ADMISSIBLE CHRISTIANITY

A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM IN THE WRITINGS OF JAMES BARR

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Desmond A. Mc Donnell

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The Vision of Christ that thou dost see
Is my Vision's Greatest Enemy:
Thine has a great hook nose like thine,
Mine has a snub nose like to mine:
Thine is the friend of All Mankind,
Mine speaks in parables to the Blind:
Thine loves the same world that mine hates,
Thy Heaven doors are my Hell Gates.
Socrates taught what Meletus
Loath'd as a Nation's Bitterest Curse,
And Ca(i)a)phas was in his own Mind
A benefactor to Mankind:
Both read the Bible day and night,
But thou read'st black where I read white.

William Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*
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FOREWORD

Christian fundamentalism is becoming a potent force in Western society. Its influence has been felt not only within the context of religion but also in education and public affairs. Research has been conducted, particularly in the United States, on various aspects of this influence. But attempts to apply the canons of academic enquiry to the theological doctrines and theological methodology of fundamentalism have been few. The history and political influence of fundamentalism, and the psycho-social character of fundamentalists, have been seriously considered. But academic theology appears to have almost totally rejected fundamentalist theology as obsolete and not a subject worthy of serious attention. There is reason, however, to question this judgement. The number of educated adherents of fundamentalism, and the discoveries of those who have sympathetically considered its claims, suggest that, far from being anti-intellectual, many fundamentalists place considerable confidence in reasonable discourse and scientific endeavour. There has been an urgent need for theology to take these observations seriously.

James Barr has taught Old Testament Studies in a number of theological faculties and is at present the Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford. Fundamentalism has been for him an enduring concern. He published his first major study on this subject in 1977. Fundamentalism, published by S.C.M. Press, remains the most theologically sophisticated treatment of Christian fundamentalism. His second major work, Escaping from Fundamentalism was published by S.C.M. Press in 1984. These works, together with a number of monographs, show that for Barr fundamentalism represents a hermeneutical problem for theology and a pastoral problem for the Christian church. The acknowledged intention of his works is to fulfill part of the need for a careful analysis of the impact of fundamentalism upon biblical studies and theology. Further, his aim is to voice apprehension and warning of what he perceives as the most serious pastoral problem facing the contemporary Christian church.
The research of James Barr reports a scholarly analysis of the intellectual basis of fundamentalism. His writings have been received by Faculties of Theology and Religious Studies as a significant contribution to the study of contemporary Christianity. Church leaders have accepted them as a resource for understanding fundamentalists within their congregations. A need now arises to critically examine Barr's conclusions. The task properly falls to philosophical hermeneutics.

This branch of philosophy directs its reflection to the activity of understanding and interpreting texts, whatever form they may take. It is concerned to seek out the factors in the interaction between reader and text. In this thesis, philosophical hermeneutics attempts a critique of Barr's methodology, a study of the presuppositions of his particular theological interpretation and the operation of 'ideology' in his understanding of fundamentalism.
ABSTRACT

An attempt to set forth the essential nature of a theology is a notoriously difficult task. This thesis addresses two questions to a contemporary study of fundamentalism. It asks to what extent has James Barr been able to describe the theology of fundamentalism and to what extent his critical analysis of that theology is philosophically valid?

The first chapter identifies the inherent difficulties in a phenomenology of fundamentalism and includes an historical survey of the theology of the movement. This chapter is supported by appendix one which identifies the philosophical culture associated with fundamentalist thought. Barr's description of the theological and religious character of fundamentalism is accepted within the identified limitations. The second and third chapters give an account of Barr's theological evaluation of fundamentalism. He argues the fundamentalists espouse an aberrant form of Christianity. Their religion represents a projection onto the biblical text of a religion foreign to the theological character of the Old and New Testaments. This projection is achieved by an intellectually sophisticated hermeneutical procedure. The doctrines of inerrancy, verbal inspiration and infallibility establish an understanding of Christianity which does not represent the essential character of the Christian faith. Fundamentalist hermeneutics, Barr concludes, allows for a theology indigenous neither to the biblical text nor to the Christian tradition. It attempts to afford biblical justification to the doctrines of a human religion extraneous to the biblical text.

The fourth chapter considers the philosophical basis of Barr's understanding of the Bible. He takes the idealist view that the biblical text possesses a theological meaning whose boundaries can be delineated and whose essential content defined. This chapter is supported by appendix two which locates Barr's writings on fundamentalism within his wider concerns about the hermeneutical problems raised by the biblical text and the religious authority of the Bible.

The penultimate chapter surveys the insights of contemporary literary theory concerning the perception of written texts. The philosophical validity of an idealist view of the biblical text is questioned.

Two major conclusions are drawn. Barr's assessment of fundamentalism is philosophically dependent upon his idealist perception of the biblical text. This conclusion leads to the more general conclusion that the biblical text contains no essential description of Christianity but is capable of being read according to a range of theological interpretations some of which are more defensible than others.
CHAPTER ONE
DEFINING FUNDAMENTALISM

1.1 Origin and Usage of the Term 'Fundamentalism'

Anxious to play their part in countering the spread of liberal Protestantism, two brothers - Milton and Lyman Steward, oil millionaires of California, sponsored the publication of twelve booklets between 1909 and 1915: The Fundamentals, a Testimony to the Faith. The Testimony Publishing Company of Chicago published approximately three million copies of the series. Each issue contained several essays written by members of an international team of leading evangelical Christians. Among the subjects addressed were: evolutionism, Biblical criticism and the social gospel movement. All of which were perceived as a direct assault upon the basic beliefs of Protestant Christianity. The purpose of The Fundamentals was to define the essential elements of Protestant theology as a defence against this assault. Doctrinal tensions within Protestantism had erupted in petitions, dismissals and heresy trials throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. By the beginning of this century all the major Protestant denominations were experiencing some tension between orthodox and liberal theology, especially in relation to Biblical studies. This was particularly so in the United States where one can locate the first use of the term ‘fundamentalism’. The philosophical and theological ideas which are associated with the development of fundamentalism are discussed in Appendix One.

On July 1st 1920, Curtis Lee Laws published an editorial in the Baptist newspaper The Watchman Examiner. He discussed the recent annual meeting of his denomination, the Northern Baptist Convention, at which a group of conservatives had been agitating for a reversal of the liberal direction which they believed the church had been taking. These ‘fundamentalists’, as they were described, attempted to have orthodox doctrines reaffirmed as the denominational standard.

During the 1920's the reaction of evangelical Protestantism to new religious thought and Darwinism was responsible for passing in eight legislatures of the United States a bill against the teaching of human evolution in state schools. John T. Scopes, a biology teacher in Dayton Tennessee, was accused in 1925 of teaching Darwinian evolution in violation of the civil law. The trial court convicted Scopes but the ruling was overturned by the appeal court on a legal technicality. In the publicity surrounding the
so-called 'Monkey Trial' the theologically conservative position was known as 'fundamentalism'. The term became generally understood as describing a militant stance assumed by evangelical Protestants.

From the 1920's the term 'fundamentalism' has remained in use to describe (more often than not with negative connotations) a range of ideas and attitudes found within evangelical Protestantism. At one end of this range it is used to identify a distinct religious movement, while at the other it refers to an attitude toward the foundational theology of Protestantism. For a time the term was accepted and used as a title of honour within certain conservative Protestant circles, but by the 1950's fundamentalism was associated with religious bigotry and fanaticism in everyday parlance. The association became so strong that even those who, in opposition to liberalism, stood for such doctrines as the inerrancy of scripture and the literal acceptance of the creeds, rejected the name. In a letter to the Times, August 25th 1955, the conservative evangelical Rector of All Souls, Langham Place, London, wrote that the word had become

almost a symbol for obscurantism, and is generally used as a term of opprobrium. It appears to describe the bigoted rejection of all Biblical criticism, a mechanical view of inspiration, and an excessively literalist interpretation of scripture. (1)

The negative connotations of the term remain to the present time, certainly in its Australian usage. It is not found, for example, in the official vocabulary of the Assemblies of God in Australia, although the confession of faith of this church, stated in each issue of its national journal The Australian Evangel, closely resembles that of The Fundamentals. Nor is it officially used in the publications of the Creation Science Foundation Ltd., of Sunnybank Queensland. A survey of the monthly journal of this organization, Ex Nihilo, clearly indicates that its theology, while emphasising the centrality of Creationism, again closely reflects that of The Fundamentals. Although one may conclude that in common usage the term largely retains negative connotations, substantial variation in its meaning does exist, and this variation lies at the surface of a deeper confusion about what phenomenon fundamentalism refers too.
James Barr commences his major work on the subject, *Fundamentalism* with this question: "Is there really such a thing as fundamentalism, and what exactly is it?" (2). He acknowledges the problem of defining his subject and asserts that, in common with other religious movements, fundamentalism cannot be reduced to a simple definition.

Complex social and religious movements cannot be defined in a few words: what has to be offered is not a definition, but an extended description. Thus, the answer to our question, "What is fundamentalism?", will not be found on this page or any other one page of this book; rather, it will be provided by the book as a whole. (3)

Barr contends, though, (and later in this chapter we shall defend this contention), that fundamentalism can be described under a range of headings, but not defined in conclusive terms.

1.2 Methodological Problems in the Study of Fundamentalism

Any theological study of fundamentalism must contend with three major problems in order to identify the proper object of its investigations. First there is a problem of primary and secondary sources. The confused nomenclature discussed above questions the possibility of identifying reliable primary source material. While some, describing themselves as fundamentalists, deny that others who also describe themselves as fundamentalists have a right to the name. On the other hand, many whose doctrine appears to be in the tradition of *The Fundamentals* eschew the name. Secondly, self-avowed fundamentalists do not write about their history or theology in any reflective way. There is no representative literature on fundamentalism by fundamentalists. A third methodological issue concerns the possibility of objective analysis. As we shall see, attitudes towards fundamentalism at every level appear to be polarised.
1. 2. (a) Primary Sources, "Who speaks for the fundamentalists?"

It has not been of interest to those Protestants whose doctrine may be identified with The Fundamentals to write about their history and theology in any self-conscious or analytical manner. Their writing, when addressing their own adherents, is pedagogical; and when addressing those beyond, is always polemical. (This polemical stance is also characteristic of most literature opposing fundamentalism.) The problem arises, therefore, of identifying a body of literature representative of fundamentalist theology.

There is a widely-held view in the secondary literature that there are six belief characteristics found in all fundamentalist writing: (i) the doctrine of the factual inerrancy of the Bible and its attendant rejection of Biblical criticism; (ii) belief in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ; (iii) belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ; (iv) belief in the doctrine of the substitutional atonement of Jesus Christ; (v) expectation of the second advent of Jesus Christ; and (vi) belief in the resurrection of the dead and the eternal damnation of sinners. These may all be accepted as distinguishing elements, but they have been variously employed with substantial additions and shifts in interpretation and emphasis. Whether one might identify, for example, the contemporary literature on prophetic eschatology with the Creationist theology of the Creation Science Foundation Ltd., illustrates the problem of identifying a body of primary source material. That there are common historical roots for these writings in Protestant evangelical theology is clear, but that they are representative of the same distinctively fundamentalist theology is debatable. Whereas, for example, the doctrine of prophetic eschatology in the popular work by Hal Lindsey and C.C. Carlson, The Late Great Planet Earth, does not reject the theory of evolution, its hermeneutical focus is so concentrated upon prophecy that the significance of the doctrine of creation is hardly considered. But the doctrine of creation itself presides over the writings of others whose theology includes the six belief characteristics listed above. There is a consistent implication, for example, in the journal Ex Nihilo, that the determining issue in human affairs is the choice between conflicting interpretations of the origin of human life. One's response to such diverse aspects of experience as party politics, sexuality, medical ethics, capital punishment and the ordination of women to church ministry should be informed by one's understanding of how the world and human life came into being. Although certain belief characteristics may be identified within a body of religious literature, they do not necessarily carry the same theological value throughout that body. Their value will be determined by other presiding doctrines such as prophetic eschatology and the doctrine of creation described above. The question
"Who speaks for the fundamentalists?" is yet to be satisfactorily answered, and has a significant bearing upon identifying the primary literature for any discussion of the subject.

James Barr identifies fundamentalism as a circle of strict doctrine and attitudes contained within a wider circle of conservative evangelicalism, which, itself, is contained within the tradition of evangelical Protestant Christianity. Fundamentalism, he concludes, refers to an insistence upon the doctrines of inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration. These are thought to be essential for the preservation of the core evangelical religion. Accordingly, Barr ranks his research material into "major works of reference" and "lesser works" as they are deemed representative of this inner or outer circle. The material studied, though not exclusively British, is largely the work of British authors published by the Tyndale Press and Inter-Varsity Fellowship. Barr's bibliography of major works is constituted mainly of Bible dictionaries and Bible commentaries. But none of these works carries an official statement of what fundamentalists are expected to believe, for there is no such statement.

1.2. (b) Secondary Sources, "Who are the fundamentalists?"

The academic literature on this subject has addressed itself to such issues as: the personality traits, social attitudes, political influence and education of fundamentalists. This literature, however, is not extensive, which is rather surprising in view of the apparent size and influence of what has been referred to as 'the fundamentalist movement'. The theological ideas held by fundamentalists have received even less scholarly attention. When they are studied, invariably they are assumed to be a form of evangelical Protestant theology. This was the understanding in Gabriel Herbert's 1957 study Fundamentalism and The Church of God, one of the first contributions of English theological scholarship to this subject. Herbert identifies fundamentalism as a party or sect within conservative evangelicalism which itself is a division of Protestant Christianity. This assumption prevails wherever the subject is discussed. It raises the problem when reading the academic literature of having to draw boundaries between what might exclusively be called fundamentalism and what is described as conservative evangelicalism. Should the boundaries be drawn in respect of the content of doctrine or the strength with which the doctrine is held? And how firm should one be in drawing these boundaries, as the assumption necessarily implies some overlap? These problems question the identity of fundamentalism and the certainty of conclusions made about it in the academic literature. What exactly is the
religious phenomenon under discussion in this literature? Who are the fundamentalists? Barr accepts the assumption that fundamentalism is a special case of conservative evangelical Christianity as was discussed above, but deals with the philosophical problem of definition in a new way.

In the first chapter of *Fundamentalism*, Barr says he has no intention of employing a simple or "plain man's" (4) definition of his subject; rather he intends to develop an "extended description". (5) He then proceeds, after the manner of other studies of fundamentalism, to describe his subject as a form - indeed distorted form - of conservative evangelical Christianity.

As a practical course of procedure within this book, I shall therefore continue to use the term 'fundamentalism' for a certain basic personal religious and existential attitude, which will be described. This attitude I consider to be a pathological condition of Christianity, and one which, when it appears, commonly appears within, and overlaps with, the ecclesiastical groupings known as 'conservative evangelical'. I do not say therefore that all conservative evangelicals are also fundamentalists; but the overlap is very great. (6)

The understanding that fundamentalism is an inner core of conservative evangelicalism, and therefore made possible by that group, prevails throughout Barr's writings. Far from being questioned, it remains the constant factor in the development of his extended description. The problem of defining fundamentalism which asks "Who are the fundamentalists?" and which will be considered further in the next section, hangs over Barr's analysis as it has done over other attempts to investigate this subject.

For an inquiry to be objective, it must seek to clarify the phenomenon under consideration without allowing interpretative models, or doctrinal prejudice (particularly in the case of political and religious phenomena) to distort either the course of the enquiry or its conclusions. Fundamentalism is a very emotive subject. The stringency with which certain doctrines are held was suggested above as one way whereby fundamentalists might be identified. The possibility therefore of a theological study of fundamentalism free from value judgments, which deem it a true or false religious response, is questionable. Fundamentalists themselves, as discussed before, have not attempted a reflective account of their religion, and those who have
attempted to study this phenomenon have usually done so in a polemical vein. This stance is also clearly identifiable in Barr's writings on the subject.

The purpose of his enquiry, he claims, is to understand the religious character of fundamentalism and how it operates as a theological system. His hope is to contribute to the corpus of Biblical studies and the history of religion. Barr denies any other motivation in the introductory chapter of *Fundamentalism*.

I am interested, not so much in altering the (fundamentalists') opinions, as in understanding an intellectual structure that will probably be little affected by these arguments anyway. My purpose is thus to understand fundamentalism as a religious and intellectual system and to see why it functions as it does. (7)

But whether he maintains this stance in his analysis of the material and the development of his thesis is indeed questionable. The importance for Barr, of this claim of objectivity, is further indicated in the Preface of his second work on the subject, *Escaping from Fundamentalism*. When seeking to write pastorally for those who have been influenced by fundamentalism, Barr denies a polemical stance.

This is not intended as a controversial book. It does not seek to argue with fundamentalists and convince them that they are mistaken. So far as the present purpose goes, they are welcome to continue in their opinions. (8)

Whether or not fundamentalists are, in Barr's view, welcome to their opinions, a question imposes itself upon his research as it has upon past studies of the subject: is an objective characterization of fundamentalism possible?

Three major constraints make a precise discussion of fundamentalism difficult. The kind of discussion, that is, wherein one is able to declare that one is speaking of this phenomenon and not another, thus providing the basis for philosophical enquiry. First, there is no body of literature immediately identifiable as the work of fundamentalists. There are works containing confessions of faith but there is no single statement of what
fundamentalists believe. Shifts in emphasis and variations in doctrinal content prevail throughout. Secondly, when fundamentalism is written about, the subject so described includes or excludes belief characteristics considered essential by some and peripheral by others. Whereas fundamentalism is clearly associated with evangelical Christianity, the question whether it is to be understood within that religious tradition, an inner core, or standing outside it, is yet to be resolved. Thirdly, this subject is particularly resistant to objective discussion. While this could be said of most religious and ideological phenomena, it is especially so of fundamentalism which has a history of conflict with liberal theology and the kind of academic enquiry it pursues. The force of these constraints is such as would make it impossible to define fundamentalism if by that one implies identifying a singular essence. If the notion of definition supposes the presence of essential characteristics, then to date no definition of fundamentalism exists. To conclude that all fundamentalists take the Bible as inerrant and probably most take it as literally true, one has not said very much, and certainly not enough to warrant philosophical study.

James Barr's "extended description" of fundamentalism introduced under the heading of: organizational exclusiveness, the doctrines of sin, ministry, sacraments and evangelism, and the veneration of the Bible in chapter two of *Fundamentalism*, is one among equally valid characterisations, if one assumes that religious phenomenon possess an essentially doctrine. The conclusion invariably drawn in the academic literature that fundamentalism, like other religious traditions, is a unitary phenomenon, possessing an identifiable core of doctrine and teaching, precludes, in the light of what has been argued in this first chapter, the opportunity of philosophical discussion. It would be impossible to identify the elements of such a core of doctrine or establish the commonality of those elements. But the essential characteristics notion of definition has been questioned in the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein who has proposed that this notion be replaced by one he describes metaphorically as "family resemblances".

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein observes that within and between the members of a family there are various resemblances of eye colour, gait etc. These features, Wittgenstein suggests, overlap and crisscross between the different members of a family; no one feature is necessarily common to them all and yet it can be said that they all resemble the other members of the one family. (9). These "family resemblances" illustrate the instrumentalist conception of language wherein meaning is attributed to the use of a word rather than the idea that there must be a thing (either object or quality) corresponding to each noun or adjective. Wittgenstein extends this
concept with the example of games which he says form a "family". Not all games are board games; not all games are ball games, but there are sufficient features common to them all to recognise them as games. Meaning is made possible by the use of a word within certain linguistic and social contexts, rather than the relationship between the word and a thing. He suggests that instead of comparing the relationship between money and the cow one can buy with it, the comparison should be made between money and its use. This understanding illustrated by family resemblances and games provides a different approach to the task of defining a phenomenon. In this approach we are not looking for essential defining characteristics but a range of features common to many, but not necessarily all, the instances of a particular phenomenon. Given the difficulties described above, one may conclude that any attempt to define fundamentalism in terms of essential characteristics simply names fundamentalism and "Nothing has been done when a thing has been named." James Barr identifies his subject not as a body of objective knowledge, a set of doctrines - though at first this might appear to be the case - but as an institutionalized hermeneutical principle. This principle sometimes affirms and sometimes contradicts doctrinal tenets. But it always reinforces the organizational structure identifiable in many transformations as fundamentalism. It is this distinctive approach to the subject that warrants philosophical investigation.
NOTES

Notes to Chapter One: DEFINING FUNDAMENTALISM


(3) ibid., p. 1.

(4) ibid., p. 1.

(5) ibid., p. 1.

(6) ibid., p. 5.

(7) ibid., p. 9.


(10) ibid., pp. 31e to 33e.

(11) ibid., pp. 48e and 49e.

(12) ibid., pp. 48e.
CHAPTER TWO

THE HERMENEUTICS OF FUNDAMENTALISM

2.1 Reading the Bible

In this and the next chapter I will outline Barr's understanding of the function of fundamentalist hermeneutics and his characterization of fundamentalism particularly in the United Kingdom. My purpose, however, is not simply to summarize Barr's thesis but to demonstrate how Barr's characterization of fundamentalism arises from his understanding of how fundamentalists read the Bible. In his own work Barr begins with a description of a number of features in fundamentalist religion. He then proceeds to argue for what he regards as the cause and development of these features. My procedure will begin with these underlying concerns. But before one may go on to these subjects it is necessary to clarify a question of nomenclature. As we have seen, Barr employs the terms "fundamentalism" and "conservative evangelical protestantism" in his article Religious Fundamentalism. In that paper he asks the reader to image three concentric circles, the outermost representing evangelical belief. The innermost circle symbolises fundamentalism and shares the beliefs of both evangelical and conservative evangelical protestantism, but is distinguished by an insistence upon the absolute centrality of the Bible maintained by the doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility. Fundamentalism is,

......within Conservative Evangelicalism, the still narrower circle of those who insist that even this conservative position is not maintainable except upon the basis of the complete inerrancy, infallibility and absolute centrality of the Bible. (1)

In Barr's usage, therefore, the term fundamentalism is a comprehensive term embracing the range of evangelical beliefs and conservative attitudes but insisting upon the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible for the preservation of these beliefs and attitudes. One may question the appropriateness of this nomenclature but such a question would require sociological investigation and therefore falls beyond the bounds of this study. For purposes of exploring Barr's thesis I will employ his own usage. We may now proceed to the subject of this chapter.
Hermeneutics is the theory of the interpretation of texts; it is concerned with the principles and rules that preside over the interpretation of texts attempting to disclose the presuppositions inherent in any individual or collective reading. Exegesis, on the other hand, is the practical work of extracting the meaning from a particular text: the task of identifying what the text meant for the author’s audience and for today’s readers. Within the context of the faith community the biblical exegete has the extra responsibility of rendering an interpretation which preserves the vividness, impact and significance which attended the original proclamation of the text. While fundamentalists place great importance upon the work and responsibility of biblical exegesis, the philosophical enquiry into the presuppositions of reading has no legitimate place in their biblical studies. The principles by which the Bible is read and understood by fundamentalists are assumed to be inherent within the text itself.

Barr would disagree. Rather than addressing itself to the outlook of the biblical text, fundamentalist exegesis addresses itself to the outlook or belief structure of the fundamentalist faith community. Barr claims that this community of belief provides the specific shape of its biblical interpretation by the imposition of three hermeneutical principles. They are: factual inerrancy, verbal inspiration and biblical infallibility. The central principle, factual inerrancy, teaches that the canon of scripture, unlike all other texts, is free from any kind of untruth, not only in its doctrinal content, but also in its historical and all other details. This principle is supported by the dictation theory of inspiration, the notion that divine inspiration extends to the verbal forms of the text. The third principle asserts that the biblical text, divinely inspired and free from any kind of error, is infallible. Its reliability as a source of information on all subjects within the biblical corpus is absolute. These principles are theoretical constructs which, Barr claims, preside over the work of biblical exegesis within Protestant fundamentalism. Characteristically such exegesis is taken to be a literal reading of the Bible. The assertion that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the contents of the text and external reality is found throughout conservative evangelical literature. This is illustrated in the popular North American work by Henry M. Morris and Martin Clark, *The Bible has the Answer*. In answer to the question, “How can a person know how to interpret the Bible?”, this work asserts that one should not attempt an interpretation at all, but accept the text as directly communicating the intentions of the author. To believe otherwise would question one’s faith in the benevolence of God.
The proper way to interpret the Bible is not to interpret it at all! It was written to be understood and obeyed and therefore should be read like any other book of information and instruction. If God is truly the Author of the Bible, as Christians have always believed, then it is certainly reasonable to assume that he could say what he means. (2)

Whenever a literal reading is not possible, then the Bible itself, according to conservative evangelical teaching, explains the figurative language without alluding to any external frame of reference. It is assumed that if a statement is not immediately explicable by its context, then reference to another part of the biblical text will provide its meaning without the need to consult any theological or philosophical authority.

Whenever a biblical writer uses figurative or poetic language he makes this evident in the context, and the truth intended to be conveyed by the figure is likewise evident in the context. When symbols are used, they also are defined and explained, either in the immediate context or in related passages in other parts of the Bible. The best rule to follow is to take the Bible literally unless the context clearly requires a symbolic meaning; if the latter is true, then the meaning is to be found in the scriptures themselves—not from modern science, or from one's own imagination, or from specifically gifted "interprets", or from any other source. (3)

The literal interpretation of the Bible is popularly understood as synonymous with fundamentalist religion. But according to Barr literalism is applied or withheld according as the doctrines of factual inerrancy, verbal inspiration and infallibility are preserved by a literal reading. Fundamentalism does not always read the Bible literally, but it does always read the Bible as divine revelation and therefore as inerrant and infallible. These hermeneutical presuppositions are ensured by an exegesis which shifts backward and forward between literal and non-literal interpretations. Fundamentalism is not characterized by a literal reading of the text as one might suppose, but according to Barr, by the preservation of certain hermeneutical principles. I will now discuss the function of each of these principles in turn.
2.1 The Doctrine of Factual Inerrancy

Throughout the conservative evangelical literature researched by Barr, he observed the consistent assertion that the Bible is the inerrant word of God. He understands this belief to have arisen in the nineteenth century history of the fundamentalist movement with the folk-perception of the Bible as a body of teaching and religious leaders as Bible teachers. (4) I will discuss Barr's analysis of this doctrine under the headings of: the aetiology of the doctrine, how it functions in fundamentalist theology and why, in Barr's view, it was adopted by the fundamentalists.

Within fundamentalism the principle of inerrancy arose from the manner in which the biblical text is perceived in the first instance. The Bible is looked upon as a kind of seamless garment. Variations within its content such as literary styles, authorship, subjects addressed and the like are all subsumed into a unity. The Bible throughout is accepted as 'teaching'. All of its content, whether sacred or secular, is deemed to be of the same nature, the authoritative teaching of God. "Biblical texts are thought of as containing teaching, nay, of being teaching" (5)

Theological emphases will be placed upon various statements and passages but no distinction in nature exists between one such statement and another, between one part of the Bible and all other parts. The distinction for the fundamentalist lies not within the Bible but between the Bible and all other teaching, indeed all other reality. There being no distinction of nature between one part of the Bible and another, then what may be said about one part may be said about all the other parts. If the spiritual and moral content of the Bible is true, being the teaching of God, then so, too, are its records, narratives and descriptions, also being the teaching of God. For the fundamentalist, therefore, Barr observes, there is no error in any form between the covers of the Bible.

...... the Bible contains no error of any kind - not only theological error, but error in any sort of historical, geographical or scientific fact, is completely absent from the Bible. (6)

Testimony to this belief is said to be made by the Bible itself in the teachings of Jesus and those who were inspired to record the words of God. In the fundamentalist view Jesus taught not only spiritual truths but historical facts. When he speaks of Jonah being in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights in Matthew 12:40 he is not simply using an illustration but verifying the historical fact that the Old
Testament prophet Jonah resided in the belly of a fish for a period of three days and three nights. Barr counters this essentially by recalling the argument found in J. Huxtable's work, *The Bible Says As* the professional reputation of a scholar is not dependent upon the veracity of his answer to a question concerning train timetables, so to the teaching of Jesus on spiritual matters does not become untrustworthy because his statement on another matter, such as the ascription of the authorship of *Psalm 110* to King David, may be incorrect. (7)

But in the mind of fundamentalists, Barr observes, Jesus, the evangelists, St. Paul and St. Peter, and indeed all the biblical writers testify to the factual inerrancy of the Bible. Barr however questions the efficacy, for fundamentalists themselves, of this argument from internal testimony on the grounds that one cannot, in the first place, be a fundamentalist without perceiving the Bible as factually inerrant.

It is highly improbable that the fundamentalist himself within his religious context believes in the authority and inerrancy of the Bible on the grounds that various passages within the Bible appear to him to assent that it is true. For him, on the contrary, things work the other way: he believes the Bible implicitly in any case, and all that these passages do is to formulate for him suitably that belief in the Bible that he already has. (8)

So, according to Barr, the first step in becoming a fundamentalist is to receive the Bible in this way. That is, one must accept a priori that all biblical statements are the revealed word of God and therefore distinguishable from and superior to all other statements. This perception is based not so much on evidence obtained from the text itself as on a personal existential response to fundamentalist religion. It comes from being part of a supportive community of church and friends, schools and broadcasts.

His (the fundamentalist) belief in the truth of biblical passages is broad-based: it was through all aspects of his experience of religion, and it would be more true to say that he believes in the truth of the entire Bible because every portion of it in his experience seems to speak to him of God and to bring to him a living experience of God in Jesus Christ. (9)
Within this network, bible teaching provides both the spiritual focus and emotional strength that allow individuals to feel in control of most of their lives. Having made an emotional and intellectual commitment to this community the Bible is thereafter perceived in a new light. Its status, Barr argues, is elevated beyond the human realm to become a sacred reality.

In the fundamentalist mind the Bible functions as a sort of correlate of Christ. Christ is the personal Lord and Saviour, who illuminates everything and enters into all relationships; the Bible is a verbalized, 'inscripturated' entity, the given form of words in which God has made himself know, and thus the Bible equally enters into all relations, its words cannot be quoted too often, its terms, cadences and lineaments are all to be held clear. While Christ is the divine Lord and Saviour, the Bible is the supreme religious symbol that is tangible, articulate, possessable, accessible to men on earth. (10)

In this new light the Bible is viewed to be without any kind of error because error is a reality of the natural, not supernatural, realm. The doctrine of factual inerrancy, Barr concludes, argues the supposition that the Bible cannot be wrong because it must be right!

It might be thought therefore that this community of belief, investing as it does complete certitude in biblical statements, is devoid or a rational basis or even antintellectual. Contrary to the common perception that fundamentalism lacks intellectual sophistication, it is, Barr argues, a complex intellectual system which values rational discourse. But it does so in its own terms, within boundaries drawn by hermeneutic doctrines which are themselves accepted by faith. The doctrine of verbal inerrancy functions in this way. It prescribes the boundaries within which discussion of the Bible is to be conducted. It is the beginning point from which exegesis develops and it remains the constant factor in that development.

Further, Barr identifies the exegetical devices employed to ensure that the doctrine of verbal inerrancy is safeguarded and preserved. Fundamentalist exegesis, he observes, may consider the findings of Historical Criticism and Form Criticism but only if they
furnish evidence for the inherent status of the passage being studied. But, as was concluded above, the fundamentalist mind does not require evidence of this nature. It assumes from the beginning that all facts contained in the passage are inherent. The pervasive influence of the doctrines is such as to afford no real significance to discoveries in Biblical Criticism. For the fundamentalist, Barr claims, correspondence between the biblical description and external events or objects is the most significant conclusion in any exegetical exercise, more important, in fact, than the moral or theological theme of the passage. The most significant truth for fundamentalist exegesis, he concludes, is this correspondence:

...the correspondence between the biblical account and the actual event or entity is the supremely important thing about the Bible. A biblical account of some event is approached and evaluated primarily not in terms of significance but in terms of correspondence with external actuality. Veracity as correspondence with empirical actuality has precedence over veracity as significance. (11)

A fundamentalist reading, therefore, not only asserts the historicity of an event or person referred to, but also asserts a direct correspondence between the biblical description and its referent. How, though, is this correspondence maintained when the Bible itself may contain two or more divergent accounts of the same event?

The exegetical device required is a process Barr describes as "harmonization". Biblical passages which appear to be divergent, or even contradictory, are regarded as corresponding by conservative exegesis, either by abandoning literality or by the assumption that the one event is described from a different perspective in each passage.

If two passages in the gospels describe in different terms what seems to be the same incident, they are harmonized in the conservative literature. The most common way to do this is to add the two together, so that what one says complements what the other says. Certainly it is admitted that one evangelist has seen things or described things differently from another, just as two persons who witness the same road accident will describe it differently. But they cannot be in real contradiction, they cannot be saying really different things that cannot be reconciled.(12)
Divergent accounts of the same event are read by fundamentalists as being superficial and they claim that closer informed reading of the text reveals that even apparent contradictions can be reconciled. Barr illustrates how the device of harmonization has further allowed some conservative exegetes to draw the conclusion that certain events described in the Bible occurred twice. In the Synoptic Gospels the incident of Jesus cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem occurs at the end of his public ministry. (Matthew 21: 10-17, Mark 11: 15-19 and Luke 19: 45-48), while in the gospel according to St. John it took place at the beginning of his ministry, John 2:13-17. The explanation given in The New Bible Commentary Revised, Barr observes, is that the event occurred twice. If this were a valid explanation, Barr asks, why could it not also be applied to the apparently divergent accounts of Jesus' ascension? In the gospel according to St. Luke the ascension takes place at the resurrection, (Luke 24: 51), but in the Acts of the Apostles it took place forty days after the resurrection, (Acts of the Apostles 1: 2-4.) It is intellectually offensive, Barr concludes, to argue that the Bible records a single event in the life of Jesus as having occurred more than once. But he has perhaps pushed the point too far. He might, for example, also argue that if this principle be applied to St. Matthew and St. Mark the ascension did not occur at all as neither evangelist mentions it! However, Barr's purpose is to show that fundamentalists are forced into this kind of interpretation by an insistence upon factual inerrancy.

In either case, what never enters the head of the conservative interpreter is that there was no certain knowledge of the temporal sequence, or that quite contradictory accounts existed, or that some source represented the events in such and such a way not because that was the way it happened but because that was important for the theological message of that particular source. (13)

The doctrine would appear to have no sympathy with the understanding of history and revelation held by the biblical writers themselves. It would appear therefore not to have derived from the biblical text but from a particular understanding of reason and philosophy. While asserting the doctrine of factual inerrancy as a primary and distinguishing feature of fundamentalist theology, Barr rejects it as alien to the thought forms of the biblical text. It is in his mind an imposition upon the text by the fundamentalist reader of what the text must mean and thus nullifies the possibility of the text making its own claims upon the reader.
The doctrine of factual inerrancy maintains the traditional teaching of Christianity in respect of the veracity of scripture, according to the fundamentalist literature. Modification of the traditional teaching that the Bible is free from error of any kind, not only in its doctrinal content, but also in its historical and geographical details, is novel and the consequence of intrusive modern philosophies. The scripture should not be required to accommodate such alien philosophies as Evolutionism, scientism and Secular Humanism which are inconsistent with itself. Any pre-understandings which a reader brings to the scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it. Yet the traditionally accepted understanding that both the divine and human dimensions of scripture are without error is deemed by such scholars as James Barr to be the particularly objectionable aspect of fundamentalist theology. Fundamentalists maintain that the kind of historical and literary analysis which attempts to separate the integrity of scripture and allow for error in its human dimension, is not only a new and extraneous influence but represents a challenge to the spiritual authority of Christianity. The acceptance of scripture as authoritative revelation would be of little profit to believers, fundamentalist argue, of its contents were not abidingly true in every particular and utterly trustworthy. The doctrine of factual inerrancy expresses the conviction that the scripture is authoritative divine communication. As a hermeneutical principle it protects the biblical text against the arbitrary imposition of modernist categories. While it acknowledges the limitations of language it asserts that these limitations do not render scripture an inadequate means of communicating divine truth. Although the biblical forms of speech represent a divine adaption to human limitations there is no accommodation to human error.

In fundamentalist anthropology error is not an essential part of human nature. Adam was human before the Fall (Genesis 1:26-31); Jesus Christ was human yet he did not err. Because the Bible was written within specific linguistic and cultural constraints it does not follow, according to this anthropology, that it contains error. Biblical revelation is both objective and absolute, as such it communicates divine truth across all temporal and cultural boundaries. Were this not so, were its truth not transcendent, the meaning of the biblical text would be inextricably tied to a given culture. The command given by Jesus himself to evangelise other cultures, (Matthew 28: 16-20, Mark 16: 15-16 and Luke 24: 45-48) would have no authority. This mandate assures biblical translators and missionaries that biblical truth can, with sensitivity, be conveyed to all cultures and situational contexts. While some biblical injunctions are directed to the specific situations of which they speak, there are teachings which transcend all cultural barriers and which binding on all peoples. The doctrine of scriptural inerrancy therefore protects the authority and university of biblical truth. If one were to impugn
this authority the authority of Jesus Christ, who himself attested it as trustworthy, would also be questioned.

Fundamentalist theology draws an analogy between the scripture and the person of Jesus Christ. This analogy is drawn from the evidence of shared characteristics. First, both Jesus Christ and the scripture were conceived by the Holy Spirit. The nativity narratives state this in respect of Jesus for example St. Matthew’s account of the virginal conception (Matthew 1: 18-25). Secondly, a human agent is involved in the birth of Jesus and the writing of scripture. Thirdly, both possess a character which unites in an indivisible form both divinity and humanity. As the doctrine of the Incarnation identifies Jesus Christ as a man without sin therefore, the theology of Revelation identifies the Bible as a book without error. Having attributed the same theanthropic status to scripture as is given to Jesus Christ, it necessarily follows that scripture is as perfect in its human expression as was God in his human person. The authority of this status is attested by Jesus himself on such occasions when he spoke of the scripture; as existing for all time (Matthew 5: 17-18), foretelling the history of salutation (Luke 24: 44), and as being uncomfortable to the ear of the unbeliever (John 10: 34-35). The application of such historical and literary categories as are unsympathetic to the traditionally understood status of scripture threaten its authority and the spiritual efficacy of the Church. Fundamentalism, keen to defend the scripture from the kind of exegesis represented by James Barr, argues that one cannot accept the authority of Jesus Christ without acknowledging the authority of scripture.

2.2 Doctrine of Verbal Inspiration

The many divisions of the Bible into books and letters, poems and sermons, historical accounts and geographical descriptions, are, to the fundamentalist mind, superficial. The Bible is a unity. It is unified by factual inerrancy. All its contents, whether theological doctrine or historical narrative, are God’s teaching and therefore true in every particular. They are true because every word of the biblical teaching was divinely inspired. Whether the Bible is considered in its totality or whether an individual passage is selected, it is regarded as the inspired words of God. According to Barr’s analysis, fundamentalist Christianity requires one to accept all the words of scripture as the dictation of God; the product of verbal [sometimes called plenary inspiration]. In this section I will give an account of the doctrine of verbal inspiration of the scriptures and describe how it functions, in Barr’s understanding, as a hermeneutical principle for fundamentalist exegesis.
A systematic analysis of the theology of inspiration is presented by Barr in his work *The Bible in the Modern World* published in 1973. In that study he concluded that inspiration is appropriately understood as an expression of faith in the scriptures, as a unique account of the tradition of ancient Israel and the early Church. It implies neither inerrancy nor infallibility, but rather the notion that the Bible contains a record of human thought and endeavour that was accomplished in a unique way by the spirit of God. Properly understood, inspiration refers to the character of this thought and action, according to Barr, not the writing of the scriptures. Thus he concluded:

My account of the formation of the biblical tradition is an account of a human work. It is man's statements of his beliefs, the events he has experienced, the stories he has been told and so on. It has long been customary to align the Bible with concepts like Word of God, or revelation, and one effect of this has been to align the Bible with a movement from God to man. It is man who developed the biblical tradition and man who decided when it might be suitably fixed and made canonical.  

(14)

For Barr himself, then, the scriptures are the product of a tradition of endeavour within the faith community, itself inspired or 'accompanied' by the Spirit of God. So it is the historical acts of leadership, prophecy and teaching of this community which demonstrated a divine inspiration. The record of the scriptures is a second order human phenomenon. From this claim Barr draws the conclusion that inspiration does not imply inerrancy or infallibility.

It is clear that this (inspiration) would have nothing to do with inerrancy or infallibility. It would have to apply in the first place not to the formation of scripture but to the formation of tradition in Israel and in the early church, the tradition which constituted the classic model for understanding; secondarily it would apply to the process of making this tradition into scripture, and thirdly but most unimportantly to the process of limitation within a sacred canon.

(15)
For Barr the theology of inspiration is above all concerned with the formation of the tradition of ancient Israel and the early Church rather than the record of that tradition contained in the canon of scripture. By contrast to Barr's view of inspiration, in fundamentalist theology, inspiration is discussed in relation to the recording of the tradition, the composition of the scriptures, rather than the events themselves, in the history of Israel and the early Church. It is understood, Barr believes, in terms of divine control over the writing process producing an infallible and inerrant record of the words of God.

The central feature of the classical fundamentalist doctrine seems to be that the Bible is part of the movement of true doctrine from God to man. (16)

The biblical writers themselves - prophets, apostles, and evangelists - are the direct and personal recipients of divine inspiration. Their function was to record the words of God - God himself being the true author of their writing.

It (inspiration) does not emerge from the community; rather it is directed towards the community and transmitted to the community by people like prophets and apostles who are authoritative didactic functionaries. These people can, indeed, be understood historically as persons emerging from the situation of their time and community. But as writers of scripture they are not seen in this way. What they write as writers of scripture comes to them from God and they pass it on to the community. (17)

But fundamentalists are anxious to deny that the inspiration of the scriptures was affected by a mechanical process of dictation. The so called 'dictation theory' of inspiration, as introduced above, understands the human authors of the Bible as scribes who passively record the Words of God. This theory was widely favoured in the early church and is held today by such Christian sects as the Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. But it has been consistently rejected by both conservative evangelical and fundamentalist writers. The matter is often explained as the Holy
Spirit employing various methods, including the particular writer’s own style and ability, but nonetheless so guided that the final result was perfectly and infallibly the Word of God. Barr argues that, despite this denial, fundamentalist religion necessarily teaches the dictation theory of inspiration. He illustrates this contention by reference to a number of biblical writers who foretold events in the history of Israel. The prophet Daniel who, according to a literal reading of the text, lived in the sixth century B.C., foretold in detail events which would occur in the second century B.C. This, Barr concludes, could only have been accomplished by dictating verbatim these details.

If Daniel (living as fundamentalists believe, in the sixth century B.C.) was able to furnish a detailed plan and account of events, with some names of places, figures, plus family relationships, all or events which at the earliest took place in the second century B.C. (to say nothing of the possibility that they are still to come), it is a futile pretense to say that all this was not done by dictation. (18)

Although fundamentalists may shy away from, or even deny, the dictation theory of inspiration, their a priori understanding of the biblical text as being inerrant and infallible cannot be held without it. It is, in Barr’s assessment, a necessary consequence of the hermeneutical principles he attributes to fundamentalism.

Barr further asks how the fundamentalist understanding of inspiration, which assumes that each individual word of the text is itself inspired, accounts for variation in the text. The loss of the particular word from a manuscript would imply the loss of an inspired word and the subsequent inclusion of another word would imply that a non-inspired word crept in.

To say the God had inspired the scriptures did not mean only that inspiration extended to the words, which as we have seen can be reasonably argued, but that God inspired one unique finite set of words, these and none other, namely only the total string of words as set down in the original autographs. (19)
Furthermore, in Barr’s view, the existence of variant texts and the historical study of the development of the canon, prevents the acceptance of this theory of inspiration. As we have seen, he postulates a theory of inspiration which understands the Holy Spirit as informing the antecedents of the text, the tradition of ancient Israel and the early church, as well as the words of the biblical text themselves.

Any viable modern idea of inspiration, therefore, though it may indeed extend to the words themselves as conservatives have argued, cannot be localized at any particular point of original ‘giving’ or in the original autographs; on the contrary, it must be an aspect of the total tradition of Israel and the church, a tradition that is known to us not through the Bible directly but through historical study of many sources, of which the Bible is only one.

This tradition of human thought and action was, as discussed above, accomplished by the Holy Spirit in a unique way according to Barr, and it is this that gives the scriptures their inspired status. The New Testament in Barr’s view is only a very small selection of the primitive Christian discussion. It bears witness to religious experience beyond itself of which there is no direct knowledge but which contributed to the process of composing the New Testament.

The second important element in Barr’s understanding of inspiration is his ranking of the biblical material. Following the historical critical method, Barr accepts the ranking of the biblical texts into categories, according some a primary place while others are regarded as marginal passages etc. In his discussion of the fundamentalist theology of inspiration he notes that the two most cited individual texts are II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:19-21. But these passages, Barr argues, belong to a secondary rather than primary stratum of New Testament thought.

But both II Timothy and II Peter can probably be considered somewhat marginal books, and are probably treated so in practice even by fundamentalist circles. But this immediately raises the spectre of a possibility that the doctrine of inspiration and the like, as enunciated
in these passages, belongs to a secondary stratum of the thought of the New Testament and does not belong to its first line. (21)

If this material did belong to the 'first line' of New Testament thought, it would have, Barr concludes, been given a strong expression in St. Paul's letters to the Romans and the Galatians. Whereas fundamentalists may permit a certain grading of the biblical material, they do so without relinquishing the exegetical principle that any one part of the scripture is capable of validating doctrine, as the notion of verbal inspiration applies equally to the total and respective parts of the Bible.

..., although fundamentalism allows and indeed requires a certain grading and ordering of the biblical material, it nevertheless combines this with the insistence that each and every part, anywhere in the Bible, is fully divinely inspired and able to bear the weight of validation of the doctrine. (22)

Once again Barr illustrates how a fundamentalist reading of the text necessarily involves a tension between exegesis on the one hand, the explication of a particular passage, and hermeneutics on the other. Fundamentalists don't read as they say they read!

All fundamentalist denominations teach that the Bible is the inspired word of God and its content is equally throughout infallible revelation. To teach less would be to abandon scripture's own claim to a unique status.

The scriptural approach to scripture is thus to regard it as God's written testimony to Himself. When we call the Bible the Word of God, we mean, or should mean, that its message constitutes a single utterance of which God is the author. What scripture says, He says. When we hear or read scripture, that which impinges on our mind (whether we realize it or not) is the speech of God Himself. (23)
The Bible does not contain the word of God as is suggested by the notion that only those verses which speak of spiritual values can be regarded as inspired, but it is the word of God. It follows therefore that the scripture is owed the same reverence as the faithful owe to God himself. This reverence is afforded only by those who accept the doctrine of verbal inspiration which safeguards the unique ontological status of the scriptures. But the moral imperative to be consistent with historical Christian teaching is not the only reason why fundamentalists insist upon the doctrine of verbal inspiration. The divine utterance in human language is not to be understood, fundamentalism asserts, as an accommodation of divine attributes to human imperfection. It is rather an elevation of human language to a transcendental realm. What is divine logically takes precedence over what is human.

Acceptance of the Bible as a reality which transcends the created order is appropriated only through faith, the internal operation of the Holy Spirit upon the mind and heart. But faith in fundamentalist thought (as in Thomistic theology) is not contrary to reason, faith is reinforced by the principles of reason. It is in the discussion of the rational basis of Christian faith that fundamentalism and the theological developments represented by James Barr meet and clash. Fundamentalist thought is concerned to defend the notion of truth inherent in its hermeneutical procedures, namely that truth is at once objective and absolute. God is the author of all truth both biblical and extra-biblical. Fundamentalist thought stands against the idea that because every perceivers' method of observation and analysis can be shown to contain an inherent bias, a wholly objective perception of individual entities is impossible. The cardinal principles which underlie its reading of the scriptures guard against the infiltration of such contemporary ideas that the true nature of an entity, for example a historical event, lies not in the thing itself, but in the relationship which is constructed then perceived between it and other entities. The doctrine of inspiration ensures that the scripture contains no error in the sense of a mistake, that is the misrepresentation of the facts where facts are taken to be that which corresponds to reality. The effect of transcends what is linguistically open and culturally conditioned and becomes a divine work. Rather than perceived as an extreme form of evangelicalism, as Barr argues, fundamentalism may be understood as occupying a central position within evangelical thought safeguarding traditional and inviolate religious truths.
2.3 The Doctrine of Scriptural Infallibility

The third hermeneutical principle Barr attributes to fundamentalism is the doctrine of scriptural infallibility. As with the doctrine of inerrancy and inspiration, this notion, Barr argues, arose from the particular way the Bible is perceived by fundamentalists. It completes and reinforces what he understands as a distinctively fundamentalist perception and use of the Bible. When attempting to describe the basic character of fundamentalism in his paper “The Problem of Fundamentalism Today”, Barr asserted that it begins with the appreciation of these three hermeneutical principles.

Fundamentalism begins when people begin to say that the doctrinal and practical authority of scripture is necessarily tied to its infallibility and in particular its historical inerrancy. The centre of fundamentalism is the insistence that the control of doctrine and practice by scripture is dependent on something like a general perfection of scripture, and therefore on its historical inerrancy; and this in turn involves the repudiation of the results of modern critical modes of reading the Bible. (24)

Infallibility complements the doctrine of inerrancy and inspiration by reiterating the supernatural character of the biblical text as divine teaching. In this section I will consider how Barr uses the term infallibility in his study of fundamentalism and discuss how, in his view, this doctrine completes the distinctively fundamentalist way of reading the Bible.

The doctrine of scriptural infallibility is not the subject of theological consideration, nor is it discussed in detail in either of the two editions of Fundamentalism. Indeed the term does not appear in the index of that work. While the term invariably accompanies discussion of inerrancy and inspiration throughout Barr’s writings, it is nowhere considered in detail and given only cursory discussion in his most recent work, Escaping from Fundamentalism. The impression is that Barr assumes his reader understands the theological meaning and history of the term. For the term infallibility is normally associated with the doctrine of Papal infallibility. (25)
That doctrine has never found acceptance outside the Roman Catholic Church and it has proved a major obstacle in ecumenical discussions. Even within the Roman Catholic Church itself the level of acceptance of this doctrine continues to be questioned.

To non-Christians and Christians outside the Catholic Church the attribution of "infallibility" to the Church's teaching office has always been unacceptable. Recently, however, it has to an astonishing extent become at least dubious within the Catholic Church itself. (26)

Barr, having not discussed the theology of infallibility in any detail, leaves the reader to make his own associations. It would not be an overstatement to suggest that he implies a parallel between the principle of scriptural infallibility and the doctrine of Papal infallibility, and this association serves Barr's polemical intention. The focus of belief for fundamentalist Christians is not, Barr contends, the person of Jesus Christ, but the infallible words of the Bible; just as some Catholics, it is argued, believe not so much in the revelation of Jesus Christ as in the institution of the Church.

Just as in the Roman church there is a tradition, and the system appears to ensure that the Bible will not say anything other than what is already present in the tradition, so it is in fundamentalism: the evangelical tradition of religion is from the beginning the accepted framework within which the Bible is interpreted, and no interpretation is carried out in such a way as to question this tradition. The insistence on biblical inerrancy, infallibility and so on is a shield set up to protect this tradition from criticism. (27)

The Bible when read as an infallible document provides fundamentalism with an authority both accessible and articulate on almost every moral and secular issue. A displacement has taken place, in Barr's view, in that the person of Jesus Christ has been displaced by a secondary institution, the infallible propositions of biblical teaching. He does not conclude that, in the fundamentalist mind, the Bible is more important than the person of Jesus Christ, but rather, that the Bible provides fundamentalism with a supreme authority. The hermeneutical doctrines of inerrancy and inspiration, reinforced by the doctrine of scriptural infallibility, have the effect of
elevating the status of the Bible beyond all other religious phenomena. This process, described by Barr as "reification", places the Bible outside the realm of critical analysis, indeed beyond the sphere of natural phenomena. This, he concludes, is to ensure that fundamentalist religious doctrine, and tradition of biblical interpretation, are preserved unchanged.

They (fundamentalists) do not use the Bible to question and re-check this tradition [of biblical interpretation], they just accept that this tradition is the true interpretation of the Bible. The fundamentalist position about the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible is an attempt to prevent this tradition from being damaged through modes of interpretation that might make the Bible mean something else. \(^{28}\)

In this way the Bible is distinguished from all other texts and all transient entities, and displaces, in Barr's understanding, the person of Jesus in the religious consciousness of fundamentalists. This displacement, which will be considered in chapter three, figures as one of Barr's strongest censures against fundamentalism. Barr does not, as mentioned above, address the theology of literal infallibility nor indeed discuss this notion at length. It is understood as reinforcing and completing the hermeneutical system Barr identifies as the distinctive way fundamentalists read the Bible.

These three complementary doctrines of factual inerrancy, verbal inspiration and literal infallibility represent a system of conventions which preside over any fundamentalist reading of the Bible. In the first instance they distinguish the Bible from all other texts, and secondly they prescribe the way the fundamentalist reader appropriates the meaning of any given portion of the biblical text. Such a reading is not, Barr argues, a literal interpretation, although in the popular mind (and according to fundamentalists themselves) fundamentalism is identified with a literal interpretation of the Bible.

What, though, does it mean to be literal? The everyday understanding, and that which Barr adopts, is one that takes the primary meaning of the text rather than a metaphorical or some other symbolic meaning - thus rendering a purported one-to-one relationship between the words of the text and external reality: the understanding, for example, that all physical phenomena were created by divine fiat over a period of six days each of twenty-four hours as described in the book Genesis chapters one and two. A
direct correspondence is accepted between the linguistic terms and the entities and
events to which they referred. James Barr provides an analysis of the terms 'literal'
and 'verbal' by a simple process of distinction in his work *The Bible in the Modern
World*. In the conclusion to that work he posits a triangle illustrating these
relationships. One point of the triangle illustrates direct references. These direct
references refer to a literal understanding of the text. They are to be distinguished from
points symbolizing indirect references. The linguistic terms no longer exclusively
correspond directly to events reported, but indirectly to metaphorical or allegorical
events as well.

Allegory is also referential in scope; the difference is that the referent
is other than that suggested by the direct sense of the language, being in
fact known only by an indirect process working from hints and hidden
signals in the language. (79)

Both referential interpretations are themselves to be distinguished from a third sense,
the intention of the writer, the actual sense - the meaning the writer intended to
convey, and actually conveyed, though in his own contemporary forms and usage. The
term 'literal' is now understood as referring to the meaning the author directly intended
his words to convey. This meaning, though not always obvious, can be reconstructed. The
historical-critical method of biblical exegesis retrieves, Barr supposes, the mind of the
writer and shows forth his intended meaning. The exegetical question which Barr asks
is not the significance of what is described, but rather why events are depicted in the
particular way they are.

In exploration of the thoughts, intentions and theologies of the biblical writers, as we have seen, we are working in a different way. The verbal
form of the text is being used as evidence from which the mind and
circumstances of the writers and traditionalists are reconstructed.
Considerations which may be valid for any purely referential use of
the Bible may now be reversed, or may become entirely irrelevant. The
question is not whether Jesus walked on the water, but why the Gospel
tradition depicted him as walking on water; (30)
The question of what it means to be literal in biblical exegesis is not, in Barr’s understanding, simply a concluding of correspondence between the words of the text and the state of affairs reported. But even supposing this were the case, fundamentalists, Barr claims, do not, as is commonly assumed, read the Bible literally.

The point of conflict between fundamentalists and others is not ever literality but over inerrancy. Even if fundamentalists sometimes say that they take the Bible literally, the facts of fundamentalist interpretation show that this is not so. What fundamentalists insist is not that the Bible must be taken literally but that it must be so interpreted as to avoid any admission that it contains any kind of error. (31)

Literality is sacrificed when the three hermeneutical principles of inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration might be questioned by direct reference. Fundamentalist exegesis therefore moves backward and forward from a literal to a non-literal interpretation according as these three principles are sustained and verified.

James Barr’s account of the operation of the doctrine of infallibility as an hermeneutical principle is important for this characterization of fundamentalism, as discussed above. Fundamentalism is an exaggeration. Principles and doctrine, admittedly found in Reformed Theology, here assume extravagant proportions. What is explicit as error to a reasonable and common sense reading of the text is taken, because of its biblical context, to be true. This, in Barr’s view, is a form of “bibliotary”. The text is subject to “reification”, elevated beyond the world of contingent reality.

Reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something else than human products - such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will. (32)

Fundamentalists would agree. But the process of “reification” is motivated in their view, not from below, since it is not an anthropological phenomenon, but from above. The status of the Bible as knowledge is afforded by divine inspiration as the resurrection status of the body of Jesus Christ is afforded by divine redemption. The Bible is not like other books, not because of its function within religion, but because of its
nature, in other words the ontological nature afforded it within conservative evangelical thought. In that mind, scripture is a witness to the objects of faith; God’s saving acts in history.

The literary historian sees the Bible as a library; ... put together over a period of a thousand years or more. But it is more than a library of books by human authors; it is a single book with a single author - God the Spirit - and a single theme - God the Son, and the Father’s saving purposes, which all revolve around him.

While part of world history, these “saving purposes” are beyond the grasp of historical analysis. They are a reality known only by faith. History may assist in exegesis but scripture is not subject to analysis in the sense of historical critical assessment. If it were subject to this kind of assessment the need to reconcile the biblical text with the results of secular research would soon arise. Modernist exegesis presupposes a discrepancy between the natural sense of the text (which is the inspired word of God and therefore infallible) and the demands of the contemporary mind. Interpretation of this kind, fundamentalists argue, represents an attempt to reconcile the biblical text with an other-than-biblical world view. Among the many disciplines of biblical theology, fundamentalist teaching values form criticism affirming the awareness that a knowledge of the literary categories of the various parts of scripture is essential for proper exegesis. A parable, for example, should not be treated like a historical narrative, nor should poetry be interpreted as though it was a straightforward reporting of persons or events. If one is not cognizant of the specific kind of literature found in each passage, one is easily led into a contempt for the text. Respect for the text is maintained by adhering to the literal sense of each passage which takes into account the figures of speech and literary forms found there. Rather than exercise respect, Historical Critical exegesis, fundamentalists claim, approaches the biblical text with contempt. The identity of Jonah, presented as an historical person in the Book of Jonah, and so referred to by Jesus (Matthew 12: 40-42) is described as a mythological character in liberal commentaries. By denying the historicity of passages which present themselves as factual this form of exegesis alters the text without either erasing or rewriting it. The manifest content must be pulled away to expose the true meaning, the latent content of the message contained in the text. To interpret therefore is to restate the phenomenon, to find its equivalent. Fundamentalist teaching rejects the need to reconcile the text with any world view other than its own. The doctrine of
infallibility declares the unique ontological status of the biblical text. While it was not introduced into Christian theology by fundamentalist teaching it in emphasised within the fundamentalist belief system. Serving as a hermeneutical principle, as James Barr accurately describes it, the doctrine of infallibility expresses the belief that the Holy Spirit guided the composition of scripture and continues to guide its interpretation ensuring that it is an inerrant authority delivering equal truth in all its parts. It represents, in the fundamentalist mind, a respect for the biblical forms of speech and a respect of the Reformed tradition of affording priority to the natural sense of each passage within its context. This is a priority arising from the understanding that the intended sense of the biblical writes is the inspired word of God and infallible. The authority of the Bible lies in the book itself according to this understanding, not, as modernist exegesis would argue, from what is said in it. Historical Critical exegesis has abandoned these classical claims, replacing the traditional understanding with the notion that scripture is a witness to faith as an existential state or mode of subjectivity. What it deems to be scripture therefore is not its inherent properties, but rather its function within the Church. The premise of the Historical Critical method is that the scripture is a distillation of the Christian faith embodying all its confusions and inconsistencies during the unique period of its earliest gestation. James Barr is concerned to reinforce the authority of that thesis and gain respectful attention for the discoveries of Historical Critical analysis.

This chapter has considered Barr’s account of fundamentalist hermeneutics, his analysis of how fundamentalists read the Bible. Barr concludes that fundamentalist religion is the author of its own meaning.

Contrary to general belief, the core of fundamentalism resides not in the Bible but in a particular kind of religion. (34)

Fundamentalists read the biblical text by way of manipulation and control

......people are not without reason when they say that fundamentalist interpretation ‘takes the Bible literally’. It does this - but only sometimes: in fact, it does at those points at which the structure of fundamentalist religion requires that it should do so. (35)
The originality and creativity of Christianity is severely damaged by this exercise of power over the Biblical text. Barr attempts to justify his conclusions by employing the resources of modern Biblical criticism.

......modern theology and biblical criticism, if valid, would break the intellectual link with the Bible which for fundamentalists provides them with the final assurance that their religious faith is true.

(36)

A rational view of the status of the Bible and the function of exegesis confronts conservative evangelical religion in Barr’s account of fundamentalism. Subsequent chapters will investigate a direction for the critical study of this confrontation. The recommendations of Deconstruction Theory will be adopted as a methodology for asking basic questions about the nature of the biblical text and the activity of reading that text. Deconstruction Theory proposes that writing cannot be reduced to the simple material fixation of living speech. Writing stands in a special relation to what is said. This theory questions the kind of text interpretation which assumes the possibility of confirming the intentions of the author and reconstructing ‘the primary meaning’ of the text. Interpretation, it proposes in the active process of the interpreter in producing. The recommendations bring a critique to both positions in the confrontation between fundamentalist hermeneutics and modern theology and biblical criticism.
NOTES

Notes to Chapter Two: THE HERMENEUTICS OF FUNDAMENTALISM


(3) *ibid.*, p. 9.


(5) *ibid.*, p. 76.

(6) *ibid.*, p. 40.

(7) *ibid.*, p. 74.

(8) *ibid.*, p. 75.

(9) *ibid.*, pp. 75 and 76.

(10) *ibid.*, p. 36.

(11) *ibid.*, p. 49.

(12) *ibid.*, p. 56.

(13) *ibid.*, p. 57.
(14) James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World*, London (1973) S.C.M. p. 120.

(15) *ibid.*, pp. 130 and 131.

(16) *Fundamentalism*, p. 289.

(17) *ibid.*, p. 289.

(18) *ibid.*, pp. 292 and 293.

(19) *ibid.*, p. 295.

(20) *ibid.*, p. 294.

21) *ibid.*, p. 67.

(22) *ibid.*, pp. 67 and 68.


(25) While the antecedents of the notion of Papal Infallibility may have been present in the early Church which held the belief that the Christian faith would be preserved without error the doctrine was not defined until the nineteenth century. The First Vatican Council 1869 to 1870 proclaimed the indelibility of Papal teaching when such teaching, deemed to be within prescribed categories, was made *ex cathedra*. The doctrine expressed the belief that when the Pope taught as Head of the Church on matters of faith and morals his teaching was preserved from error and irreversible. That is not to say that infallibility is a personal and permanent attribute of those who hold the Papal Office but rather an attribute of the office itself, it refers exclusively to the *magisterium* of the Pope. The doctrine was again promulgated by the
Second Vatican Council 1963 to 1965. The theological discussion associated with this doctrine allows one to question the extent to which it has been accepted (particularly in the West) within the Catholic Church. The term infallibility often carries negative connotation in those discussions and the contribution of this notion to an understanding of how the church is preserved from error is widely questioned. Where possible the term is avoided in ecumenical discussions.


(28) ibid.; p 37.


(30) ibid., pp. 173 and 174.


(32) ibid., p. 313.


(34) *Fundamentalism*, p. 11.

(35) ibid., p. 47.

(36) ibid., p. 342.
CHAPTER THREE
THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF FUNDAMENTALISM

Introduction

This chapter stands with chapter two and considers the experiential character of Protestantism which emerges from a fundamentalist reading of the Bible. In chapter two I identified the three hermeneutical principles: factual inerrancy, verbal infallibility and inspiration, which represent, according to Barr’s thesis, the essential character of fundamentalist theology. It was demonstrated that a literal reading of the Bible, normally understood as the distinguishing feature of fundamentalism, constitutes only a secondary element. While maintained wherever possible, it is always sacrificed in favour of inerrancy. This chapter asks of the writings of James Barr, what kind of, experience of Christianity arises from reading the Bible according to these hermeneutical principles? It considers Barr’s characterization of the usage of the Bible in the worship and piety of Protestant fundamentalists, their theology of atonement and sin, the ecclesiastical organization and authority within fundamentalism, and the evangelistic aspirations of fundamentalists. Barr’s ‘extended description’ concludes that fundamentalist religion is extraneous to the Christian tradition, as its theology is extraneous to the biblical text. It is an aberrant form of Christianity therefore, not only in its biblical theology but in its religious praxis. Barr’s conclusion is considered in terms of its theological rationale and the evidence available to substantiate his judgement on what it means to experience Protestant fundamentalism.

The first two chapters of Fundamentalism contain the major conclusions of Barr’s research. He does not, as discussed earlier, give a definition of fundamentalism, but develops a phenomenology of his subject. This phenomenology envisages a matrix of historical, structural but primarily intellectual and religious forms. He identifies a religious structure which provides a context for fundamentalist doctrine and practice but which is not a church. This structure includes elements of organization, positions of authority, lines of communication and identifiable goals, but it is not an example of denominational religion. It possesses an intellectually sophisticated theological doctrine and methodology, but it is not, in Barr’s judgement, a Christian belief system. This chapter will consider each of these elements in an attempt not only to present Barr’s phenomenology but also to assess its philosophical character. Fundamentalists
themselves would agree that central to the doctrinal structure and personal experience of their faith is the appropriate use of the Bible. It was upon this activity, the use of the biblical text, that Barr based his critique of fundamentalist theology as demonstrated in Chapter Two. Again, it is upon this activity that he bases his critique of the practice of fundamentalism.

3.1. The Use or Abuse of the Bible

Whatever ritual and sacramental observances are made by fundamentalists as members of mainline denominations, they have, Barr claims, their own distinctive ritualism. This arises from the manner in which they employ the Bible. The Bible itself is much more than its contents of history and doctrine; it possesses sacramental as well as intellectual attributes.

For the fundamentalist the Bible is more than the source of verity for their religion, more than the essential source or textbook. It is part of the religion itself, indeed it is practically the centre of the religion, the essential nuclear point from which lines of light radiate into every particular aspect. (1)

The Bible functions within fundamentalism as the supreme religious symbol providing the tangible sacred reality necessary for ritual activity. The recitation of biblical verses is a basic feature of fundamentalist picy as is the quotation of texts. Biblical texts are not only employed in preaching and teaching and prayer but are thought relevant to every aspect of daily life. They are learned by heart and frequently recited so that their wisdom might be immediately at hand.

In a religion lacking in ritual, the citation of scripture has often functioned as a practically ritualistic procedure. The Bible is a form of poetry, a myth that coheres, undergirds and harmonizes with the fundamentalist tradition of religion. (2)
Whereas scripture may be employed in a similar fashion in other Christian traditions, the recitation of the Divine Office by Catholic religious for example, Barr identifies a distinctive use in fundamentalism in that the Bible is almost exclusively the focus of prayer and source of spiritual themes. Secondly, although fundamentalism eschews ritual activity, its usage of biblical verses in prayer and song is, in Barr's understanding, a form of ritualism. He concludes that the Bible is celebrated rather than discussed in the experience of most fundamentalists. This celebration predominantly takes the ritualistic form of the recitation of biblical verses in personal prayer and worship, and the extensive quotation of biblical texts in preaching. A deep concern for the precise wording of the biblical text in fundamentalist spirituality is such, Barr concludes, as to almost replace the person of Jesus Christ.

......the position of the Bible within fundamentalist religion stands high above the particular formulations that seek to grasp it and the various arguments that are used to defend it. The religion is an entirety in which the supreme position of the Bible is central, faith in Christ and the experience of salvation, as fundamentalists see it, are not separable from this position of the Bible. (3)

While Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the divine Lord and Saviour, the Bible exclusively provides access to a relationship with him. In the mind of the believer, therefore, salvation depends upon hearing the words of the Bible which make this relationship of forgiveness and divine acceptance possible. No other intellectual or spiritual activity will substitute for a knowledge and acceptance of biblical truths. Indeed, the doctrine and sacramental forms of non biblical religions are judged not only inadequate for salvation but spiritually deluding and morally damaging. The biblical text in this understanding possesses a perfection and sublimity that removes it quite outside the sphere of human reality. It is of all things that which gives the human spirit access to the divine world.

The central feature of the classical fundamentalist doctrine seems to be that the Bible is part of a movement of true doctrine from God to man. It does not emerge from the community; rather it is directed towards the community and transmitted to the community by people like prophets and apostles who are authoritative didactic functionaries. (4)
The Bible therefore is not something that had its origins in human experience but rather with God alone. This view contrasts markedly with Barr's own view which sees the Bible as a product of the human rather than divine realm.

Christian faith is not faith in the Bible, not primarily: it is faith in Christ as that one through whom one comes to God, and through the Bible we meet him and he communicates with us. The Bible is thus the instrument of faith and the expression of faith, rather than one object of faith. (5)

In Barr's understanding the Bible is at the end of the long and complex process of human endeavour to understand and express a relationship with God. It is not, as commonly understood, antecedent to the early church.

Scripture emerged from the tradition of the people of God. Instead of the traditional model which reads something like God - revelation - scripture - church we should have a newer model which would read something like God - people - tradition - scripture, with revelation attached to no one place specifically but rather deriving from all the stages alike. (6)

Fundamentalist doctrine perceives the Bible as part of the divine realm, containing as it does the very words of God revealed to man. Barr, on the other hand, applying the hermeneutics of Historical Criticism and Form Criticism, see it as the product of human aspiration. It is a record of ways, some retained, some discarded, by which God has been discussed. One may not therefore lose sight of the fact that Barr's characterization of the position of the Bible within fundamentalism, contrasts with his own understanding of how the Bible should be perceived and employed by contemporary Protestant Christianity. Whatever reservations he may have about the social or political consequences of fundamentalism, Barr's argument against it is concerned with interpretation. It is part of that long debate within Christianity
concerning biblical hermeneutics and the possibility of imposing upon the Bible ideas extraneous to its character.

......fundamentalist religion is not, as on the surface it appears founded directly on the Bible interpreted in a consistent way, but rather rests on a particular tradition of interpretation. This tradition of interpretation stresses the elements within the Bible which are important for fundamentalist religion, taking them literally where the religion requires it; and equally it passes lightly over the elements which stand within the Bible but are unwelcome to fundamentalist faith. (7)

Though appearing to be primary, the Bible, Barr suggests, is subservient to other principles. These principles are variously described in this instance as "a particular tradition of interpretation", "fundamentalist religion" and "fundamentalist faith" and in his major work as a "self-enclosing ideology". (8) The conclusion that fundamentalism is a form of ideology (9) is developed further in a chapter on fundamentalism in his work on biblical authority; Exploration in Theology, the Scope and Authority of the Bible, published four years after Fundamentalism. In these, as in his two major works on the subject, Barr asserts that what is primary in fundamentalism is not the Bible per se, but a tradition of human religion which endeavours to identify the Bible exclusively with its own doctrine.

Conservative evangelism and fundamentalism are doctrinal and religious positions which seek to tie Christian faith indissolubly to conservative ideology: their doctrines of scripture and scriptural infallibility are devices which ensure that scripture will speak only in terms of this conservative ideology. Seeking to protect the authority of scripture, they have in fact imposed upon scripture a human religious tradition; and seeking to elevate scripture, they have in fact deeply distorted its meaning. (10)

As we have seen the hermeneutical principles employed to secure this identity are those of inerrancy, infallibility and verbal inspiration discussed in the previous chapter. Contrary to the general understanding, Barr concludes, the centre of
fundamentalist doctrine does not reside in the biblical text but in a tradition of human religion. This tradition of 'believing rationalism' employs the form, rather than the substance of biblical principles and biblical authority, to provide a symbol and guarantor for its doctrines.

Fundamentalism is the imposition upon the Bible of a particular tradition of human religion, as the use of the Bible as an instrument of power to secure the success and influence of that form of religion.

(11)

Whereas the form of fundamentalist religion, with its emphasis upon the centrality of the Bible, may appear to be in the tradition of Protestantism, its substance, in Barr's opinion, represents doctrine not found in, nor justified by, the biblical text. The Bible is employed to afford credibility and authority to a theology it does not express. In making this case Barr draws a distinction throughout his thesis between the text as an objective entity, and interpretation or reading of the text. The text, he argues, contains within itself not only the ideas of its authors but directions to its readers. For the fundamentalist the biblical text, Barr argues, directs how it should and should not be read.

3.2 A Church within Church

Barr perceives fundamentalism as a distinctive religion, possessing all the attributes which by definition attach to such a phenomenon. But it is not, he asserts, identifiable in ecclesiastical or denominational forms. Fundamentalism is not a denomination as the term is understood in respect of Catholicism or Christian Science for example. Although some denominations may be predominantly fundamentalist in doctrine and religious character, the structure of fundamentalism, as Barr characterizes it, is extra-denominational.

While contained in, it is not contained by, denominational Christianity. Fundamentalists are to be found in all Protestant denominations, identifiable not by their denominational allegiance but by their doctrine and distinctive piety. There are though non-denominational organizations particularly in such areas as publishing, elementary education and student groups entirely committed to fundamentalist
doctrine. Organizations similar to those in Britain mentioned by Barr can be identified in Australia. The 'Christian' schools provide a significant instance of an extra-denominational organization. These schools, committed to fundamentalist religious doctrine, with a particular emphasis upon creationism, are now to be found in every state of Australia and enjoy increasing popularity. Apart from education, such organizations provide a stable ideological point of reference for committed fundamentalists and may provide emotional support and social identity. Barr identifies the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship in Britain as one example of an extra-denominational organization. Indeed, the publications of this organization were used as the major point of reference for his research. Of the nine works cited in the Bibliography of Fundamentalism as "Major works of reference", six were published by the Inter-Varsity Fellowship and another thirty three are included as "Lesser works". In Australia an analogous organization, the Navigators, is to be found on campuses of universities and in some government high schools.

James Barr's major point on the question of the structure of fundamentalist religion is that it cuts across denominational boundaries giving or withholding support according to its doctrinal stance. Individual fundamentalists may work in support of their fellow parishioners on some issues while on others withhold their co-operation or work actively against a congregational project. This selective stance is held without surrendering denominational identity. Fundamentalism has, in Barr's understanding, produced its own special forms of organization.

Characteristic of such organizations are those which work among children, among young people and students, and certain overseas missionary societies. These organizations are not churches, and those who work in them will be Anglicans, Methodists or whatever it may be; they do not have a ministry of their own and do not celebrate the sacraments. But, though undenominational in this sense, they are commonly very exclusive and non-co-operative towards non-conservative evangelical organizations which work in parallel with them.

Members of these organizations are to be found within the major Protestant ecclesiastical traditions working as Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, parish councillors and missionaries both at home and abroad. While the church may provide
the context and organization for their Christian endeavour, their doctrinal allegiance is extra-denominational. Fundamentalist organizations of the kind identified by Barr provide a setting within which doctrinal purity can be assured. They provide published material, theological and missionary training and the kind of emotional support that can only come from those similarly committed. They identify 'Liberalism' and 'Modernism' (13) in theology wherever it is to be found, as the enemy of the true gospel, and afford committed fundamentalists a definite reference for doctrine and piety.

These organizations form a training ground, a publishing centre, and a remarkably stable ideological centre and point of reference. The main reason for this is their insistence on doctrinal homogeneity and purity. These organizations exist in order to provide a setting and a milieu in which the true gospel, and nothing else, will be preached; and in this purpose they are successful in a way that would not be possible within any of the traditional denominations. (14)

While participating in the life of a particular congregation fundamentalists remain acutely aware of the distinctions which separate them from their fellow parishioners. The distinctions are primarily doctrinal according to Barr. The inerrant and infallible status of the Bible and its primary function in Christian piety and teaching is that which distinguishes a fundamentalist position. Doctrinal principles that identify in the fundamentalist mind the true Christian will determine the range and level of cooperation. Those ignorant or unaccepting of the transcendental status of the Bible and the centrality of its teaching in worship cannot be regarded by them as Christian believers.

It was discussed in the first chapter that central to Barr's theses was the identification of fundamentalism as an intellectual system. Understandably then his description of the character and structure of fundamentalist religion is primarily concerned with doctrine. He does not discuss the phenomenology of religious experience within fundamentalist groups or the significance of personal religious experience within what might be described as the fundamentalist movement. According to some Protestant groups Christianity is deemed authentic if it fulfills such criteria as 'baptism in the spirit', or 'glossolalia', or the presence of a 'healing' ministry. Doctrinal principles, of the kind associated with fundamentalism, would not, in themselves be taken by these
groups as sufficient proof of authentic Christinity. Barr does not address this aspect of
the phenomenology of fundamentalism. He does not consider the religious temperament
of fundamentalism. While prayer and piety are discussed, their structure and character
are not considered in detail. No mention is made of the quality of fellowship within
conservative evangelical congregations or how fundamentalist religion ministers to the
bereaved. Rather Barr concentrates his concern upon fundamentalism as an intellectual
system. In the following section, the character and history of this intellectual system
will be considered.

3.3 Old Theology or New Ideology

As we have seen, James Barr’s “extended description” of fundamentalism characterizes
this form of religion as, a self-enclosing ideology, and intellectual system with its own
peculiar understanding of the nature of the biblical text and the philosophy of
interpretation. As with other Christian traditions, its devotional focus is Jesus Christ,
but fundamentalism, according to Barr, characterizes him as a teacher of biblical
views. The Bible, as discussed in the previous chapter, replaces the person of Jesus
Christ as the centre of devotion. This displacement is effected, Barr claims by a process
he describes as “reification” (15) a concept acquired from anthropology. (16) Though not
discussed in detail, the theological conclusion Barr draws by employing the notion of
“reification” is that the Bible is withdrawn from the field of critical inquiry and
theological analysis. The Bible acquires a symbolic status, the sanctity of which does
not permit the kind of intellectual investigation appropriate to the natural world and
the products of human creation.

......it (the Bible) has a kind of perfection and sublimity that makes it
sacred for us to analyse and criticize its seamless fabric. (17)

Having adopted the term “reification” from social anthropology it becomes invested
with a theological meaning in Barr’s thesis. It gives a status to the Bible which
determines how it is to be read, what the activity of reading the biblical text requires
and precludes. The interpretive devices of infallibility and inspiration ensure that the
Bible will be understood exclusively in terms of what Barr describes as conservative
evangelical ideology. This hermeneutical process renders a religious expression to a
particular intellectual system. This system or apparatus is what fundamentalists value
above all else, according to Barr. Its doctrine and principles of interpretation are the
very object of their belief. The beliefs about the Bible which fundamentalists vigorously defend are beliefs not found in the Bible itself, Barr claims. They are imposed upon it from elsewhere.

These principles, as discussed in the previous chapter, do not have their origin in the biblical text. Rather they represent a propositional theology which asserts that faith is necessarily verified by rational processes. Fundamentalism affirms that the Bible expresses divine truth in propositional statements declaring that biblical truth is both objective and absolute. The conservative evangelical position defended in J.L. Packer’s work *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, first published in 1958 by the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, affirms the need for such principles as inerrancy and infallibility in order to ensure the authority of the Bible.

What Scripture says is to be received as the infallible Word of the infallible God, and to assert biblical inerrancy and infallibility is just to confess faith in (i) the divine origin of the Bible and (ii) the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God. The value of these terms is that they conserve the principle of biblical authority; for statements that are not absolutely true and reliable could not be absolutely authoritative. (18)

Barr argues that the securing of such authority affords exclusive value to a single and particular tradition of thought within the history of biblical theology.

Fundamentalism is basically an intellectual and rational system, and that is why its power is particularly great in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Its thought patterns go back to the traditional conflicts between faith and rationalism. As against the idea that reason contradicts faith, fundamentalism followed the line of arguments that suggested that reason, properly employed supports faith and indeed demonstrates it. (19)
This tradition defends the affirmation that Christianity is a reasoned and systematic belief structure, in which intellectual processes support and complement the response of faith. James Barr envisages fundamentalism as a complex theological architecture posed upon the fulcrum of biblical hermeneutics. The complementary principles of inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration balance its life and doctrine in such a way as to preserve the accepted interpretation of particular doctrine and praxis. The Doctrine of Sin and the Doctrine of Atonement are afforded particular importance within this belief system. While these doctrines are found in some form in all Christian tradition, they are, according to Barr, particularly emphasised within fundamentalism and considered foundational to its teaching and worship. Fundamentalism affirms that the person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible. This affirmation is made with reference to such Christological passages as; Luke 24: 27 and 44, John 5: 39 and Hebrews 10: 7. These passages exemplify the revelation concerning the centrality of the mission of Jesus Christ in the redemption of mankind from original sin.

3.3 (a) The Importance of Sin

If fundamentalism is to be understood as a unified and cohesive intellectual structure, a systematic theology, then the Doctrine of Sin is an essential element of that system. This doctrine has, in Barr's view, a “presuppositional status” (20) in fundamentalist theology and teaching. It provides a reasoning for such foundational concepts within fundamentalism as its anthropology and Doctrine of Atonement and the compelling need to evangelise all peoples. Within this reasoning, the Doctrine of Sin functions as “an argumentative principle” (21) It connects biblical material and conservative evangelical notions in an intellectual context of support and verification. It is, in Barr’s assessment, a device in the sense of an instrument through which something is effected rather than a doctrine in the sense of a precept declared from antecedents. The notion of sin is used and employed to provide a rationale and make certain connections rather than furnish insights towards an evolving anthropology.

......though the doctrine of a universal, all-pervading, totally horrific sin is a common argumentative premise in fundamentalism, there is no reason to suppose that it in fact contains any specifically deep or serious insights into sin. In fact, it tends very easily to let sin be understood as
specific lapses from conformity, or else in its personal advice to
trivialize everything into minor matters. (22)

This 'instrumentalist' rather than 'analytical' view of sin represents the basis of Barr's conclusion that, fundamentalism possesses only a narrow and limited understanding of the Christian Doctrine of Sin. Whether this conclusion, that fundamentalism has no reason to boast of a more profound and radical Doctrine of Sin, can be justified, it requires some comparison with how the doctrine functions within Barr's own theological tradition.

The substance of the Christian notion of sin is generally understood to refer to the universal and hereditary corruption of mankind since the fall of Adam. (23) The angels and mankind possessed a freedom either to accept the order of creation in which they existed, or to rebel (John 1: 5, John 3: 19 and John 9: 41). Since submission to the order of creation would have meant the happiness of mankind, rebellion against it necessarily entailed the loss of happiness. The order which should have obtained between reason and passion was destroyed by the event in the garden, (Genesis 3) and humanity found itself self-condemned to ignorance and concupiscence. St Paul explained the origin, nature and universality of sin in his pastoral epistles. He proclaimed that all men had sinned (Romans 3: 23) and designated the person of Adam as the inaugurator of the sinful condition of humanity (Romans 5: 12 - 21). According to St John, sin consists in preferring darkens to light which is belief in Jesus Christ (John 3: 19 - 21 and John 2: 10). In both Catholic and Protestant theology the state is not merely a psychological condition but a metaphysical state of being. The fall of mankind into sin described as an historical event in Genesis was a fall in the order of being. Once having fallen therefore, humanity cannot by its own efforts regain its former moral stature. But this understanding with its ontological implication that sin is the universal and inherited state of our being was rejected by liberal Protestant theologians as incompatible with scientific knowledge. Man's origins, they claim, were brutish, and a moral state such as that attributed to Adam in Genesis is the consequence of a long evolutionary process as well as moral insight. Further, liberal Protestant thought rejected ontology as a vehicle for theological argument and confined the Doctrine of Sin to that of a reference to mankind's animal ancestry and the corporate power of evil. Nowhere in his writings on fundamentalism does James Barr discuss at length his own understanding of the Doctrine of Sin or directly address this subject. His theology of sin in these writings can only be deduced from his discussion of the distortion and deficiencies of the
fundamentalist interpretation. But the substance of his criticism reflects the objections of the liberal Protestant position.

In his discussion of the formation of the Old Testament canon in *Escaping from Fundamentalism*, Barr reminds his reader of the fact that the phenomenon of human evil is nowhere explained by reference to the transgression of Adam and Eve, and the fact that the term 'sin' does not occur in this story as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. Rather it is only in later interpretations of the story, as found in the apocryphal Book of Wisdom, that sin and death became central themes in the story of the Fall. The use made by St Paul of the Genesis story as the aetiology of human evil represents a reinterpretation of the story of Adam and Eve mediated through the Wisdom literature. (24) Although Barr is primarily concerned with another subject in this explanation, his discussion implies an objection to the use of the story of Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2 as the conclusive explanation of the phenomena of evil. The use of biblical material in this way trivializes a profoundly complex subject. The fundamentalist claim, that their religion takes sin more seriously then do other religions, is, Barr asserts, a hollow boast. It does not illuminate the pervasiveness of sin, its influence even within the affirmation of belief and the practice of religion. (Nor does it provide insight into the nature of evil).

Does conservative evangelism teach that a man in and through his adherence to conservative evangelism may be following out his own sinful impulses, or that conservative faith may be a structure vitiated by the deep and all-pervading sinfulness of mankind? Of course it does not. Sin may be found in religion, but not in conservative evangelical religion. (25)

Barr's research concludes that while the Doctrine of Sin proclaims an inherent corruption within humanity and all that humanity touches, there is no suggestion that this pervades biblical teaching or the forms and structures of evangelical faith. Nor does it stimulate insights into the deep lying strata of human motivation or how evil functions in society. Rather, in Barr's characterization of fundamentalism, the ethics of social relationships are belittled. Human motivations and issues of personal and sexual relationships are not subject to reflective thought but trivialized and dealt with in a pastoral context simply by giving advice. While prescriptive advice on the folly of playing with another's affections or cautioning against hastily marrying on the basis of
a shared devotion to do the Lord’s work, may be sound, it does not, in Barr’s opinion, facilitate insight into the operation of evil in human experience.

All these are indeed not matters without any importance: but as an ethical implication of the (supposedly earth-shaking) gospel they are just laughably negligible in comparison with the perceptions of ethical issues in theologians of mainstream theology. (26)

Non-fundamentalist theology on the other hand considers the issues of personal and social evil in terms of analysis and discovery. There is an expectation of some effect upon human understanding.

The Doctrine of Sin within fundamentalist religion is a fixed body of revealed knowledge. It accounts for the aetiology of evil, it verifies the need for the atoning work of the Christ event and teaches the total depravity of mankind. But, more significantly, in Barr’s view, it functions as an intellectual device to substantiate the claim that fundamentalism exclusively teaches the biblical message. Whether such a claim may be made for fundamentalism in general raises once again the problems of definition and taxonomy discussed in the first chapter of this work. That it is valid for Barr’s “extended description” of fundamentalism, which is the subject of his thesis, is affirmed by fundamentalist literature. One may refer to the exposition of evangelical principles in J.I. Packer’s work ‘Fundamentalism’ and the Word of God. In chapter six of that work, entitled ‘Reason’, the author argues that human pride was responsible for the origin of sin and the same desire for self-sufficiency blinds him today to the verity of scripture. Having referred to Genesis 3: 5 the author concludes;

He (mankind) sought intellectual self-sufficiency, ability to solve all life’s problems without reference to the Word of God. He turned his back on the way of acquiring wisdom by making God’s statements the criteria for his judgement; indeed, he accepts the serpent’s assurance that wisdom could not be had that way at all. He had the audacity to query God’s Word. Pride, and more particularly intellectual pride, was thus the root of his sin. (27)
Pride distorts even the biblical teaching into something other than the inerrant word of God producing what Packer describes in his final chapter as a compromise "one that is partly man-made" (28) The Doctrine of Sin has for fundamentalists a polemical function; while they themselves may suffer from the effects of sin this is only because they are not as fully and consistently committed as they might be.

The Doctrine of Sin is not "looked into" in the sense of being investigated and analyzed, but rather "looked out" from; that is employed as a means of obtaining a perspective on moral and social issues. Sin is a universal and metaphysical reality, it belongs to the nature of man as a fallen creature. Having rebelled against his creator, man is now deprived of divine fellowship, a condition he, by his own efforts, can do nothing to alter. He has descended from one ontological state to another and now depends upon God crossing the barrier. The philosophical status of this doctrine is not questioned within fundamentalist theology; it is accepted with its metaphysical presuppositions as a given. This position necessarily elicits an objection from the kind of critical scholarship represented by James Barr. Theological doctrine is not primarily 'instrumental' in his view, not primarily a means for teaching or polemics, but rather a statement about religious self-consciousness. As Christianity consists in a certain quality and structure of the religious affections, doctrinal statements are but a verbal expression of those affections. It follows therefore, that all doctrine must be directly related to religious self-consciousness. They represent an attempt to express judgements of value, especially in the saving significance of Jesus of Nazareth. Metaphysical constraints, such as that which interprets the story of the 'fall of mankind' in Genesis 1 and 2, as referring to an ontological change in the nature are regarded as unproductive. The task of illuminating religious self-consciousness is not served by metaphysics. Rather this theology understands the gospel of Jesus Christ as teaching the essential goodness of humanity. It attributes to humanity infinite capabilities for growth in reason and freedom to effect a change in all such conditions of ignorance or social injustice as threaten his authentic character. This is a false assertion and a vain hope in the eyes of conservative evangelical religion for whom reform is dependent upon the appropriation of faith in Jesus Christ. The eradication of evil from the earth will not be achieved through any steady progress towards righteousness but by a cataclysmic act of divine intervention. But this position is not representative of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by those who endorse critical scholarship and entertain ideas of human progress. Barr argues that fundamentalism absolves itself from social and political action against injustice and reduces moral theology to the teaching of moral standards.
Thus the general impression received is that, apart from the necessary rebuking of sin and of low moral standards in individuals and community, it is best to leave things alone. Any explicit programme for change is thus more likely to be resisted than any policy of keeping things as they are. Any attempt to introduce change, to plan things in another way, falls under the suspicion that the reformers are motivated by sinful pride ...

Barr therefore condemns fundamentalism for its passivity in the face of institutionalised evil.

3.3. (6) Divine Atonement

The grim and inevitable fact of sin presented in the New Testament condemns mankind to darkness. St Paul describes it as "bondage", a state in which mankind is unable to effect any essential change in his moral nature. (Romans 7: 8 - 25 and Galatians 3: 22). Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the one who brought about the long awaited delivery from this dark imprisonment by giving his own life as a ransom, (Matthew 20: 28, 1 Timothy 2: 6 and Titus 2: 14). In him freedom from the chains of sin and death are to be found, (Romans 3: 24 and 1 Corinthians 1: 30.) His propitiatory act of suffering and death on the cross of Calvary obtained God's pardon for all mankind (Hebrews 5: 7, 7: 25 and 9: 24 and 1 John 2: 2 and 4: 10). The Doctrine of Atonement belongs to soteriology, that part of Christian theology that concerns itself with notions concerning sin, the means of grace, and the prophesied destiny of mankind. A number of different perspectives have been taken of soteriology in the history of Christian thought. What may be described as the Protestant (30) perspective conceives salvation in terms of the restoration of a broken personal relationship. In the Protestant understanding atonement effected the forgiveness of sins and regained divine favour. The barrier had been breached thus restoring a personal communion between God and mankind. The suffering and death of Jesus Christ upon a cross on Mount Calvary (Matthew 27: 32 - 56, Mark 15: 23 - 39 Luke 23: 33 - 46 and John 19: 17 - 37) which restored the fellowship between creator and creature was, like creation itself, an act of divine grace. Human beings were incapable of redeeming their own desperate plight.
Emphasis is placed on different components of soteriology according as different tradition have read and re-read the New Testament. In the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions salvation is regarded more in terms of the deification of mankind by participation in divine grace. According to this understanding humanity is destined to participate in the divine life. The church and the sacraments therefore play a divine part in this economy, since they are the divinely appointed means of grace. As might be expected therefore, the language of ontology is crucial to any discussion of this matter. The Protestant position, which at this level can be said to include the fundamentalist teaching, emphasises total dependence of humanity upon the Christ event for the forgiveness of sins and the restoration of a personal relationship between God and man. This event is the 'essential step' in the salvation history of mankind, as Barr points out in his discussion of the religious basis of fundamentalism.

In this salvation the essential step is something that has already been accomplished by the work of Christ: it is not a step forward which has to be achieved by our human effort. On the cross Christ effected a once-for-all atonement, in which the power of sin was broken and the divine judgement due upon man for his sin was endured by God himself in his love. (31)

In the Christ-event an innocent victim was substituted for the guilty thus releasing fallen humanity from its deserved eternal punishment. Whereas the content of the Doctrine of Atonement found in fundamentalism may accurately reflect the Protestant formulation, the issue for James Barr turns once again on how the doctrine functions. Where is the emphasis placed and for what purpose?

Within the fundamentalist belief system the Doctrine of Atonement, according to Barr, emphasises three aspects of the Christ-event; substitution, sacrifice and penal condemnation. In his passion and death, Christ substituted himself for mankind. He sacrificed himself by taking upon himself the punishment due to the sinful. He suffered on their behalf to overcome the power of sin and death. The emphasis is placed upon the metaphysical aspect of the Gospel narrative. The fact that the Christ-event refers to an essential change in the moral nature of humanity does not, in a fundamentalist reading, constitute the background, but rather the theme of the narrative. The emphasis is made in order to proclaim the divinity of Jesus Christ and teach the profundity of sin. The divine elements in the account are above all significant while
the anthropological theme, the emergence of a new humanity overcoming the bonds of death is a secondary and consequential element. This reading, Barr claims in his discussion of fundamentalist theology, affects the whole character of their religion.

The approach to the atonement for instance, naturally takes the form of God (the Son of God) suffering on our behalf, and not of other conceptions of atonement such as that of the man Jesus making reconciliation as leader of a new manhood. It affects also the balance between the cross and the resurrection and fits with the emphasis, already mentioned, on the crucifixion as God taking our judgement or punishment, more than on the resurrection as man breaking forth from the hands of death and entering into new life. (32)

The metaphysical element is essential to the narrative as it identified the person of Jesus as the Son of God. The principal affirmation of fundamentalism is that Jesus Christ is God and his teachings are the central theme of the scripture; such Christological passages as Matthew 5: 17, Luke 24: 27 and 44, John 5: 39 and Hebrews 10: 7 are deemed to identify this focus. There is, within fundamentalism, a hermeneutical obligation to make the Christo-centric message clear when the scriptures are explained. Fundamentalism affirms that the person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, there is therefore a hermeneutical obligation to make this Christ-centred theme clear. While this focus upon the person of Jesus Christ in the unfolding of biblical revelation appears proper and necessary to Christian hermeneutics. Barr questions where and why emphases are placed. Fundamentalist Christology, he claims, verifies fundamentalist hermeneutics: the argument is straightforward.

A heavy emphasis is placed upon such passages which expressly identify Jesus Christ as God, and the account of the virgin birth and the miracle stories are stressed. The fact that divine imagery is used to describe Jesus only in marginal books such as St John’s Gospel and The Letters of St Paul to Titus is avoided. The emphasis is upon those passages and terms which expressly designate Jesus Christ as God. The nomenclature ‘Son of Man’ is an example. Barr argues that fundamentalist exegesis dissolves the meaning of this widely used term, and others like it. This term is understood as referring to the divine/human nature of Jesus Christ but the human dimension is lost by making the term referentially equivalent to Son of God. The human character of Jesus
Christ evident in the New Testament is consequently understated to allay, Barr claims, the anxiety that he be identified as a noble teacher of ethical principles or the leader of a new humanity. These are ideas they suppose to be associated with theological modernism. The true ontological identity of Jesus Christ as divine is the only perspective from which all references to him should be read. His personality and teachings are in themselves secondary elements in this construction.

They (fundamentalists) bitterly oppose any trends which would concentrate on the teaching of Jesus, as an ethical guidance to be followed, while depending less upon his death upon the cross. It is totally wrong to suppose that by following his teachings or his example we might be able to do something to overcome sin. The teaching and the life of Jesus are subsidiary to his death and make sense only when seen as leading up to it. (33)

But this heavy emphasis upon the divinity of Jesus Christ serves a purpose, Barr claims, other than defending the principle that ethical teachings and good example, even those of Jesus Christ himself, are ineffectual against the bonds of sin. It serves a hermeneutical purpose. Jesus was God and therefore taught with absolute authority. Among his teachings were statements about the Scripture itself. These teachings which refer to historical events evidence the infallible and inerrant character of the Bible.

......the fundamentalist view of the Bible as a whole is very much grounded upon the teachings of Jesus: Jesus taught that David wrote Psalm 110, that Jonas was in the belly of the fish, that David spoke the prophecies named after him: and in order for this teaching to be infallible and inerrant it has to be teaching that comes from God. (35)

It would be inconceivable to receive the teachings of Jesus as being other than accurate in every particular. By taking every opportunity to emphasize the divine nature of Jesus Christ, the divine aspect of the Scripture, its inerrancy and, infallibility are once again verified. The Doctrine of Atonement, like the Doctrine of Sin, becomes functionally related to the Doctrine of Scripture in the fundamentalist mind. In Barr's assessment it provides a ready defence against the claims of other theologies.
Furthermore the emphasis upon the unique significance of the passion and death of Jesus Christ symbolized by the cross furnishes the "key imagery" for conservative evangelical piety and pedagogy.

It (concentration upon the cross in conservative evangelical religion) supplies the key imagery ('Blood of Christ'), the haunting hymns ('When I survey the wondrous cross'), and the centre from which lines radiate to every aspect of religious practice - to the call for conversion, to the dedication for service and sacrifice, to the command to evangelize the world.

The Doctrine of Atonement informs and strengthens fundamentalist religion by identifying its distinction from all theologies and religions and provides an internal connection between the various layers of conservative evangelical belief. But the doctrine places emphasis, Barr asserts, where emphasis should not be, and makes theological claims that the biblical text cannot substantiate. Barr's reading of the account of Jesus Christ in the four gospels is cautionary and restrained. The messianic identity of Jesus and the absolute truth of his teaching are claimed only in marginal texts. In the central gospel narrative Jesus presents his character in an indirect and complex way according to the Higher Criticism that informs Barr's reading. A more appropriate understanding of Jesus' self presentation and and teaching is to contextualize his words in terms of specific subjects rather than employ them to evidence hermeneutical claims.

Jesus' teaching is time-bound and situation-bound, not because of his humanity, because of his being man, but because of the functional character of his teaching. What he taught was not eternal truth valid for all times and situations, but personal address concerned with the situation of Jesus and his hearers at that time. It is therefore entirely to be expected that what he says about himself in his early preaching will be different from what the church says about him after his resurrection. That the teaching is functionally related to the ministry, death and resurrection is a good evangelical insight, which is however quite abandoned when fundamentalists come to talk about the teaching
and use it to validate assertions about literary and historical questions. 

The primacy of Christology is defended in this argument. In Barr's view Christological doctrine, like all doctrine, is a refinement of man's ideas about God. The subject of doctrine, in this case the person and teaching of Jesus Christ, is of primary importance. The doctrine is formulated in order to illuminate the present understanding of this subject. But in fundamentalist theology, christological doctrine is defined in such a way as to provide 'shelter' for the doctrine of biblical inaccuracy. Barr concludes that this hermeneutic principle together with the concomitant principles of infallibility and inspiration provide the initiative in the formulation of the fundamentalist doctrine of atonement.

By contrast to critical exegesis, which, through the application of historical and literary analysis, separates the human aspects of the biblical text from the divine, fundamentalist exegesis allows for no such disjunction. In their theology an analogy is drawn between the person of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. Both, it is supposed, possess divine and human aspects. Jesus Christ is one person uniting two natures and the Scriptures are one written expression uniting two authors God and man. The Scripture is essentially a divine Book as Jesus Christ is essentially God. It is from this divine aspect that one should frame one's thoughts about the nature of the Scripture.

The right way to think of Scripture is to start from the biblical idea that the written scriptures as such are 'the oracles of God' and to study their character as a human book only is one aspect of their character as a divine book.

Both the person of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures were conceived by the Holy Spirit and both involved the use of fallible human agents. But fundamentalists assert, the result was a man without sin and a book without error. As the human form of Christ is found to be without sin, so too the human form of Scripture is found to be without error. The Bible is the indivisible Word of God in human language and all doctrine and teaching that is taken from it necessarily emphasize and reinforce this fact. Any attempt at division in the text between what is human and therefore fallible and what is divine, would destroy its unity and led to subjective interpretations.
Those who start by postulating a distinction between the bible as a human book and the Word of God that is in it are unable, on their own premises, to recognize and exhibit the real oneness of these two things and when they try to state their mutual relationship they lapse into an arbitrary subjectivism.

Within fundamentalist religion the Bible is accepted as a parallel to Jesus Christ the Son of God; it follows therefore that it cannot be in error, if error is to be understood as that which wilfully deceives. The biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of literary forms, corresponds to historical fact. James Barr rejects the defence of biblical inerrancy and argues that this interpretative principle has its origins outside theology.

3.3. (7) Ideology or Religion

The concluding judgement of Barr's study is that fundamentalists are not doing what, in the practice of their religion, they suppose themselves to be doing, and in the measure that they come to perceive this fact they would abandon fundamentalism. In his two major writings on the subject and in many of his articles he describes fundamentalist religion as an 'ideology'. Since 1796 when the French writer A.L.C. Destut de Tracy coined the term 'ideology' as a title for his own science of ideas, its usage has been diverse. While a residue of Destut de Tracy's meaning remains in a current usage of the term - viz an comprehensive theory explaining human experience and a system of ideas and practices based on that theory - many writers in philosophy and politics use the word in their own characteristic, and sometimes neutral, sense. But the long association of the concept of ideology with an all-encompassing theory of society and programme for social behaviour, has put it at odds with the values and aspirations of a pluralist society. In general usage the term is now charged with pejorative shades of meaning. It suffices to discuss three of these negative connotations. (i) The mention of 'ideology' carries with it suggestions of authoritarianism, the promulgation of ideas values, and codes of behaviour 'from above', rather than from the resolution of consensus opinion. Whether such a structure might be appropriate or even necessary for society is not considered in the general reading of the term because of the force of the second negative connotation. (ii) Ideologies carry implications for all major areas of human concern.
While some theorists may question whether a distinction exists between ideology and religion, the latter being not normally associated with a political programme, it is doubtful whether any such distinction exists in the general use of the term. Ideology implies a comprehensive pattern of cognitive and moral beliefs which may include spiritual entities, reinterpret former understandings or deny the existence of all except empirical phenomena. This comprehensive character of ideological thought and its dependence, like that of religion, upon symbolic modes of communication, put it in the same logical category, that of symbolic meaning, as religion itself. (iii) But use of the term 'ideology' gives rise to the suspicion that it refers to something the true nature of which is concealed. The presence of disguised and concealed elements, are in James Barr's assessment, basic to fundamentalist religion. And it is particularly with this third connotation in mind that Barr places fundamentalism in the category of ideology. It is not a question of kinship, the existence of a connection or relationship between ideology and fundamentalist religion, but rather that fundamentalist religion is an ideology. It is something whose true nature is concealed. But the question of whether the same censure may be brought against modern 'scientific' biblical criticism which draws its stimulus and basic principles from the 'ideology' of nineteenth century science is a central theme of this thesis. That fundamentalism is something it does not appear to be is a contention Barr attempts to demonstrate in his discussion of the function of authority within its belief system.

Among the many connotations of the term fundamentalism when it is used in the context of Protestant Christianity is that of a religion, which derives its authority from an immediate appropriation of the biblical scriptures. There is a direct relationship between the received text and the faithful. Where an ecclesiastical structure and authority exists it is regarded, in the general understanding of fundamentalism, as secondary and sometimes even dispensable. What is important to fundamentalists is a direct, unmediated reading of the text of the Bible. Their teaching and preaching affirms that with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit believers may discern for themselves the biblical message. There is no authority greater than the scripture itself. But, despite the suspicion of scholarly and ecclesiastical influence, the centrality of human authority is nowhere more evident, according to Barr's characterization, than in fundamentalist piety and teaching. It is particular preachers and teachers whose ideological 'bona fides' are established who are cited as authorities in fundamentalist literature. The authority of their teaching exercises significantly more influence upon their adherents, Barr claims, than does the authority of ecclesiastical headship in the other Christian traditions.
What fundamentalists talk about in discussion, and what they quote as authority, is often not the bible, but their own ideological leaders, the Billy Grahams, the Francis Schaeffers, the J.I. Packers. The series of gurus who bear the authoritative doctrine and can state it, and who have some sort of reputation, are central. The prominence of these persons is far greater than the prominence of biblical scholars or theologians in non-fundamentalist Christianity, and their authority in ideological matters is far greater than that of bishops or moderators or other official church leaders.

The influence of these leaders maintains the doctrinal purity of fundamentalist religion. What is deemed the substitution of human authority for divine authority in Roman Catholic and liberal Protestant Christianity by fundamentalist apologists, exists, according to Barr, in fundamentalist religion itself. This is another aspect of its ideological character. There are elements of its true nature which are concealed and it is Barr's purpose in his theological study of fundamentalism to unveil these elements.

But in characterizing fundamentalist religion as an ideology does give a relatively simple definition to a complex phenomenon? James Barr does not give a definition of his use of the term 'ideology', but as discussed above uses the term in a general sense and in so doing takes advantage of its negative associations. The limitations of this procedure are clear. If fundamentalist religion is to be described as an ideology, and if by ideology one understands a comprehensive theory of society and a programme predicated on that theory, it follows that such other phenomena as Roman Catholicism or the views of the international scientific community could also be defined as ideologies. If the Roman Catholic tradition within Christianity were considered one identifies an encompassing and cohesive system of belief with implications for both personal and social behaviour. The ideological status (in terms of the definition used in this discussion) of Roman Catholicism is poignantly described by the contemporary Roman Catholic author David Lodge. In the Afterword of his novel The British Museum is Falling Down, David Lodge provides a rationale for the acceptance by Roman Catholics in England of the Church's teaching on artificial birth control during the early 1960's. The distressing and often unsuccessful form of artificial contraception allowed by the papal encyclical Human Vitae was accepted, Lodge argues, because of the existential effect of Catholicism upon its adherents at that time.
Any intelligent, educated Catholic of that generation who had remained a practising Catholic through adolescence and early adulthood had made a kind of existential contract: in return for the reassurance and stability afforded by the Catholic metaphysical system. One accepted the moral imperatives that went with that system even if they were in practice sometimes inhumanly difficult and demanding. It was precisely the strength of the system that it was total, comprehensive and uncompromising, and it seemed to those brought up in the system that to question one part of it was to question all of it, and that to pick and choose among its moral imperatives, flouting those which were inconveniently difficult, was simply hypocritical. (41)

David Lodge’s description of Catholicism is that of a metaphysical belief system the teachings and practices of which have implications for almost every aspect of the lives of its members. (42) Individual components of the system cohere in such a way as to bring a charge of inconsistency of belief if one element is questioned. This characterization of Catholicism reads remarkably similar to aspects of Barr’s characterization of fundamentalism though the respective contexts are very different. Basic to James Barr’s thesis is the understanding, as discussed earlier, that this form of religion is a rational belief system demanding compliance with every particular of its teachings.

The classic fundamentalist thinkers were logically right: you have to accept the entire fundamentalist system, down to every detail. The system is by its nature tied to extremism. Any substantial deviation or admission of weakness, and, logically, the whole thing must collapse. (43)

To question parts of this comprehensive pattern of cognitive and moral belief threatens the whole and, as with the Catholicism Lodge describes, brings a charge of inconsistency of belief. Clearly therefore other forms of religion can and have been described as ‘ideologies’. Is Barr thesis advanced by employing this term?

Understanding the notion of ideology is more than grasping the fact that it implies the reification of certain ideas and values which are themselves historical products. In Barr’s usage it implies a critique of the forgetfulness of that fact. Fundamentalism in its doctrines and religious praxis is a rational belief system, which allows its adherents to
overlook the extent to which the belief and values by which they live are historically
determined. While Barr does not address himself to the history of fundamentalism as a
separate subject, he does consider the aetiology of its major teaching (the Doctrine of
Sin and the Doctrine of Salvation discussed in the previous chapter are examples) and
traces the development of the influence of certain conservative evangelical scholars
and theological schools upon contemporary fundamentalist teaching. The extensive
references, in his major work, to such writers as Charles Hodge (21 citations), B.B.
Warfield (27 citations), K.A. Kitchen (19 citations), R.K. Harrison (15 citations), B.
Ram (14 citations), and J.I. Packer (11 citations) refer to a major element in Barr's
thesis, that fundamentalism does not acknowledge the context from which its theology
emerged. His discussion of the Princeton Theology of Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield
demonstrates the assertion that the ways fundamentalists perceive and argue reflect
(as does all perception and argument) underlying patterns of value. These patterns and
systems of thought have been forgotten, Barr argues, by contemporary fundamentalists,
who attribute their theology to the scriptural texts alone.

Barr attributes primary elements in the fundamentalist doctrine of scripture to
"Princeton Theology", (discussed in Appendix One). This nineteenth century tradition
of theological teaching in North America was dedicated to dogmatic rigour and
confessional loyalty. With its origin in European Calvinism it was established by
Archibald Alexander (1772 to 1851) who was appointed the first Professor of Didactic
and Polemical Theology at Princeton University in 1812, a position he held until his
death. His defence of the verbal inspiration and factual inerrancy of Scripture was
continued by his successor, Charles Hodge (1797 to 1878). Charles Hodge, together with
his son A. A. Hodge (1823 to 1886), provided a systematic explanation of Princeton
Theology in the work Systematic Theology, first published in 1872. It vehemently
opposed the conclusions of biblical criticism and attributed the discrepancies in the
biblical text to translation error. No error, it declared, existed in the original, now lost,
autograph manuscripts. Charles Hodge personally trained more than three thousand
clergymen and his teaching substantially influenced not only Presbyterianism but other
Protestant denominations throughout the United States. The tradition of interpretation
established by Alexander and Hodge was continued into the twentieth century by B.B.
Warfield (1851 to 1921). It is particularly to Warfield that Barr attributes
fundamentalism's unacknowledged debt.
But at least in respect of the doctrine of scripture it was this tradition (Princeton theology), and especially the contribution of Warfield himself, that moulded the set of ideas we now know as fundamentalism. A conservative evangelical bibliography will almost certainly have Warfield's name on its list of authorities for the doctrine of scripture; and any other names there are will in all probability have got their thoughts from Warfield.

B. B. Warfield was the professor of Didactic and Polemical Theology at Princeton University from 1851 to 1921 during which time Princeton Theology stiffened its doctrine of scripture. In vigorous opposition to biblical criticism the notions of inspiration and factual inerrancy were carefully formulated. While significant aspects of Princeton theology were discarded by subsequent fundamentalist theology - the doctrine of predestination is an example - its teaching on inerrancy and the inspiration of scripture can be traced to the formulations of this school. According to Barr's thesis Princeton theology was a conditioning factor in the historical development of what he identifies as the primary doctrinal element in fundamentalism. A reading of fundamentalist literature makes no such recognition and prefers not to consider the history of its own doctrine. It is this insistence upon a historical approach to its own teachings that fundamentalism may warrant Barr's characterization of it as the objectification of a system of ideas.

The religious phenomenology described in this chapter is the praxis which emerges, Barr asserts, from how fundamentalists read the scripture. It is upon this hermeneutical fulcrum that their religion is posed. Fundamentalism shares many of the characteristics of Protestantism and even some of those of Catholicism, but in Barr's mind it cannot be called a legitimate heir to the Christian tradition. Fundamentalism is an aberrant form of Christianity representing the projection of predominantly nineteenth century ideological ideas onto the biblical text. When considering the problem of the biblical authority in contemporary Christianity, Explorations in Theology, the Scope and Authority the Bible published in (1980), he concludes that, in its attempt to reassert the authority of the Bible, fundamentalist interpretation distorts it.
My argument is simply and squarely that fundamentalist, because it insists that the Bible cannot err, not even in historical regards, has been forced to interpret the Bible wrongly; conversely, it is the critical analysis, and not the fundamentalist approach, that has taken the Bible for what it is and interpreted it accordingly.

It is not a biblical religion precisely because of the hermeneutical principles employed to provide the basis of its doctrine.

The problem of fundamentalism is that, far from being a biblical religion, an interpretation of scripture in its own terms, it has evaded the natural and literal sense of the Bible in order to imprison it within a particular tradition of human interpretation.

Unlike the approach of biblical criticism which, Barr concludes, reads the scripture in its own terms, fundamentalism interprets the scripture in doctrinal terms. In both his major works he describes fundamentalism as an ideology, by which he implies, as discussed in the previous section, a mode of interpretation which has not recognized its own philosophical and historical roots, thus supposing itself to occupy an autonomous position above theological and ecclesiastical institutions. This failure to recognize the historically limited and contextual character of its own discourse has serious consequences. It prevents the kind of critical enquiry that would allow the scripture to be interpreted, and the religion experienced, in ways other than those prescribed by doctrine.

As I have depicted it, fundamentalism is basically an intellectual system of such a kind that it deprives the intellectual of power to do much constructively about the faith.

Furthermore Barr morally condemns this kind of religion for the hurtful and distressing effects it has upon those who are unable to accept its doctrinal prescriptions.
The real and fatal cost of fundamentalist doctrine and ideology, as a system of life, is not its inner logical inconsistency, but rather its personal cost: it can be sustained as a viable way of life only at the cost of unchurching and rejecting, as persons, as thinkers, as scholars, and as Christians, all those who question the validity of the conservative option. The presence of the questioner breaks down the unnatural symbiosis of conflicting elements which makes up the total ideology of fundamentalists.

Feelings of alienation, in parishes and within Christian homes themselves, made known to Barr through personal contact and correspondence, testifies to the pain and emotional suffering that fundamentalist religion, in his judgement, often occasions.

Barr’s critical assessment seeks, as we have seen, to identify the presuppositions of fundamentalist hermeneutics and unveil supposed ideological distortions. Underlying this assessment is Barr’s own conception of the biblical text and what it means to read it. The Bible, he asserts, is essentially an ancient text and the more it can be understood as such, through historical and critical analysis, the more its relevance and effect can be appreciated. In the following chapters the possibility of reconstructing the conditions which produced former meanings of the text will be questioned. We will see in chapters four and five that Barr’s conclusions are contestable.
NOTES

Notes to chapter Three: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF FUNDAMENTALISM


(2) *ibid.*, pp. 37 and 28.

(3) *ibid.*, p 38.

(4) *ibid.*, p. 289.


(6) *ibid.*, p. 60.


(8) *Fundamentalism*, p. 341.

(9) This conclusion will be considered fully in Chapter Four where it will be discussed in the context of Barr’s own philosophy of biblical hermeneutics.

(10) *Exploration in Theology, the Scope and Authority of the Bible*, p. 68.


(13) Fundamentalist writers are unanimous in their condemnation of modern liberal theology. What is understood by them as ‘liberalism’ in Biblical studies can be
described in a series of refutations. Fundamentalism denies that the Scripture can accommodate 'preunderstandings' inconsistent with itself such as Secular Humanism or Darwinism. The Church has no message from God apart from the message of Scripture. It denies that general categories which negate historicity may be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual. Scientific hypotheses about the history of the earth may not be invoked to disprove what Scripture teaches about creation. The expressed meaning of the biblical writers does not contain error of any kind. It denies that the message of scripture is detected by the reader's understanding, that the 'horizons' of the biblical writer and the contemporary reader may come together in such a way that what the text communicates to the reader is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the scripture. It denies the legitimacy of any approach to scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support. Extra-biblical philosophies do not disprove the teaching of scripture nor hold priority over it.

(14) ibid., p. 22.

(15) ibid., p. 313.


In that work the term is given a technical definition extending the meaning given in the The Oxford Dictionary where it is defined as "The mental conversion of a person or abstract concept into a thing". The Oxford Dictionary (1933) volume VIII Oxford Clarendon Press p. 384. The definition used by Berger and Luckmann refers to the social process of objectifying a human product or activity in such a way as to place it beyond the realm of human creation. It is thus invested with an objective value as belonging to the natural order or as a product of the divine will. While Barr concludes that this anthropological term aptly described how the Bible acquires its status in fundamentalist society he does not proceed to critically assess the process of 'reification'.


(20) Fundamentalism, p. 177.

(21) ibid., p. 177.

(22) ibid., p. 179.

(23) Whether the idea of universal sinfulness is to be found in the Old Testament apart from the Apocrypha remains a matter of scholarly debate and outside the boundaries of this discussion, but it is presupposed, where it is not explicit, in the New Testament.


(26) ibid., p. 328.

(27) Fundamentalism and the Word of God, p. 139.

(28) ibid., p. 170.

(29) Fundamentalism, p. 115.

(30) There is no attempt to define the term 'Protestant' in the discussion but only a use of the term in contradistinction to the designations 'Catholic' and 'Orthodox' Christianity. My purpose is to give a general account of the Protestant teaching on the subject at hand.
(31) *Fundamentalism*, p.27.

(32) *ibid.*, pp. 27 and 28.

(33) *ibid.*, pp. 169 and 170.

(34) *ibid.*, p. 28.

(35) *ibid.*, pp. 170 and 171.

(36) *ibid.*, p. 28.

(37) *ibid.*, pp. 170 and 171.

(38) 'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God, Some Evangelical Principles, p. 84.

(39) *ibid.*, pp. 84.


(42) While the experience of David Lodge's characters may not be typical of contemporary Roman Catholics, their story observes how that religion was experienced by many in Britain and Australian until relatively recently.

(43) *Escaping from Fundamentalism*, p. 179.

(44) *Fundamentalism*, p. 262.

(45) *Exploration in Theology, the Scope and Authority of the Bible*, p.79.
(46) *ibid.*, p. 79.

(47) *Fundamentalism*, p. 342.

(48) *ibid.*, pp. 314 and 315.
CHAPTER FOUR

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Introduction

James Barr's study condemns fundamentalist theology primarily for its espousal of the hermeneutical principles of inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration which determine its reading of the Scriptures. The stringent application of these principles renders interpretations which, in Barr's view, are not consonant with the nature of the biblical text. While acknowledging the historical arguments against fundamentalist exegesis, Barr bases his thesis on semantic arguments in showing that seminal passages do not mean what fundamentalists take them to mean.

The basis of our argument has rather been a semantic one: the key passages themselves do not mean what fundamentalist understanding takes them to mean. The semantic and the historical sorts of argumentation are linked to one another: but on the whole the historical sort is consequent upon the semantic, rather than the other way round. Thus even if no 'historical criticism' existed, it would be clear on semantic, literary and linguistic grounds alone that the fundamentalist position did not follow from scripture but frequently goes against it. (1)

Barr draws the conclusion by pointing out not only the mistakes in logic of the fundamentalist position as discussed in Chapter Two but also what sometimes appear as conscious manipulation. When Barr writes pastorally on the subject of fundamentalism he describes the sorrow and cruelty that many of his readers have themselves identified in fundamentalist congregations. Underlying his conclusion is of course Barr's own view of the biblical text and the philosophical foundations from which his theology of scripture is drawn. Like that of the fundamentalists, Barr's own biblical theology is itself determined by a philosophy of interpretation which contains many unquestioned assumptions concerning the function of writing and the reading process. The Historical Critical Method of biblical exegesis emerged in the early nineteenth century when historiographical considerations and procedures for literary
analysis, formerly employed in classical studies, were applied to the scriptures (2) But despite the marked differences and the long history of conflict between the Historical Critical Method and conservative evangelical exegesis, both share common assumptions about the nature of texts, and how they contain and transmit meaning. They both represent what will be described as the 'hermeneutics of reconstruction', a belief in the possibility of recovering the subjective intentions of the author. In this chapter the implications of this assumption will be explored and its philosophical validity questioned against contemporary theories of communication. It will be argued that meaning is not a stable entity tied forever to a 'signifier' but necessarily changes with subsequent readings. The argument developed in this chapter is supported by background information on the wider scholarly concerns of James Barr discussed on Appendix Two.

4.1 The Historical Critical Method

The scholarship represented by James Barr assumes that biblical exegesis is a process of critical analysis. It involves a number of formal intellectual skills necessitated by the fact that the biblical text is perceived as a product of historical settings. The gradual accumulation of historical and literary evidence and the reassessment of former readings brings each successive generation of scholarship new insights about the meaning of the text. While acknowledging the historical character of the biblical text and the presence of distinctive literary forms within it, fundamentalist scholarship denies the legitimacy of any exegetical method to question the expressed meaning of the biblical text as understood by conservative evangelical teaching. The distinction between Higher Criticism scholarship, its methods and aims, and those of fundamentalist biblical studies are the constant factor in Barr's writings on this subject. He summarises the significance of this distinction in the conclusion to his monograph, The Fundamentalist Understanding of Scripture published in 1980. The fundamentalist reading of Scripture is impervious to reassessment from new understandings of the historical and literary dimensions of the biblical text.

To sum up, Scripture is deeply loved in fundamentalism: the devotion to it is intense. Our criticism of it is not that it is too exclusively devoted to Scripture but that, our of an understandable devotion to a traditional dogmatic position about the nature of Scripture in general, it has refused to be led by new understandings which have arisen from the
evidence of Scripture itself and which require their older general understandings to be reassessed. Seeking above all things to be biblical, it has actually greatly straitened its own access to the actualities of Scripture.

No recognition is given by fundamentalist teaching to the inner dynamics of the Bible, its evolutionary growth, the conflicts between the theologies contained within it and its dependence upon oral traditions. There are, however, a number of assumptions concerning the nature of the biblical text and the process of reading which Higher Criticism and conservative evangelical exegesis share. A comparison of these assumptions provides a critical stance from which one may gain access to the philosophical foundations of Barr's apologetics.

4.2 Critical Analysis and the Fundamentalist Approach

Both the 'Fundamentalist Approach' and 'Critical Analysis' accept the content and status of the canon of scripture. The Old and New Testaments together represent a closed collection of books which contain a record of the divine/human history of God's dealings with humanity. The canon of scripture represents a unique record of the divine will revealed definitively in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It provides therefore an authoritative standard for Christian belief and practice. Both conservative and liberal biblical theology accept the Scripture as a self-authenticating revelation of God. No writings of the post apostolic church have acquired the status attributed to Scripture. But even beyond these shared affirmations the scholarship represented by James Barr and that of fundamentalism, as Barr characterizes it, hold certain other assumptions in common.

Both assume 'an expressive theory of the text'. This notion asserts that a text discloses the author as the originator and owner of its production, the independent voice behind its words. The text contains the mind of the author, albeit concealed from immediate view. Within fundamentalism the biblical text is regarded as containing, in the sense of holding or embodying, the communications of God. These communications have an objective reality and reside in the normal sense, that is, the grammatical historical sense, of the words of the text. Disclosing the meaning of these communications for their original hearers, and thus discovering the intentions of their divine author, is however not only possible, but the main object of all exegesis. Discussing the interpretation of
scripture, J.I. Packer in his work, 'Fundamentalism and the Word of God, asserts that the first principle of exegesis is to locate the meaning of the text within its historical context in order to discern the intentions of the writer.

The first (principle for interpreting scripture) is that the proper, natural sense of each passage (i.e., the intended sense of the writer) - is to be taken as fundamental; the meaning of texts in their own contexts, and for their original readers, is the necessary starting-point for enquiry into their wider significance. In other words, Scripture statements must be interpreted in the light of the rules of grammar and discourse on the one hand, and of their own place in history on the other.

In other words the biblical text has an autonomy, its meaning exists in the printed word rather than any intentions of the reader. Within fundamentalism 'the expressive theory of the text' is reinforced by the doctrine of inspiration which teaches that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the composition of Scripture but also discloses its meaning. No one can appropriate the message of Scripture save through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12: 13); there is no welcome for the biblical teaching in an unregenerate heart. And exegesis inspired by the Holy Spirit will not be contrary to the teachings of Scripture, as the utterances of God are necessarily harmonious. The force of the doctrine of inspiration may disguise the extent to which conservative evangelical exegesis and historical-Critical exegesis share a perception of the biblical text. The spiritual significance of the text for both traditions of interpretation has been discussed above indicating the extent of their agreement. But there exists a level of shared understanding as to the epistemological status of the text. The Historical-Critical method assumes an 'expressive theory of the text', that the author's intended meaning is retrieved when the words of the text are read within their historical and literary categories. While the biblical text is perceived as an historical document this perception does not conceal its original meaning; as an historical document it is amenable to the same kinds of scholarly analysis as are applied to other ancient writings. When such analysis is applied the original meaning of the text, via the intentions of the author, is theoretically accessible. The Historical-Critical method stands in opposition to the view that exegesis is an objective descriptive enterprise and acknowledges a necessarily interpretive element, but all the while assumes that the original meaning of the text is available. This assumption is
therefore shared by both the conservative tradition of biblical scholarship and that represented by Barr. A second presupposition found in both Barr's own biblical scholarship and fundamentalist scholarship is the notion that the text contains within itself directives as to how it is to be read.

Conservative evangelical theology attributes to the Bible a harmony and consistency that denies the possibility that the meaning of one passage could correct or contradict that of another. This unity of meaning is understood to issue from such hermeneutical principles as factual inerrancy and the notion that the biblical text itself directs how it is to be read. In his defence of conservative evangelical theology Packer asserts that the Bible itself is its own best interpreter, and he gives as an example the illustration of Jesus himself in his teaching on the law of divorce.

The second basic principle of interpretation is that Scripture must interpret Scripture; the scope and significance of one passage is to be brought out by relating it to others. Our Lord gave an example of this when he used Gn.2.24 to show that Moses' law of divorce was no more than a temporary concession to human hard-heartedness. (5)

The Bible contains within itself cross references and connections which contribute to the interpretation of any given subject. The focal point of this unity, according to Packer, which links almost everything that the Bible contains, is St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

From the vantage-point given by Romans, the whole landscape of the Bible is open to view, and the broad relation of the parts to the whole becomes plain. The study of Romans is the fittest starting-point for biblical interpretation and theology. (6)

It is from this point in the New Testament that a systematic relationship can be established between all the significant themes treated in both the Old and New Testaments. While Barr would not accept the hermeneutical significance attributed to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, he does accept the principle that the Bible itself contains its own directives as to its interpretation. His major criticism of
fundamentalists is that in their interpretation of scripture the text is denied its autonomy and read in terms of an external frame of reference. This frame of reference is not to be understood, Barr argues in Chapter Four of Fundamentalism, as the product of a pre-scientific society. He rejects what has become the popular assessment that fundamentalism is a religion of antiquated beliefs, preserved by the socially and economically disadvantaged. Fundamentalism in Barr's view is not intellectually weak. It is, on the contrary, a peculiarly modern phenomenon which draws a particular scientific world view into the work of biblical exegesis. In arguing for the Bible's accurate reporting of historical truth, the fundamentalist approach attempts to show how the Bible argues with the discoveries of scientific research.

It is reasonable comment, therefore, to say that the fundamentalist conception of truth is dominated by a materialistic view, derived from a scientific age. This stress on the accuracy of the Bible, in its material-physical reporting separates modern fundamentalism entirely from that older theology, such as the theology of Luther and Calvin, which it ill-informedly claims as its own forebear. (7)

The events reported in the Bible refer to events which are literally true as that term is normally understood. They are not the results of religious imagination as is supposed by biblical scholarship influenced by such contemporary disciplines as psychology and sociology. (8)

4.3 Apologetics

Despite the distinctive differences between the Historical Critical Method and the fundamentalist approach there are, at the level of communication theory, shared assumptions. While they disagree on the special conventions and procedures for interpretation which enable one to move from the meaning of sentences to the theological meaning of passages, neither liberal theology nor conservative evangelical theology possess what might be called a theory of reading. As both are apologetic enterprises, they lack the objectivity to explain the difficult fact that a passage can have a range of meanings and not just any meaning. They cannot ask how it is that reading produces new meaning, or how it is that reading produces new meanings which are defensible, yet conflict with other defensible readings? While Barr's study of
fundamentalism makes strong criticisms of the fundamentalist form of interpretation, it is essentially a theology commenting upon a theology and thus leaves many philosophical questions about the interpretation of a religious text unanswered. There is, for example, an irresolvable contradiction in western philosophy and literature: the attempt, through language, to arrive at some centre or locus of absolute truth, an aspiration which of necessity lies beyond language. What this tradition (within which both liberal theology and conservative evangelical theology are cousins, albeit distant) systematically forgets is that language can never become a vehicle for such absolute truths since the meanings of words are never context-free. If the canons of communication theory are applied to biblical exegesis as liberal theology would apply the canons of historical and literary analysis, then the object of enquiry, the biblical text, is perceived not as a vehicle of definite achieved meaning but infinitely deferred meanings. Biblical narratives share in the fate of all stories, being vulnerable to misuse and manipulation. Stories do not exist apart from the way in which they are transmitted, performing one function when told by one person and another when told by someone else. There is need for a concern not only with the text as an object for study, to be interrogated and controlled, but equally a concern for the activities involved in receiving and responding to the text. The Historical Critical Method replaced the preconceived unity of the Scriptures with the understanding that they contained an accumulation of interpretations reflecting different theological constructions. The aim, as discussed above, of the Historical Critical Method was to retrieve the original meaning of the text through historical and literary studies. If the theologies and thought-forms of the authors were better understood, it is assumed by this method that readers are restrained from imposing on the material their own concerns and presuppositions. This conclusion is the kernel of Barr's judgement of fundamentalist exegesis.

Conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism are doctrinal and religious positions which seek to tie Christian faith indissolubly to conservative ideology: their doctrine of scripture and scriptural infallibility are devices which ensure that scripture will speak only in terms of this conservative ideology. Seeking to protect the authority of scripture, they have in fact imposed upon scripture a human religious tradition and, seeking to elevate scripture, they have in fact deeply distorted its meaning. The only way we can recover the sense of scripture today is by asking what it really means. It is the critical study of scripture, and the critical theology which accompanies it, that
does this; it is conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism that
seeks to prevent this from being done. (9)

It is only by analysing the biblical text and locating it in its historical and critical
context that the true meaning and sense of Scripture can be retrieved. But does this
conclusion ignore the social nature of language, the understanding that the meaning of a
text is determined by the 'interpretive community' to which the reader belongs? This
understanding asserts that it is not possible to confront a text directly without the
intervention of social and political presuppositions. All interpretive positions
necessarily imply a philosophy of reading, making a 'neutral' or 'innocent' critical
stance impossible. Consequently there is no 'objective' text, no theologically neutral
Bible. According to this notion the text does not function as a transparency through
which readers encounters the subject. Rather the text is 'auto-referential'; it is its own
subject. There is no concrete reality beyond the work itself to which it must be seen to
refer. The understanding of this theory of reading, unlike that assumed by both
conservative evangelical theology and the Historical Critical Method, is that a text
does not convey to its reader a preordained content of knowledge. The biblical text, like
other readable forms of communication, is, according to this understanding, a signifying
system employing specific activities of symbolization which are the source of meaning;
they generate meaning and are therefore the proper object of analysis. This
hermeneutic calls for an end to conclusive readings and asserts that exegesis would
better concern itself with the signifying systems and structures of convention which
make-up the 'grammar' of a reading response. Thus biblical exegesis should be part of a
larger programme devoted to the systematic study of discourse and communication in
general. In this context the Bible is, as Barr described it, a symbol linking together
religion, history, politics and family. It provides a cultural idiom through which the
structure and emotions of these relationships can be expressed. It is, again as Barr
asserts, a way of talking about an ideology. But, in the context of discourse analysis,
this situation prevails, as Barr fails to acknowledge, in whatever circumstances the
biblical text is employed. This fact identifies the need to explore the structures and
forces that recur in reading the biblical text. Further it demands that biblical studies
not only produce interpretations but record the crisis of modern interpretative systems.
Attention should be directed to such interpretations which attempt to deny this crisis.
4.4 Deconstruction Theory

While a discussion of the development and character of deconstruction lies outside the frame of reference of this work, a brief account which will locate it within contemporary hermeneutical theory is necessary before we proceed. There have been many attempts to clarify this concept and its usefulness for philosophy. The present concern is to look at its notion of text against other notions represented in the fundamentalist debate. For this purpose I have confined my discussion of the concepts of Deconstruction to the seminal works of Jacques Derrida and the secondary accounts of his work. Further the technical vocabulary has as far as possible been avoided so that Deconstruction serves the singular purpose of applying pressure to the polemical controversy that is the subject of this discussion.

Deconstruction, inspired in its early development by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida refers to a strategy for reading texts. It perceives the act of writing as a distinct entity in itself not simply a technical instrument. Deconstruction attempts to reveal the extent to which the written word, rather than being a surrogate for speech, a deputy for another sign system, itself creates meaning. It stands in opposition to a retrospective theory of interpretation which attempts, either by historical research or a doctrine of revolution, to reconstruct an original meaning, and proclaim that meaning as the truth of the text. In place of what might be described as ‘archaeological hermeneutics’ in which the text is understood in terms of the world from which it supposedly originated, Deconstruction, on the other hand, understands the text in terms of the world it creates in its relationship with the contemporary reader. Having been removed from the circumstances of its origin the text assumes semantic autonomy and therefore can no longer be considered co-extensive with the thoughts of its author. What access therefore does it give the reader to the mind and intentions of its creator? This questioning of what constitutes a text make Deconstruction theory relevant to our purpose. From the perspective of Deconstruction one could view the biblical text as having a performative (in the sense of effecting a production) as well as a cognitive dimension. This perspective assumes a particular model of communication. Underlying this approach is the assumption that language so completely structures and determines our grasp of the world that ‘reality’ can only be constructed through deep linguistic conventions. Any given literary work, according to this theory, is understood as a sign system (the ordering of ‘arbitrary’ fixable values used to signify thoughts by means of conventions), along with other sign systems. Its meaning though, is to be found not in the author or the subject of the text but in the relationship between reader and text.

Interpretation informed by Deconstruction principles presents a turning away from the
explanation and appreciation of an achieved meaning to an investigation of a text's relation to particular structures, be they rhetorical or sociological. The relationships between reader and text, rather than the self-consciousness of the author, are the major sources of explanation in this form of analysis. A Deconstruction approach to biblical exegesis therefore would describe the system of conventions which enable the biblical texts to have the range of meanings they have. The conventions which allow or make reading and interpretation possible are the real subject of this form of analysis, not the text themselves. It is motivated not by respect for the authority of the text but a desire to experience oneself reading the text. This implies a need to decipher; to bring to the fore elements of the readers' consciousness of which they are not directly aware, and a need to reveal what appears to be spontaneous, the emotions and ideas produced by reading, and show them to be contrived. This method of analysis of the reading process suggests that all texts are related to what individuals and their interpretive community desire to read, and that they are readable in terms of some underlying 'ideology'. (10) It assumes that all texts are historical documents, implying by this that they necessarily reflect the ideas and conventions of an identifiable historical context (a basic assumption of the Historical Critical Method) but also that they move beyond the control of their authors. Meaning is historical in the sense that it necessarily participates in the ideas and conventions of the historical context of the reader.

Following nineteenth century studies in literary theory the Historical Critical Method recognizes that the scriptures, like all texts are not independent of history. Historical and literary circumstances are brought to bear as evidence in Barr's argument against a fundamentalist reading of the Scriptures. But like all readers of a text, biblical scholars are themselves influenced by their own historical circumstances. However, this opposite pole of the reading process is hardly acknowledged by Barr. To this extent he shares with fundamentalism the view that a text is the encoding of a message and that reading is the decoding of that message. The focus of Barr's condemnation of fundamentalism, as discussed above, is that the text does not authorize the hermeneutical principles which produce a fundamentalist reading. But can a study of the historical and literary circumstances of the origin of the biblical text sustain this argument against fundamentalism? Higher Criticism itself affirms that the biblical text, upon being read, moves beyond the control of its author. Deconstruction, when applied to hermeneutics, asserts that texts contain within them no determinate meaning, but that readers impose a determinate and stable meaning upon them. Interpretation, according to this notion, is not a process of decoding a message but rather 'creating' or 'constructing' a message. Once it is published the text begins a life of its
own which the original author no longer controls. Temporal and cultural distance opens
the way to a multiplicity of readings according as the text is received within different
'climates of belief'. Deconstruction analysis attempts to investigate the relativity of
interpretation by making explicit what happens in the relationship between reader
and text. It assumes a role for the readers' own assumptions, expectations and
capacities. Further, it assumes that the text is necessarily an indirect expression of a
value. But the value which lends unity to a text is dependent upon variable modes of
reading. It is these which generate meaning and are the proper subject of hermeneutics.
Barr has demonstrated how they apply to a fundamentalist reading of the biblical
text. These interpretive principles allow the fundamentalist to move backward and
forward from a literal to a non-literal reading according as the pre-accepted theology
is accommodated. The complementary processes of selection and organization, the
formulation and modification of expectations, and the unification of texts are the
devices which maintain a fundamentalist exegesis, according to Barr.

However, what Barr does not recognize is that similar processes are as much at work in
the exegesis of the Higher Criticism as they are in conservative evangelical biblical
studies. If the findings of Deconstruction analysis are to be taken seriously, then a
number of questions must be directed to the Historical Critical Method used by Barr.
Deconstruction is itself not a critical process, rather the critical process is the object of
its attention. Its goal, as we have seen, is not to reveal the meaning of a particular text
but to explore forces and structures that occur in reading and writing. The object is to
develop a self-revelation mediated through the world of the text rather than the
perception that the text is a world to be manipulated, interrogated and controlled. It
assumes that access to the text in any 'pure' form is limited, consequently what is
important is one's relationship with the text. Within the dynamics of this
relationship it asks how the text is prescribed and enriched by the reading process?
Finally, this analysis asks whether one is free in the interpretation of a text to employ
ideology as one element in the appraisal of the value of that text? These questions
necessarily direct themselves to Barr's study of fundamentalism as they put the status
of the author in question.
NOTES

Notes to Chapter Four: BIBLICAL HERMENNEUTICS


(2) It is the practice of this kind of biblical scholarship as exemplified by Albert Schweitzer's work *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* first published in 1910, that Barr refers to when he contrasts 'the fundamentalist approach' to that of critical analysis in his essay *The Problem of Fundamentalism Today*, p. 79. Understanding the biblical text from the perspective of 'critical analysis' involves becoming acclimatized to a world where sensibilities, customs etc are quite different from those of the modern reader. We need to rediscover the history of this world and reconstruct its culture. We must study each narrative in isolation in order to determine precisely the nature of the events to which it purports to bear witness and compare the text with other contemporary material. From the biblical text, critical analysis works back to the sources of the text and thence to the events which gave rise to them. This kind of reading attempts by way of reasoned conjecture and the assessment of comparative possibilities to detail the historical accuracy of the text and establish its authorship. The appreciation of such scientific principles to the study of the biblical text began in the early nineteenth century. Protestant theologians questioned the doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible and acknowledged that contradictions and inconsistencies in the text should not be 'harmonized' away but be treated as the natural consequence of human fallibility. That which James Barr identifies as 'the fundamentalist approach' receives the biblical text as something without precedent or wide social context.


(5) *ibid.*, p. 106.


(9) *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God*, p. 107.


CHAPTER FIVE
THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE TEXT

Introduction

We have seen so far neither liberal theology nor conservative evangelical theology possess a theory of reading. Both are apologetic enterprises and lack the objectivity to ask how it is that reading produces new meanings which are defensible, yet are in conflict with other defensible readings? Contemporary studies in hermeneutics (for example Frank Goversmith (ed.) The Theory of Reading, Susan Suleiman and Inge Crosman (eds.) The Reader in the Text and, Jonathan Culler On Deconstruction, question the idealistic view of the text which attributes to it an essential meaning. They conclude that texts with social and religious significance do not have hermeneutical autonomy but are rather transformed by the reading process. The spoken word is taken to be the direct expression of the intention of the speaker. It delivers its meaning without diminution, without distortion and without mediation. But the written word, as the sign of the spoken word is only the signifier of a signified. Writing is a secondary ancillary, reduced, and probably 'debased' form of language. By mediating it, writing distorts the meaning which is manifested immediately in speech. (1) These conclusions are relevant to James Barr's study of fundamentalism precisely because of his philosophical assumptions concerning the nature of the biblical text. A given biblical passage, like ordinary discourse, is not more difficult to paraphrase them any other narrative, and other than the problem of translation, its interpretation does not pose any particular linguistic problems. But of course the initial interpretation does not exhaust its meaning; rather the first meaning constitutes a complex signal that must become the object of a second symbolic interpretation. The text then becomes an instrument of social communication, involving both the author's and the reader's experience. In science a maximum of data is accounted for by a minimum number of hypotheses, but symbolic discourse ignores this economy; it retains from experience a minimum of data to establish a maximum number of hypotheses.

This process is a necessary part of reading, according to Deconstruction theory, and would affect fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists alike. Both share the notion of the text. Both read the text as if it were a transparency through which, with greater or less difficulty, the readers encounters his subject. Deconstruction criticism argues that all critical positions mask ideology - the beliefs of the interpretive community controls
the reading process. Meaning, according to this understanding, is a function of conventions and agreement. Barr's analysis of fundamentalism identifies the conventions which produces a fundamentalist reading of the scriptures, but does not identify the conventions of his own interpretive community. The functional relationship between the reader and the biblical text remains relatively unexplained in biblical theology, and the experience whereby individual readers receive and appropriate or realize the message of the text is not itself seen as a subject for consideration. But deconstruction analysis suggests that it is the act of 'appropriation' and 'realization' that transforms the text itself. This transformation occurs as the reader advances through the text engaged in the complementary processes of selection, organization and the formulation of expectations. This chapter will consider conceptual issues associated with the notion of text and the activities of writing and reading.

The generally accepted understanding of the act of writing is that it is an attenuated version of speech. As speech is a form of self presence where one's words give immediate and direct access to one's thoughts, writing is a form of the same process. While there is an awareness that the meaning of what is written is subject to interferences of every kind, there is a general acceptance of writing as a idealized speech in theological discussion as there is elsewhere. Deconstruction theory contends, however, that no writer is completely in control of the product of his writing.

Speech is seen as indirect contact with meaning: words issue from the speaker as the spontaneous and nearly transparent signs of his present thought, which the attendant listener hopes to grasp. Writing, on the other hand, consists of physical marks that are divorced from the thought that may have produced them. It characteristically functions in the absence of a speaker, gives uncertain access to a thought, and can even appear as wholly anonymous, cut off from any speaker or author.

Writing thus seems to be not merely a technical device for representing speech but a distortion of speech.

(2)

Given that a writer knows what he means and intends, this thought makes his language mean exactly what he wants it to. What is 'signified' in the text of his writing is also itself a 'signifier' and so does not function to anchor any given 'sign' securely to any extra-linguistic reality. Having been severed from its origin the text comes to testify not to what it claims - what is 'present', but to what is 'absent', that is
what the text makes available in its reaction to different reading communities. In this light the biblical text is never completely in control of its implications being influenced by other texts both within and beyond the canon of scripture. It is, itself, something which 'reads' as well as something which is read. The text, according to this thought, does not function as a unit of meaning (a 'signified'), but as that which produces certain effects. It follows that the written text gives uncertain access to the mind of its author, and the meaning of the text remains unspecifiable apart from the relationship of particular points of view. Deconstruction does not foreclose on the possibility of determining meaning in the study of sacred texts, but directs attention to writing as something other than a transparency through which one may glimpse a preordained meaning.

Barr's initial criticism that fundamentalist teaching confuses the Words of God with the biblical text implies the notion that the written word is an entity in itself, an icon, something without precedent or wider historical context. The biblical text, in Barr's view, is a belated testimony whose meaning is subject to the effects of human history. But this forceful criticism notwithstanding, the theologies involved in the fundamentalist debate, while differing on almost everything else, are astoundingly alike in their notion of what constitutes a text.

5.1 The Notion of Text

It follows then that the Deconstruction theory of communication would attend to the fact that the study of the biblical text should concern not only the text, but equally the actions involved in responding to the text. It assumes that any literary work has two poles: (i) the author's text, and (ii) the interpretation accomplished by the reader. The meaning is not identical with either but is situated somewhere between the two.

... like the text and its meanings, the reader too is a product of the strategies of an interpretative community, constituted as reader by the mental operations it makes available. (3)

Thus exclusive attention either to the author or to the readers' psychology or to ideology indicates little about the reading process, which alone is responsible for meaning. The assumption in terms of this theory is that there is no common code; if
there were, accurate communication would be ensured since the message would travel only one way from text to reader. The theory, however, asserts that the reader receives the message by actually composing it. Reading therefore is not a passive act of consumption, despite the awe associated with the reading of sacred texts, nor is it a moment of unanalyzable communion between a self and a text. How, though, might it be analyzed so as to expose the operations that engender plausible interpretations? What are the processes that occur as a reader advances through the text and derives from it, and/or imposes upon it, a pattern of meaning.

First let us look again at the two poles in this phenomenon: the author and the text. It was concluded earlier that both fundamentalist and Historical Critical exegesis imply an expressive theory of literature. This asserts that a text discloses the author, the author is the voice behind the text, the originator and owner of its production. The text conveys the mind of the author, albeit concealed from immediate view. However, according to Deconstruction theory, that which the text conveys is not only the author's intention, since, once written and separated from its historical roots, the text assumes a life of its own. Through being read it becomes 'infiltrated', as it were, with other texts such that no 'first', 'pure' or 'original' text can be identified. Its unity of meaning therefore does not lie in its origin, that is with the author, but its destination, the reader. The operations of this process are such that a transformation takes place as follows:

1) the author's account.

2) the imaginary situation evoked by the author.

3) the universe constructed by the reader.

4) the reader's account.

In this transformation the relation skips between stages one and two, and between three and four. The relationship between stages one and two is a relationship of 'signification'. That is, they involve signified facts which are understood simply through a knowledge of the language. The relationship between stages two and three, on the other hand, is a relationship of 'symbolization'. Because the text is old and distant from its original world of reference, it has become more and more difficult to penetrate the connotations of meaning. While historical scholarship attempts to recover some of this loss, it must necessarily remain inadequate because symbolism is not
entirely dependent upon our volume of information, but also upon the reading process. It is at this point, therefore, in the reading process, (between stages two and three), that the text becomes very efficient in reflecting the contents of the reader’s mind; their previously internalized ideological values. (As discussed above, the theory rejects the idea of a self-aware critical intelligence directly confronting a text, and asserts that all critical positions imply largely undisclosed ideological assumptions.) The transformation that takes place between stages two and three allows these values to appear as universal principles through the agency of the text at stage four. Now, whereas Barr touches upon this process when he discusses the idea of ‘symbolism’ and ‘reification’, he suggests that it is something exclusive to fundamentalism. However, both forms of exegesis - fundamentalism, and that represented by Barr himself - understand the meaning of a text to be explicitly and objectively present in its language, and the work of the commentator is simply to make this original meaning transparent.

While Barr’s criticism of fundamentalism is forceful indeed, he shares with fundamentalists a similar philosophy of the text. Central to Barr’s study of fundamentalism is the disclosure of the nature and operation of the interpretive strategies fundamentalists bring to the biblical text. But it is impossible to confront a text without implying a particular way of reading. Every text is constituted of a series of formal structures upon which readers confer meaning by the way they read. Therefore an original written text and subsequent reproductions of it are necessarily different, quite apart from the fact that it may be a translation, as in the case of the scriptures. The reader, according to Deconstruction theory, confronts the text only with the intervention of presuppositions. No individual reader decides the meaning of the text but rather the group to which the reader belongs. It is the interpretive community that confers determinate and stable meaning in culturally conditioned forms. Deconstruction seeks therefore to provide the reflective awareness of what takes place in the reading process.

5.2 The Activity of Reading

Clearly, reading an historical document is different from participating in a contemporary dialogue. In a dialogue we may not be prepared to claim that we have penetrated the mind of the other person but there is a common situation, and a shared cultural and linguistic context. When discourse assumes a written form and is separated from its immediate circumstances, it embarks upon quite a new path. The text, having moved away from its historical frame of reference, is subsequently perceived and read
in distinctive ways. Reading involves a reaction to the text as a series of formal structures upon which the reading process confers meaning. The way a text is read determines which of its many formal features and patterns count as ‘facts’ of the text. The principle of factual inerrancy does not, as Barr again and again demonstrates, allow divergent or contradictory accounts of the same event to threaten the structural unity of the scripture. Meaning is not inherent in the text of scripture but is an ‘inference’ drawn by the construing mind of the reader, according to Deconstruction theory. The convention that authors make meaning arose from a desire to think of ‘truth’ as single and unequivocal, an understanding which images writing as antithetical to the process of reading. Writers embody their view of reality in words and send it to the reader who removes this ‘content’ from its verbal ‘form’. Thus, according to this ‘idealistic’ understanding of the text, the biblical text is an object endowed with formal meaning. In this view readers see themselves as servants of the text. To explain facts about the form and meaning that biblical texts have for readers, is to construct hypotheses about conventions and interpretive operations in the reading process and the conditions of meaning. This involves a study of reading.

The study of reading is then a way of investigating how literary works have the meaning they do and it leaves entirely open the question of what kinds of meaning or what range of meanings a work may have. Deconstruction analysis is relevant precisely because there is no agreement among readers. It is particularly relevant to the study of religious texts. Reading and interpreting the scripture may be carried out in solitude but it is normally a highly social activity which cannot be separated from the interpersonal and institutional conventions that are explicitly manifest in theology and preaching. Distinctive conventions prevail in fundamentalist religion as Barr has disclosed. It is not until fundamentalist readers have reduced a piece of scripture to agree with these conventions, that they feel they have properly ‘understood’ the text. The activity of interpretation is a process of accepting what is recognized, and of filtering out what is incompatible. In a fundamentalist interpretation a literal reading is applied in one place but withheld in another. A substantial part of Barr’s argument against fundamentalist interpretation demonstrates this, attempting at the same time to reveal its inconsistency. But what nor Barr and the Historical Critical Method constitutes an obstacle in the quest for a coherent result, fundamentalism understands as a logic peculiar to the text. The question of factual inerrancy may be considered in this light.
Factual inerrancy - the understanding that the Bible is free from any kind of error not only in its doctrinal content but also in its historical details - entirely dominates, according to Barr, fundamentalist hermeneutics. The question raises epistemological issues since the principle of inerrancy proposes, together with the Correspondence Theory of Truth, that there is a Biblical Theory of Truth. The Correspondence Theory of Truth states that truth is not an entity nor is it a property of statements, but rather the notion that truth is a relationship between propositions expressed in language and the world. An accurate statement of what exactly this relationship or 'correspondence' is, is of course difficult to give. The common understanding is that the content of what is stated agrees with the state of affairs. That is, correspondence is seen as congruity. But is this theory of truth relevant to the scripture, or must one look to the scripture itself for a different theory of truth?

Both Barr and fundamentalist exegesis agree that the scripture conveys its own rules as to how it is to be read. It follows that the inerrancy or otherwise of the biblical text must be made on the basis of the scriptures' own concept of truth and error. The definition of terms such as 'inerrancy', 'infallibility' and 'error' should be determined not by secular standards but the theology of the text itself. Within the context of the scripture 'error' means wilful deception, not divergence from formal accuracy. No passage can be deemed in error, according to fundamentalist exegesis, because there is no wilful deception. God himself being the author of scripture and his Holy Spirit its expositor guarantees its truth.

The Bible is inspired in the sense of being word-for-word God-given. It is a record and explanation of divine revelation which is both complete (sufficient) and comprehensible (perspicuous); that is to say, it contains all that the church needs to know in this world for its guidance in the way of salvation and service, and it contains the principles for its own interpretation within itself. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, who caused it to be written, has been given to the church to cause believers to recognize it for the divine word that it is, and to enable them to interpret it rightly and understand its meaning.

To suggest that scripture was anything but trustworthy in every particular would from this perspective questions the authority of God himself. If there were wilful deception in historical and geographical matters could one guarantee the validity of doctrinal
and spiritual statements? The issue from the perspective of fundamentalist exegesis is not inerrancy, the extent of biblical truth, but biblical truth per se. Error in the sense of wilful deception is inconceivable therefore the issue is not the facticity of inerrancy as James Barr discusses it, but the conceivability of inerrancy. The scripture, like God himself, belongs to a separate category of being. The doctrine of biblical inerrancy, that the Bible speaks truthfully on all matters about which it addresses including history and science, is a doctrine traditionally held by the Christian Church. It was the accepted doctrine of the early church and remained unquestioned as part of its ‘central tradition’ until the Eighteenth Century. It was not until the Second Vatican Council that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy was limited in Catholicism to spiritual and historical matters pertaining to Salvation. (5). The traditional view therefore of the biblical text is that which participates in the divine realm. While containing historical fact itself, it was a-historical. Barr’s attempt to formulate a doctrine of scripture, on the other hand, apart from the conditions of revelation see it in the light of a developing, pluralist tradition. The meaning of the text for him is on the level of the human. This opens up a critique of language and a refusal to accept the imposition onto the text of authority structures foreign to the text itself. Together with a limited view of revelation, he identifies historical laws of development which are a vehicle for the communication of spiritual truths. The task of hermeneutics, as he understands it, is to uncover the presuppositions of those who would explain human phenomena as revelation. In Barr’s mind the role of the principle of inerrancy within fundamentalism does not allow a reading to be examined by the text itself. That is, the reading of the text when informed by the principle of inerrancy confers an exclusive meaning. Thereafter, within that ‘reading community’, this meaning is inseparable from the text itself. Hermeneutics is understood in this context as a ‘closed ended’ process wherein the meaning is implicitly and objectively present in the language. This doctrine of interpretation simply continues the Christian tradition of focusing upon the absolute and transcendent Word of God, rather than the subjective structures of religious awareness. The complementary principles of inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration represent an effort to reassert the inviolability of the biblical text and insulate Christian belief from the type of scrutiny and interpretation to which all other forms of human thought are justifiably refered. In opposition to this perspective, Barr understands religious consciousness and the content of Faith as subjects for critical enquiry. Barr criticizes fundamentalists, as we have seen, for their insistence upon a correspondence between the content of the biblical text and the facts of the external world, the view that scripture refers to objects beyond itself, the persons and events of salvation history. If these references cannot be substantiated then Christian faith has no objective content. Barr rejected this view as philosophically antiquated.
Clearly, one cannot prove what all fundamentalists have thought, but it is not difficult to show what leading figures in the movement have thought, and in the case of people like Hodges and Warfield a good deal of this is plainly set out in their writings. It cannot, I think, be doubted what philosophical position they held: it was a pre-Kantian eighteenth-century empirical rationalism.

Barr’s critique seems to propose that through critical research we can reach a sufficient conception of truth, both secular and religious truth. That is, critical enquiry will of itself yield the truth of the text. The activity of exegesis therefore demands a penetration of the manifest content of consciousness to its psychological and historical base. But one can argue against this view that such an activity may advance particular elements in a fashion analogous to conferring an absolute status upon the text, as in the case in fundamentalism itself. Rather than uncovering the multi-dimensional nature of religious expression, the kind of study conducted by Barr tends to become reductionist. He asserts the importance of the author, and the need to understand the author as achievable goals, through the processes of historical reconstruction. But this attention to the history of the text remains curiously insensitive to the future which the text opens upon interpretation. It is just as insensitive to what the text becomes upon interpretation, as fundamentalist interpretation is insensitive to historical facts. In order therefore to arrive at a satisfactory theory of biblical hermeneutics one must re-examine the relation between author, text and reader.

The world of the text invariably reflects the psychology of authors and the cultural and historical circumstances within which they wrote. But even if reading could understand authors as they understood themselves, through the process of historical reconstruction, a religious text always implies more than the world from which it originated. The text is both dependent upon and independent of (as a result of the reading process) the author. It develops a semantic autonomy as it is read. The text is not an authorless entity, nor is it absolute in the determination of meaning. Meaning, as discussed above, is not a function of the relationship of experience to authorial intention, but emerges from the encounter between text and reader. This encounter is mediated through some historical tradition of reading. Again, as the reader questions the text, the text questions the reader; it is not a matter of a self-contained subject seeking to penetrate an object. Interpretation involves a creative interaction between
subject and object, that is, the establishment of something new. The product of interpretation is therefore the coincidence of subjectivity and objectivity.

The contemporary biblical text is infiltrated by previous traditions of interpretation, 'previous texts'. These previous texts reside in the contemporary text and operate in such a way that no original text can be identified. The hypothetical 'contemporary' text is necessarily delineated by the tradition of reading. No text therefore is a static entity; rather the unity of structure identified within a text represents the text at an historical moment. While hermeneutical principles such as inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration may be established, the text itself is not established; it is never closed. As no text is closed, no text conceals a unity or symbolism which can be recovered through historical reconstruction. Those factors which identify: thematic structure, authorial intention, symbolic frame of reference, confer meaning upon the text at a particular point in time. Discussions of these factors therefore refer to the text, not at its origins but a particular and transitory point in its history. However, an appreciation of this historicity of the biblical text is overlooked by both fundamentalist exegesis and Barr's own approach to the biblical text.
NOTES

Notes to Chapter Five: THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE TEXT


(2) *ibid.*, p. 100.

(3) *ibid.*, p. 74.


(5) Section 11 of the document, 'Dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation' promulgated at the Second Vatican Council acknowledges that while the Bible contains only the truth it was not written to teach natural science or history but touches these subjects only in so far as they concern salvation. Walter M. Abbot in his edition of the documents; *The Documents of Vatican II*, London (1966) p. 119, states that the caveat "for the sake of salvation" was a last minute addition to this document.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

"The problem of fundamentalism", as Barr describes it, is, in the first instance, a hermeneutical problem for biblical studies. A formal academic study of this religious phenomenon is required to counter the propaganda which fundamentalists themselves give of their own religion.

There is a need for a body of careful analysis of fundamentalism in its impact on biblical study and theology, made from outside, to set against the accounts, invariably propagandistic, which fundamentalists give of their own thinking and operations. (1)

There is a need therefore to give an objective account of fundamentalist interpretation. Far from being anti-intellectual and a religion that distracts reason, as the British and North American scholarly communities commonly believe, fundamentalists do not reject science and argument. Rather, they employ a particular understanding of science. Furthermore in Barr's view, fundamentalism presents grave pastoral questions to Christianity.

The issues involved in fundamentalism are without doubt among the most serious pastoral problems for the church today. Very many people are concerned with them. (2)

There is, in his mind, a deep concern for the effects of fundamentalism upon the lives of individual Christian people and congregations. Barr's research has identified fundamentalism as a source of severe conflict within the lives of Christians occasioning emotional distress, alienation and marital breakdown. It has given rise to tension within congregations and between congregations within the same denomination. He identifies an expression of Christianity which is extremely aggressive especially against those whom it regards as theologically liberal. And further still, Barr considers fundamentalism a threat to international security.
And, on a world-wide scale, when one looks at the social and political implications, few can doubt what many observers have noted: that the continuance of religious fundamentalism and of the attitudes associated with it, may have great importance in determining whether or not mankind is to be destroyed through nuclear warfare.

Fundamentalism imposes itself upon the attention of modern theology not only because of the interpretive strategies it brings to exegesis, but significantly for its social and political consequences. While Barr's study of this phenomenon concentrates on hermeneutics it remains throughout keenly aware of the personal and social consequences of fundamentalist Christianity. Far from reserving judgement, Barr forcefully condemns fundamentalism in each of his writings. In this sense Barr's study is part of a long tradition of Christian apologetics which seeks to discuss truth and falsehood as orthodoxy and heresy. While this has allowed for considerable insight into the theological and social character of fundamentalism it has, at the same time, opened up perennial questions about methodology in the formal discussion of religious phenomena.

This thesis argues that biblical exegesis, the art of explaining and understanding the biblical text, has, irrespective of hermeneutical principles, a deep and complex relation with the structure of power and social values that organise human life. The question has to be asked; what belongs to exegesis as an autonomous art and what belongs to the ideologies that underlie interpretive tactics? Barr has been concerned to show the ideological influences upon critical strategies in fundamentalist exegesis. This thesis has been concerned to demonstrate the necessarily conditioned nature of all hermeneutical activity. The understanding that ideologies are "built into" the very mechanisms that organise the production of meaning.

While there is an awareness that the meaning of what is written is subject to interferences of every kind, there is a general acceptance in theological discussion, as there is elsewhere, that writing is a kind of idealized speech. Deconstruction theory contends, however, that no writer is completely in control of the product of their writing. Given that a writer knows what he means and intends, this belief does not make his language mean exactly as he wishes. What is 'signified' in the text of his writing is also itself a 'signifier' and so does not function to anchor any given 'sign'
securely to any extra-linguistic reality. Having been severed from its origin the text comes to testify not to what it claims, what is 'present', but to what is 'absent'. That is what the text makes available in its reaction to different reading communities. In this light the biblical text is never completely in control of its implications being influenced by other texts both within and beyond the canon of scripture. It is, itself, something which 'reads' as well as something which is read. The received text, according to this thought, does not function as a unit of meaning (a 'signified'), delivering its meaning without change or diminution, but itself produces particular effects. It follows that the written text gives uncertain access to the mind of its author, and the meaning of the text remains unspecifiable apart from the relationship of particular points of view. Deconstruction does not foreclose on the possibility of determining meaning in the study of sacred texts, but directs attention to writing as something other than a transparency through which one may glimpse a preordained meaning.

Deconstruction theory as discussed in Chapter Five, denies the existence of any meaning independent of the 'local' community and its traditions. It is the values and conventions of local interpretative communities which impress themselves upon the reader as objective criteria, and decide what is an admissible interpretation of a text and what is to be rejected. But, to follow the path of this thought, would, it appears at first sight, lead one into the cul-de-sac of relativity. Deconstruction criticism could lead one to believe that all discursive paths are dead ends. The conclusion that all interpretations are on the same level making it impossible to discern which interpretations of Christianity are 'admissible', in the sense of being faithful to the biblical text, and which are not. There are though, resolutions to this dilemma signalled by Deconstruction analysis itself, but before following this path it is necessary to recall how, according to the fundamentalist mind, meaning is produced.

The language of the Biblical text in a fundamentalist reading enforces its own system of interpretation and prescribes the boundaries of meaning by the operation of the principles of inerrancy, inspiration and infallibility. In this system the reader is positioned as the spectator of a story, he simply catches figures performing their narrative functions. They do not need him in order to narrate themselves. The author's voice is throughout the text unitary and consistent. His voice is made available by the text to those of good conscience irrespective of their cultural context. Indeed the verbal and intentional unity of this voice asserts itself over against all competing constructions. All constructions, which argue that the original voice of the text is in some way muted or obscured by the text itself. The primary character of the biblical text, according to this understanding, is its ability to make known the immediate and
accessible presence of its single author. Deconstruction would argue, as discussed in
Chapter Five that the structure of writing is such that it is constituted both by a
presence and by the absence of what it signifies.

In this understanding of writing there is no primary signified, no primordial presence,
but only an endless succession of interpretations. The signs which constitute the text are
always seen to change, according as the context of reception changes, the enabling
conditions of interpretation. No context can circumscribe a sign's meaning. The sign's
meaning will alter when repeated in a different context, as the sign is structurally open
to repetition.

To deconstruct a text therefore is to draw out the conditions of possibility that
underwrite the truth claims of the discourse. The object is to show that these conditions
of possibility prevent the text from meaning exactly what it says. It represents a
critique of 'logocentric' reason which, as discussed earlier in this thesis is that
intellectual process which aims at a perfect unmediated access to knowledge and truth.
Fundamentalists would argue that that without the possibility of intellectual
certainty one necessarily falls into relativism and religious anarchism.

In the context of a discussion of the so called 'Cartesian Project' the claim that human
reason is capable of possessing an indubitable foundation of knowledge, Max
Charlesworth puts forward the possibility of an anti-foundationalist doctrine of
scripture. His argument begins by questioning that understanding of scripture which has
it's philosophical roots in the notion, that external facts are objectively knowable by
dispassionate and unbiased observers. This view of truth, discussed above in Chapter
Two and Appendix One, placed extreme significance upon the written word to the
exclusion of the other elements in the reading process identified in Chapter Five. If
truth were the same for all ages, and apparent primarily in objective facts, as the
Baconian notions (favoured by fundamentalists) reasons, then the written word as found
in the biblical text, was the most reliable means for permanently and precisely
displaying this truth. This understanding only permits a doctrine of scripture which
confines itself to the isolated written word. Charlesworth employs an enlarged concept
of tradition to redirect attention to a process of signification that is ignored in both
fundamentalism and the Historical Critical Method. Attention to the figurative
potential of language identifies a process in which meaning is differed, rather than
defined. The idea of tradition which has always been an integral part of religious
thought may be enlarged to show the kind of self critical and self reforming reading of
the biblical text advanced by Deconstruction.
Tradition is not static or conservative, according to Charlesworth, but dynamic and creative. Like language it is open textured and generative; it can embody conflict within its continuity, as it embodies both knowledge and power. Tradition as a hermeneutical principal, a way of approaching the biblical text, embodies continuities of conflict, it is only partially constituted by argument as to its own values and goals. It has a built-in deconstructive function. It is this function which allows exegesis to appreciate that meaning, far from being absolutely indubitable and self evident, a Cartesian 'foundationalism', is a product of the relationship, sometimes a relationship of conflict, between the text and communities of interpretation. In the discussion of what produces meaning, this enriched definition of tradition helps restore the balance between the text and the reader. Scripture is in a very real sense, 'constructed' within the lived experience of the Christian community and its general shape and form continually refined and determined within different contexts Scripture does not, and cannot establish its own credentials it does not bear it's meaning upon it's face.

This critique inspired by Deconstructionist thought, claims that the text is only accessible, indeed only exists through interpretation, as such it strikes at the very roots of fundamentalism. The epistemological basis of fundamentalism combines Baconian categories with the doctrine of inspiration to assert that, the meaning of the biblical text is self evident, communicating itself without any kind of mediation to all reasonable people of good intention. The only alternative, according to fundamentalist thought leads to one of the many forms of epistemological relativism. Charlesworth contends with this fear by arguing that the idea of tradition provides a reflective technique in biblical hermeneutics. It discredits the notion of an historical, non-situational reality in writing and reading. But, at the same time, it does not deny the defensibility of readings which acknowledge the context of a particular reading community. While James Barr locates the biblical text within theological and cultural traditions he does so without due recognition of the, often unconscious, reading theories of the communities which generate these traditions. His criticism of the notion of the perspicuity of Scripture, provides an understanding of the text which transcends the empirical/verifiable contradictions found there, but does not account for the generative characteristics.

It follows then that Deconstruction theory of communication would attend to the fact that the study of the biblical text should concern not only the text, but equally the actions involved in responding to the text. It assumes that any literary work has two poles: (i) the author's text, and (ii) the interpretation accomplished by the reader. The meaning is not identical with either but is situated somewhere between the two. Thus
exclusive attention either to the author or to the readers' psychology or the ideology of the reading community indicates little about the reading process, which alone is responsible for meaning. The assumption made by Deconstruction is that there is no common code; if there were, accurate communication would be ensured since the message would travel only one way from text to reader. The theory, however, asserts that the reader receives the message by actually composing it. Reading therefore is not a passive act of consumption, despite the awe associated with the reading of sacred texts, nor is it a moment of unanalyzable communion between a self and a text.

Deconstruction analysis argues that an ideological stance necessarily influences every interpretive practice. The claim that the fundamentalist interpretative strategy is ideologically loaded is forcefully made by Barr as he discloses how this strategy functions. But this thesis has attempted to show that there is more to the politics of interpretation than unveiling concealed ideology. The unmasking of false claims to neutrality, loyalty to traditional authority and objective scholarship may, in the study of religion, be a prelude to the discussion of how interpretive strategies are necessarily ideological. Ideology need not be just a shameful secret; it can also represent a body of values affirmed by a community. Fundamentalists, by putting their faith in God, feel in control of most of their lives. They are sustained by a supportive network where church, scholarship, broadcasts and friends reinforce common values and spiritual ideals. The Bible is a source of certainty and promotes feelings of a secure world. Within this world they are confident that God's will prevails in a way it seems not to in the world of economics, entertainment and advertising and in the everyday world in which they work. Barr condemns fundamentalism because of its absolute claim upon revealed truths, yet every religious system makes an absolute claim for the confession of faith it teaches. Precisely because of this, religions claim to provide understanding of reality which are at once comprehensively objective far beyond the claims of natural science, and are subjectively satisfying as no natural law could be. No religion or ideology takes its concerns as transient or its teachings as perishable, or intends its demands as conditional. Yet Barr would condemn fundamentalism for just that. Fundamentalist hermeneutics need not be a name for bias prejudice and manipulation, it can also be seen as an instance of how Christianity has been defined. Barr's conclusion, that the chief formative element in fundamentalism is a particular and distinctive theological tradition is convincing. While purporting to read the biblical text literally, he demonstrates how fundamentalists do not hesitate to read it figuratively when a literal reading does not accord with their faith and practice. What is read is what is expected to be read, the customary, the familiar and the authorised. This thesis questions however, the possibility of identifying the biblical
text as the chief formative element in any articulation of Christianity. Analysis
provided by philosophical hermeneutics would suggest that particular theological
traditions within Christianity represent 'modes of reading'. These traditions mediate
through the biblical text a prior matrix of elements drawn not only from prior readings
of the text, but also from systems of philosophy, faith and religious practice. There
have been, and will continue to be, generalized statements by theologians, religious
bodies and confessions of faith by denominations, but there is no 'ideal' Christian faith.
The introduction of historical and literary considerations, the so-called Historical
Critical Method, has had profound effect upon the way the Bible has been read. Barr's
study of fundamentalism is a demonstration of the achievements of this kind of
analysis (4). However, there needs now to be another development within that
tradition of scholarship: the introduction of contemporary theory about the nature of
texts and the nature of reading. The present analysis of Barr's study of fundamentalism
has shown how necessary is.
NOTES

Notes to Chapter Six: CONCLUSION


(3) ibid., p. x.

(4) It should be noted however, that the debates of modern biblical scholarship have been little understood outside specialist academic circles. It would appear that they are virtually unknown to the majority of Christian people.
APPENDIX ONE

The basic assumptions of fundamentalism discussed in the body of this thesis are not derived in a direct way from any particular speculative school. But the notions of inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration which, in the fundamentalist mind, support the perspicuous nature of the biblical text can be associated with a particular ‘philosophic culture’. This ‘philosophic culture’ emerged from an alliance between Scottish Common Sense Realism and North American Evangelicism. While one may not describe the relationship in terms of dependence the association between what is this thesis, is defined as Protestant Fundamentalism and the philosophy of common sense can be clearly identified. D.W. Dockrill in his treatment of the matter in The Problem of Revealed Truth: Notes on Fundamentalism, Catholic Modernism and Early Barthianism, identifies this association, but with a cautionary note.

The conservative view of Scripture does not depend upon the philosophy of Common Sense; rather, this philosophy provided a speculative framework within which, intuitively obvious structural truths about the world of common experience could be given a systematic base. Theologically, the Common Sense philosophy helped to integrate strong doctrine of revealed knowledge as knowledge with the certain truths derived by natural means.

(1)

Although the proponents of fundamentalism differed substantially from confessional theologians in their articulation of evangelical orthodoxy they shared a common view of theology. This view ‘emancipated’ theology from culture and history, and assumed that its sole concern was explicating the universal truths of biblical revelation. In contrast to most philosophy since Descartes and Locke, Scottish Common Sense Realism held that the human mind, irrespective of time or place was capable of apprehending the truth of the external world in a direct way. The immediate objects of human perception were not ideas of the external world, but direct apprehensions. The same principle applied to memory. According to this understanding, what we remember is not the idea of a particular object or event, but the thing itself. Induction from the simplest facts of experience allows one to discover fundamental principles, therefore all people of common sense and good will are capable of knowing truth in its purest form. That is, as precisely stated propositions. It is therefore possible for the human intellect to
apprehend truth exactly, or in the case of past events by reliable testimony. The application of this thought to theology concludes that, religion is founded upon the intellectual faculty, not indefinable feelings or emotions. A view of Protestant Christianity emerged which claimed to be realistic in the sense of having a basis not in abstract theorizing or mythologies, but in historical events known to have happened at a certain time and place.

Strong contrasts were drawn between this understanding of theology and that expounded by Friedrich Schleiermacker for example, who held that human religion was grounded in human feeling. The notion of truth as an external and stable entity available to the human intellect irrespective of context, placed substantial emphasis upon the written word, as the surest means of displaying truth. The written word enables people in different places and times to apprehend the same reality. It is particularly in respect of this perception of textuality that one may identify a close association between this 'philosophic culture' and fundamentalism. G. Marsden identifies this close association between Eighteenth Century scienticism and the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture.

Most importantly, this Common Sense account of reality was considered to provide a sure base for the rational scientific confirmation of the truths of the Bible and the Christian Faith. The Bible, it was constantly asserted, was the highest and all sufficient source of authority. The Protestant doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture provided a further basis for the belief that the common person could readily understand Biblical teaching. Common Sense paralleled this doctrine with its insistence on the perspicuity of nature.

The common sense of mankind could be relied upon to apprehend the essentials of biblical truth as it was relied upon to apprehend the essentials of science. This analogy is drawn in the writings of the Presbyterian theologian, Charles Hodge (1797 - 1878). Hodge saw theology as analogous to natural science such that one may read the facts of spirituality set forth in the Bible in a manner similar to one's reading of the facts of biology, recorded in nature. He was convinced that authentic religion was based on the apprehension of right intellectual ideas and that such ideas could be expressed in words. The inspired words of scripture therefore provided an accurate and infallible record of ideas and events and made the scriptures binding upon the religious faith and
obedience of all people. There is a clear contrast between this doctrine of scripture and that developed by James Barr.

We have observed that Barr rejected the notion of the perspicuity of scripture. Apart from his theology, discussed earlier, Barr's objections are based on his assiduous study of technical semantics. The doctrine of inerrancy was made untenable to Barr's mind by his early studies of the philology of the biblical text. These studies had already provided the empirical basis for his rejection of any doctrine of scripture which did not satisfactorily account for such factors as the vagaries of Hebrew spelling and their implications for semantics.
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APPENDIX TWO

Nowhere in his writings does James Barr question the contemporary significance of the Bible for religious insight and teaching. The religious authority of the Bible has in his view, a compelling interest not only for Christian communities, but society in general.

The Bible belongs to the world, and not to the Church only. When the Church addresses the world on the basis of the Bible, it invites people to look for themselves and see if these things are not so. The possibility that people may do this looking for themselves carries with it a consequence on the more scholarly level: non-Christian interpretation of the Bible is a possibility, indeed it is more, it is a reality. (1)

His understanding of the biblical text as a literary and historical construct with inherent confusions and ambiguities may, from a selected reading, disguise the positive character of Barr's writings on fundamentalism. This appendix aims to locate Barr's writings on fundamentalism within the context of his concern for a more adequate theological and scholarly approach to biblical studies. The analysis of Barr's representation of fundamentalism in this thesis identifies the severity of his conclusions. But these conclusions must be read in the context of his wider scholarly concern to emphasise the religious authority of the Bible and the continuing significance of the Bible in the light of modern textual scholarships.

Barr's treatment of interdependent themes found in the Old and New Testaments, in his study Old and New in Interpretation, A Study of Two Testaments, includes a discussion of the relationship between the Bible and modern scholarship. While denying that biblical theology is dependent upon philosophy, Barr argues against the "purist" position, which holds that only those conceptual categories found within the biblical material may be used to interpret that material. This position leads in his mind to the complacent belief that if one interprets the biblical text in "its own terms" excluding all foreign or external categories one's reading is protected against error.
The fundamental error in purist thinking is the supposition that by
taking an internal stance we somehow guard against error. Belief of
this kind only supports the complacency of the church culture and
damages the Church's ability to meet with the world in humility. The
most serious and critical conflicts do not arise from the entrance of
concepts and mental structures from outside, but from the turning what's
within the tradition into a support for human aggrandizement and
complacency.

Although Barr takes issue with this "purist" stance, maintaining that the use of
concepts and categories taken from "outside" the Bible is unavoidable, he warns against
the opposite extreme. That is a position which places an extreme dependence upon
philosophy. A dependence which leads to the conclusion that the decisive element in
any given reading of the biblical text is the reader's presuppositions.

Even if we grant, however, that presuppositions can be interesting,
there is no reason to look on them as the decisive element. To do so,
gives the impression that somewhere behind all the contingent
problems there is some one big idea, and that if we could get that idea
right, everything would come out right. There is no such one big idea.
Reliance on the presuppositional element can often be an easy way out,
which has bad effects in Biblical study.

Barr locates the centre of biblical interpretation not in the denial of the influence of
'external' categories, or a dependence upon the analysis of presuppositions, but upon the
use of evidence. That is, a process of relating the text to readings of the text. Barr
concludes that interpretation is not the discovery of meaning as a stable entity, but
rather the reappraisal of interpretive possibilities, including previous assessments of
meaning. This is a process not of discovering the final meaning of a text, but of "working
with the text" to discriminate between a variety of interpretations. It is a process in
Barr's view, which gives full weight to previous accepted methods and readings
without allowing the traditions of those methods and interpretations, determine new
readings. This "working with the text", does not imply the manipulation of the text,
indeed this is the criticism Barr brings against the 'purists' and presuppositional
analysis alike. Rather, it restores the proper status of the biblical text by allowing the
text to "speak with" antecedent theological ideas as well as the contemporary intellectual environment of which it is inextricably a part. This "dialogue" allows for the possibility of approaching the biblical text conscious of previous readings, but seeking through closer investigation of the textual evidence, other dimensions of meaning.

In his study of the distinction between the faith experience of those who populated the New Testament and subsequent Christianity, Barr describes how the latter have become a "people of the book" in a way the first were not.

It is possible of course, to theorize that writing was, in fact and in the culture, more important than is actually expressed in the Gospels, and that it was tacitly understood that as much as possible must be committed to writing. But this is pure hypothesis if not pure wishful thinking. There is not a single point at which Jesus commands that an event or a teaching should be written down, so that it would be accurately remembered. (4)

Barr’s analysis of fundamentalism does not detract from the status of the Bible as some might suppose. His study of fundamentalism draws attention to the limitations that conservative interpretation places upon the scope of the biblical text. Indeed, the significance of the biblical text for spiritual teaching and spiritual authority is, in his view not limited to Christianity alone. The Bible belongs to the secular world as well as the Christian Church. This perspective is found in other writings where Barr is concerned to locate the biblical text in an intellectual context. In his discussion of the Canon, as it effects exegesis he concludes that the Canon does not prescribe fixed boundaries of interpretation. Thus he argues,

Scripture was, in the end, very properly bounded by the presence of a Canon; one can hardly see how it could have been left otherwise. But the Canon is not very important. Scripture itself in its content, makes it clear to us that the boundary of the Canon does not necessarily or always express precisely the horizon of authority in Christian believing. (5)
Barr's concern for the status of the Bible, and the threat to that status posed by
Fundamentalist hermeneutics stems from its positive value in his eyes as a source of
religious authority. But this authority is found not in the text as such, but in the person of
Jesus Christ. The two are not synonymous in Barr's view as conservative Christianity
might suppose. Rather he asserts that;

The undoubted authority of the Old Testament as Word of God, does not
alter the fact that for the New Testament, it is no longer the unique
starting point: Its positions may be criticized, may be modified and it is
no longer an absolute. Its authority is relative to the supreme authority
of Jesus Christ.  

Thus it can be seen that Barr argues for a wider view of scripture then that prescribed
by the doctrines of inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration. For Barr the biblical text
must be located in a cultural and historical context in which nevertheless theological
priority is given to Jesus Christ. In doing this he maintains a regard for theological
doctrine and the canons of intellectual enquiry.
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(2) ibid., p. 173.

(3) ibid., p. 188.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

This Bibliography is presented in two parts. The first part is confined to works by James Barr. The second part includes all works cited in the text and other material of value and significance used in the preparation of this thesis.

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