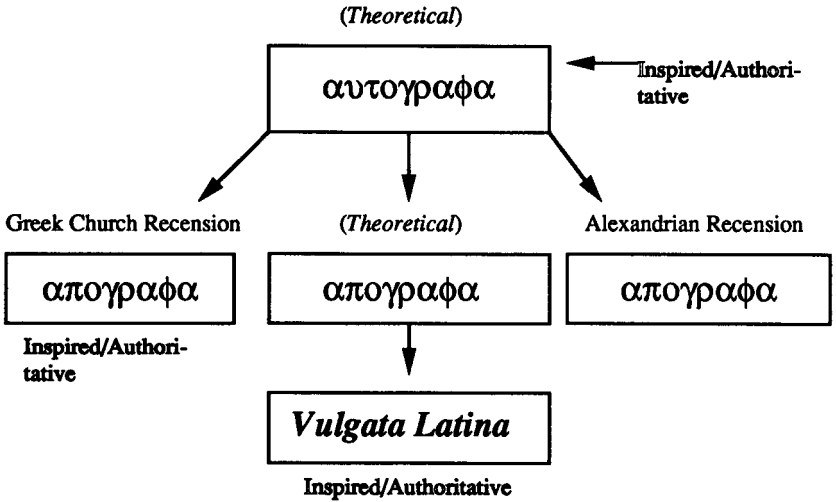
³⁰ Modern day advocates who have attempted to prove Warfield's thesis regarding the meaning of the confession on the Biblical texts have run into a brick wall when resorting to history to make their point: they have been forced to admit, 'It is true that in the seventeenth century a good number of Christians esteemed that the Bibles they had in their hands were infallible' (Woodbridge/Balmer 1983:405, n.106); 'Some Englishmen apparently did think that their Bibles perfectly reflected the originals' (Woodbridge 1982: 187, n.64).

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 major seventeenth century Protestant dogmaticians in response to
 Tridentine Roman Catholicism. 31

Protestant Dogmaticians

Roman Catholics

B.B. Warfield



Based on:
 Providential
 Preservation

Based on:
 Ecclesiastical
 Authentication

Based on:
 Providential
 Restoration

Latin Vulgate
 corrupt

απογραφα
 generally
 corrupt

Latin Vulgate
 and
 απογραφα
 corrupt

31 One of the historical ironies of this development is the inescapable loss of awe and reverence for the existential Bible as sacred text in confessing communities and in the culture at large. David E. Timmer, in an editorial in the *Reformed Journal* treating the NIV's paraphrase of Genesis 2:8;19 took this occasion to note, 'The principle of inerrancy, so often invoked to preserve Scripture from disrespect, has in this case led to flagrant disrespect for what Scripture actually is and says' (Timmer 1984:2-3).

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