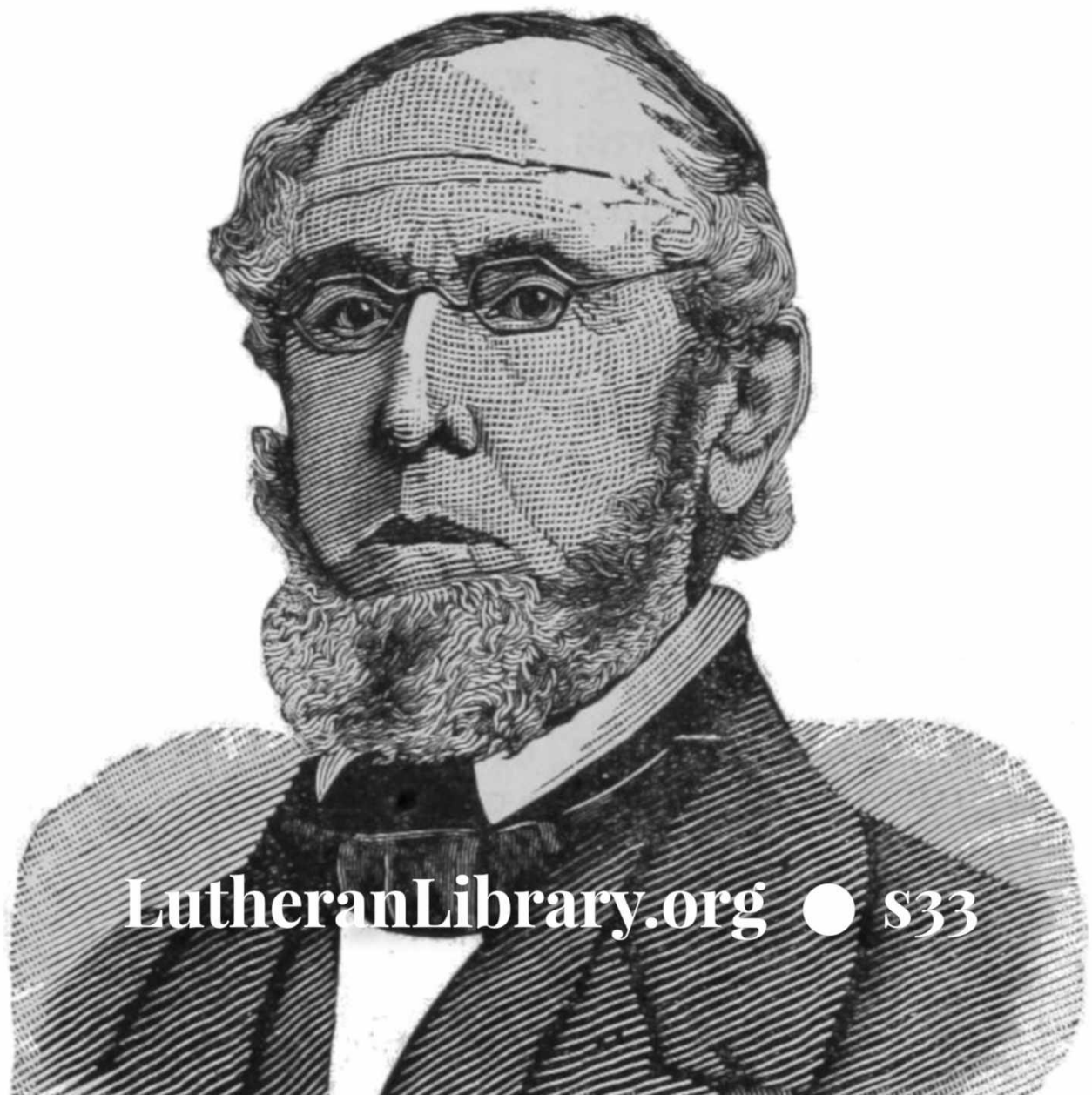


Charles F. Schaeffer

**The Nature of
Fundamental Doctrines**



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The Nature of Fundamental Doctrines

By Charles Frederick Schaeffer
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An Inquiry Into The Nature Of Fundamental Doctrines.

By Rev. Charles F. Schaeffer D. D., Easton, Pa.

THE INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY of the present age in every department of science frequently leads to the investigation of the truth of principles which had, at an earlier period, been supposed to be incontrovertibly established; while, too, the progress of discovery has introduced many new technical terms, it has discarded some as unsuited to the present advanced state of science, and assigned new definitions to others that have been retained.

Religious Terms Not Defined or Used Correctly

In the departments of human knowledge not occupied by the exact sciences, many inconveniences are still occasioned by the use of terms, the sense of which is not positively fixed or distinctly apprehended. Of this fact various religious terms, that are now frequently employed in the discussion of doctrinal and ethical questions, afford illustrations. When teachers or disputants have exerted all their powers in unfolding and establishing their views, the result of their labors is, sometimes, the unwelcome discovery that their meaning has been entirely misapprehended. They have not enlightened but clouded the minds of those whom they addressed, and, in place of convincing others, are themselves charged with self-contradiction or error; while they sincerely attempt to promote among believers the cause of Christian union, they perceive, with unspeakable grief, that they have, involuntarily, become the authors of discord, and have occasioned new alienation of spirit. To avoid these painful consequences, no remedy is more

efficacious in certain cases, than a distinct expression of the sense in which a theological term is used, particularly, if after an honest investigation of first principles, that sense may be expected to be recognized as just and true. Until this course be generally adopted, all efforts to effect that union of believers which we yet hope to be accomplished, but which has hitherto found so many obstacles in the prejudices of men, will continue to result in mortifying defeats.

Can't We "Agree to Differ"?

Amid the disappointments which we encounter in this noble cause of Christian Union, we are often soothed and cheered by the kind language which dissentient brethren employ. — The polemic cry is sometimes hushed, the controversial panoply is laid aside, the sectarian scowl is relaxed, the Bible, which had become grievously contorted in all its parts, during the contest, is partially restored to its former position, and the wearied combatants salute each other, not simply as allies, but as brethren. Why should they longer contend? Do they not agree in "fundamentals"? The angel of peace seems to descend and to illumine a scene not now disfigured by wrath and bleeding wounds, but hallowed by the sweet influences of brotherly confidence and Christian love. Why can they not "agree to differ"? "Do we not," the delightful chorus repeats, "do we not fully accord in essentials?"

Each Religious Opinion Is Assumed To Be "Fundamental"

Charmed by this unexpected issue of the struggle, we indulge in the most pleasing anticipations; we apprehend no renewal of the contest; we bear with us a talisman, which, wherever it is applied, will surely banish the demon of discord; let us merely pronounce the mystic words: *We agree in fundamentals*, — and harmony is secured. Alas! it is a dream. We return to actual life; we approach those whose names indicate a difference of theological views, and we discover that these shadowy "fundamentals"

existed only in our night-visions. When we inquire into their nature, we find that, practically, each religious opinion is assumed to be fundamental.

We propose a union, we suggest that certain views may be safely permitted to recede, and we entreat those whom we address, to confine themselves to “fundamental doctrines,” assuring them that therein all the orthodox agree. To our dismay, the contest recommences; the definition of the word provokes jealousy and prejudice; we ultimately arrive at the conclusion, that nothing is explained, nothing gained, not a step to an actual union taken, until we all adopt the same views of the nature and power of “fundamental truths;” then, and not till then, we can agree, and calmly permit minor differences of opinion to remain without an advocate.

What Are “Fundamental Doctrines”?

What are “fundamental doctrines,” or “fundamental Articles of faith”?¹ The answer is, confessedly, attended with serious difficulties. Every intelligent Christian feels competent to state the general basis of his belief, or the doctrinal foundation of his Christian character and life, and may even wonder that a question apparently so simple is proposed. When he, however, proceeds to *specify in detail* the doctrines which essentially constitute that “foundation,” he will no longer be surprised by the embarrassment that even distinguished divines, on attempting to furnish an answer, have candidly confessed.

The difficulties attending the solution of the problem proceed from various sources: — the vagueness attached to the term “fundamental doctrines” itself, in consequence of its figurative character, which unfits it for scientific purposes — its singular complexity or involvedness and feasibility, which seem to defy analysis — the absence of a scriptural or authoritative definition, combined with the uncertain exegesis of the texts which have apparently suggested it — the undetermined nature of the *superstructure* erected on these “fundamental doctrines.” The fluctuations of the meaning of the term appear in every discussion which occasions a recurrence to the great landmarks of the Christian faith. When the doctrine of the Atonement of Christ, for instance, is denied, we refer, perhaps, to passages like 1 Cor. 3:11. or Matt. 16:16., without precisely defining whether such a text specially regards the divinity, or the person, or the work

of Christ, we have a general impression that the “doctrine concerning Christ” is *the* fundamental doctrine. But the opponent may be a Trinitarian Universalist, such as we personally know, and appear to deviate from our system specially in reference to the doctrine to which he owes his name.²

At once we expand the definition of the term, and it now embraces an eschatological doctrine far removed from the soteriological or Christological portion of the system to which the doctrine concerning Christ belongs. When the Papist adores the *Host*, he adapts flour to one of many miscellaneous uses, precisely as the idolater so graphically described by Isaiah, ch. 44:9-20. applies a forest tree. “He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; . . . and the *residue thereof he maketh a god.*” One part of the precious wheat which God had given, he employs for food, another, he converts into a god. We instinctively feel, as we look with scorn and abhorrence on this heathenish worship which a *Christian*, as the Papist terms himself, renders to the Son of God as he alleges, that this idolater, with all his professed implicit³ faith, which fully admits the divinity of Christ, differs fundamentally in doctrine from ourselves.

Both were distinguished from the *Particularists* (Calvinists and Jansenists).

The *Arminians* of our day, probably disown the name of Universalists, in its more recent sense, as applied to a sickly sect. These appellations were bandied in the French and Dutch or Holland Reformed churches, but, we believe, were never either adopted or indeed needed by the Lutheran church.

Do “Fundamentals” Concern Differences Between “Protestants” Only?

Do fundamentals concern not only the essential differences of doctrines among Protestants, but also those in which “Catholicity”^[^bDe] deviated from Protestantism? Can we now proceed to designate *fundamental* doctrines with precision? An affirmative answer would, perhaps, afford a tangible result, but it is given with great hesitation; for, surely, the Mufti, the Brahman and the Fetishist differ fundamentally from us as well as a Rabbi or a Pope.

^[^bDf] This favorite term of papistical writers is as amusing as the

"molossici, Odiosiciaue et multum incommodistici,"

of Ergasilus, Flaut. Capt. I. 1. I8.

This vagueness of signification does not occur solely in religious discussions. We quote an illustrative passage from an eminent writer, who is not advocating any system of faith, but speaking historically of a past age; and we introduce it rather than any other passage, because it chanced to be the last and the most accessible in which we remember that we have found the term.

“The greatest and most popular dramatists of the Elizabethan age treat religious subjects in a very remarkable manner. They speak respectfully of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. But they speak neither like Catholics nor like Protestants, but like persons who are wavering between the two systems; or who have made a system for themselves cut of parts selected from both. They seem to hold some of the Romish rites and doctrines in high respect. They treat the vow of celibacy, for example, so tempting, and, in after times, so common a subject for ribaldry, with mysterious reverence,” etc.

(REVIEW OF NATES’ *MEMOIRS OF LORD BURGHLEY*, *EDINBURG REVIEW*, 1832 —
P. 123, VOL. 2 OF CAREY AND HART’S EDITION OF *MACAULAY’S ESSAYS*.)

Macaulay has certainly not weighed the expression with his usual accuracy. Are the “fundamental doctrines of Christianity” so few in number, so exceedingly abstract, so indefinite, that a writer can refer at all to them without betraying popish errors, or revealing the splendor of principles that are Protestant in the lofty sense of the name?⁴ The existence of a God, the death of the theanthropic Redeemer, the personality of the Spirit — are such doctrines alone fundamental? The term is so evanescent that, when we think we have secured the meaning, Proteus himself does not more successfully elude our grasp.

It is not usual to call both *the* Sun and a dim telescopic comet or a meteoric stone, by the common name of *suns*. Thus too, we cannot speak of the fundamental doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as being distinct from those of any other ecclesiastical organization and claiming only coordinate rank. The doctrines of *the Church*, as set forth in her Confessions, are identical with those of the Bible, and we decline the task of elevating any opposite doctrinal system, or any sect, to parity of rank with that which stands alone as — *the Church*.

It occurs absolutely in a gaseous state in Dumesnil's fanciful work *De l'Esprit des Religions*, the *Discours Préliminaire* prefixed to the second edition, in which he replies to certain strictures that appeared after he had published the first edition:

“Mais est-il un impie,” he indignantly asks, “celui qui ne rassemble sous les yeux du lecteur toutes les religions du monde que pour montrer par-tout une même croyance fondamentale, et faire voir la vérité dans ses différents états de dégradation?”

His *croyance fondamentale*, or, *contexture essentielle de toutes les religions connues* as he terms it, p. 25, appears to have been as undefined in his mind, as the outlines of a vapor, that is slowly moving over a western prairie. In absolute despair of obtaining satisfactory information from men, whose opinions are liable to continual modifications, we apply to the fountain of all truth, and hope to find our difficulties removed, by searching the word of God.

Elementary Doctrines As Defined In The Bible

When the sacred writer enumerates in Heb. 6:1, to which passage we shall afterwards recur, the titles of several elementary doctrines, and even uses the word “foundation,” he intends, by no means, to give a catalogue of fundamental doctrines, in the current sense of the term. It is, however, usual to regard that passage as a guide, in any attempt to effect a union of sects, and, as the titles there mentioned, while their naked form allows the utmost latitude of interpretation, nevertheless occur in a canonical book, they are sometimes assumed to constitute the sum of our fundamental doctrines, with perhaps a short appendix directed against Universalism, Popery and similar ecclesiastical excrescences not known in the apostolic age. Nothing could be more unsatisfactory. Each individual will find some favorite doctrine or favorite aspect of a doctrine omitted in the short list, and real union is not accomplished.

We propose to arrive at a point of view from which we can indicate specially the true fundamental doctrines, by another path, more circuitous and less frequently chosen, in this case, but, possibly, rewarding us by some

results that are tangible and distinct; that is, if we can ascertain the nature of the *superstructure*, as far as it is the work of the Holy Spirit, we may, perhaps, be enabled to explain the nature of the *foundation*, which is also divine. The former, if correctly ascertained, will indicate the materials and extent of the latter.

“Foundation” in the New Testament

The original word “foundation”⁵ occurs in the New Testament sixteen times, and the corresponding verb “to found,” occurs six times. Of these passages, by far the most important is 1 Cor. 3:9-15. Its exegesis is, at the same time, attended with unusual difficulties. Without alluding to Universalist perversions of the sense, or papistical folly which discovers purgatory in it, we confess that the conflict among respectable and orthodox commentators is startling. Their views would not, perhaps, have diverged so widely, if they had originally avoided the error of pressing or urging too far a figurative expression which was not intended to present more than a general analogy. St. Paul, whose style is not constructed according to the rigid rules of rhetoricians, is more anxious to guide the conscience and improve the hearts than merely to gratify the literary tastes of his readers; he is justly emancipated from many rules of art by which uninspired men, occupying of course a far inferior position, are expected to model their writings. Thus, in Eph. 3:17, (“rooted and grounded in love,”) he compares believers in the same clause to both plants and buildings; in Rom. 6:4-6, a burial, a being planted together, (in the Engl. version) and a crucifixion, all refer to the same topic; in the passage before us, verse 9, believers are both God’s husbandry, that is, according to the original, field (γεώργιον), and also God’s building. These rapid transitions from one figure to another, indicate an unusual exaltation of mind, and show that the Apostle’s whole soul was absorbed by the revelations which were, at the time, imparted to him; such was the grandeur of these revelations, so full, so mighty, was the current of inspiration, that the Apostle struggled vainly to find human terms which would adequately express those divine conceptions, and, regardless of the somewhat arbitrary rules of composition, which it would be puerile to apply to one who felt the divine afflatus, he simply translates into terms which are intelligible to man, the language of inspiration.

We cannot, consequently, expect that in the present passage, the individual words, e. g. hay, stubble etc. should be nicely discriminated, and supplied, respectively with an appropriate spiritual sense; neither can the predominant idea of a “foundation” be rigidly interpreted throughout the passage and fitted precisely to others in which it occurs.

We insert the passage 1 Cor. 3:10-15:

“[10] According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. [11] For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; [13] Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is. [14] If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. [15] If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

The “*foundation*” of 5:10. is declared to be “Jesus Christ.” If the article before Χριστός is retained, according to the *text rec.*, the older exegesis which regards Χριστός not as a proper name, but as an appellative, would seem to be preferable, that is, Jesus is *the* Christ or Messiah promised in the Old Testament, as in John 20:31; 1 John 2:22 etc., and this would be *the* fundamental doctrine. (Mosheim, Elem. Theol. Dogm. § 7.) The article, however, is omitted by Griesbach, Knapp, etc.; and Olshausen makes no distinct allusion to it, either in his commentary or his German version. Assuming this emendation to be justified by the critical apparatus of the latest and best editors, (and, we believe, its propriety is conceded), we fully adopt the language of the English version, in which both words occur as proper names, without any distinction, as in Matt. 1:1, 18, and many other passages.

Christ as our “All”

This “foundation” then, is not simply the doctrine in general *taught by* Christ merely as a teacher, or the doctrine in particular *concerning* Christ, as, rather, Christ himself in his fulness and his truth, teaching with a life-giving power. Gospel doctrine, essentially connected with Christ in all its parts — revealed truth, emanating directly from Christ — the religion of

Christ, treating of him and leading to him — a system of truth which alone is perfect, and alone can purify, delight and save, and which, in its unrivaled completeness presents Christ as our “all” (Col. 3:11)—this is the “foundation.” St. Paul, agreeably to his own statements in 1 Cor. 2:2, Galat. 2:20, Phil. 1:21; 3:8, declared Christ to be the “author and finisher of our faith,” (Hebr. 12:2); he led those whom he addressed to Christ as their teacher, presented Christ to them as their example, represented him as the God of their love and their worship, pronounced him in his character of a vicarious sufferer, to be the only source whence pardon and salvation flowed to the penitential believer, and fully coincided with Peter, who said: “Neither is there salvation in any other,” etc. Acts 4:12.

This “foundation” Paul desired to lay in every heart, agreeably to his words: “I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you,” Galat. 4:19, and this work of laying the foundation he accomplished by preaching Christ with the aid of the Spirit. When an individual received Christ as his Lord and Saviour, and his heart was filled with love and faith, the foundation was laid. But 5:10, “another buildeth thereon.” Who is this builder? Assuredly *not* a Christian teacher; this *builder* is, evidently inferior to the “master-builder,” the name which Paul applies to himself. But this Apostle possessed too much delicacy of feeling to claim a higher rank than he assigned to his *fellow-teachers*, although he claims a species of paternal authority over his spiritual children, derived from his high office. As little would it be consistent with Paul’s dignity of character to imagine that he covertly alludes to Apollos. Indeed, when he drops the previous figure of planting and watering, 5:6-8, he also drops the distinction which he had made between the teachers and the taught, and regards both as alike dependent on Christ for salvation; and this view is completely established by the emphatic expression: “every man,” 5:10. The *ἄλλος* is the same as the *ἕχαστος* in 5:10, and as *τις* in 5:12. “If,” Paul proceeds, “if this man, whoever he may be (*τις* 5:17) destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him.” (The same verb, *φθείρω*, rendered *verderben* by Olshausen, occurs in both members of the sentence, although the English version presents two words.) It is inconceivable to us that Paul should speak in this manner of any teacher whose gifts proceeded from the same source which gave apostolic authority to him. The next verse, 18, permits no doubt to remain of the general application of Paul’s language.

The Builder is “Every Professing Christian”

We assume, therefore, that the builder is — *every professing Christian*. What then is to be understood by the *building process*, or “work” or superstructure to which Paul now directs our attention, 5:12 sqq., or rather, of what *materials* does the latter consist? The literal sense is obvious; in the construction of costly buildings, in “kings’ houses,” gold, silver and precious stones were ambitiously employed: an inferior edifice consists of wood: hay or stubble is used in thatching a hovel. We find the solution of the question in the word “day,” 5:13. It is mentioned in connection with a “reward,” 5:14, and a “suffering of loss,” 5:15, and, indeed, with a “fire,” 5:13.

The work shall be “made manifest,” by being “revealed by fire” for we regard ἡ γὰρ ἡμέρα δηλώσει as a parenthetic or exegetical clause, and take, not “day” as Olshausen suggests, but rather “work” as the subject of “shall be revealed,” or rather, as it is in the original, “is revealed,” (ἀγοχαλύγεται), the present time, by an enallage, being use for the future, to indicate the certainty, or perhaps, the nearness of the event. (Winer, Gr. of N. T. §41. 2. p. 209.) Analogous passages like 2 Thess. 1:8, and 2 Peter 3:10 imperatively direct us to explain this “day” as the day of judgment. Now on that day (Matth. 7:22, I Thess. 5:4, 2 Tim. 4:8,) all will be judged (Acts 17:31) and this judgment, strict, unerring and impartial, like a fire which purifies gold but destroys stubble, will manifest the nature of “every man’s work.” But what is declared to be the subject of that judgment, unless it be the *Christian character and life* of those whom Paul addresses? (Rom. 2:16, “in the day when God shall judge the *secrets of men*,” τὰ κρυπτὰ, *die innern Vorgänge in der Tiefe der Seele*, Ols. ad loc. — 2 Cor. 5:10, “that every one may receive the things done in his body.”)

Such we regard as the “work” which a man builds on the “foundation.” We now incorporate with our explanation another passage, for the purpose of obtaining additional light: “Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone,” Ephes. 2:20. A change of the figure here occurs. In the former passage, Christ himself is the foundation, in the latter he is called the chief cornerstone, contradistinguished from the general foundation of which it forms, preeminently, a part, and the “apostles and prophets,” (not the

prophets of the Old Testament, but the “prophets” or inspired teachers mentioned in passages like Acts 15:32, 1 Cor. 12:28 etc.) now constitute the foundation" on which believers, in their capacity of believers, are built. The apostles, personally, are not our “foundation,” but *the religion* which they were commissioned to teach, or, rather, the *doctrines* which are the sources of our moral duties. Thus, from the whole doctrine of God, in its vast dimensions, flow our duties to love, obey etc. him. From the doctrine of our corruption, in the detailed form deduced from the Scriptures, and presented in our Confessions, flow the duties of repentance, etc. From the doctrine of the Atonement are derived, the powerful claims of Christ, not only on our love and faith, but also on our whole life. From the doctrine of the future judgment, with all the other truths connected with it, are derived those solemn admonitions of Scripture to watch, work, pray, etc., etc.

“Every Man’s Work”

We are now prepared to state our view of the nature of “every man’s work.” The *work* itself may be burned, 5:15, but “he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The general idea is obvious; a loss is suffered, but not a total loss. — The Apostle designs to employ a simile, and might have introduced the case of himself and his shipwrecked fellow voyagers, (Acts 27:44) “who escaped to land” with the loss of all but their lives; the word “fire” however, which had occurred in 5:13, suggested a corresponding image, equivalent to the expression: He has escaped from the conflagration with the loss of all but his life. The *foundation or doctrinal system taught by the apostles* was stable and had been adopted as a whole, by the individual; he has not been guilty of a deliberate and conscious rejection of divine truth; his faith was sincere; he believed in Christ. *But* sincerity of faith may coexist with an imperfectly developed Christian character, and with a life in which the seed does not bear fruit a hundred-fold, but only sixty or thirty, Matth. 13:8, 23. The “foundation” or general doctrine of the Scriptures may be received by two persons with equal candor; the one, however, better understanding the nature of the foundation, more clearly comprehending Christian doctrine, more exempt from narrow views of religious truth, more orthodox, builds on his fully developed doctrinal system a glorious structure of gold, or silver or precious stones; in him the Christian character attains to

its highest development; his heart is the abode of every Christian grace; the virtues which adorned his Saviour are reflected in his own life; *he* will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father, Matth. 13:43; for *his* work endures: “he shall receive a reward,” 5:14.

The faith of the other receives Christ indeed as its great object, but co-exists with a certain sloth (of which holy men have often mournfully accused themselves,) or with doctrinal defects, which will be obstacles to the harmonious development of character, and retard his progress in holiness. Readily admitting the truth of the Scriptures, he does not distinctly view every part of the “foundation” of truth. Some scriptural doctrines he undervalues, others he adopts in a mutilated form, while he assigns an undue importance to tenets or usages which are mere human inventions. These defects or errors in his faith, in as far as they affect his Christian character, and dim the lustre of Christian virtue in his life, lead him to introduce “wood, hay, stubble” into his work. Or, like one who erects a mean hut on a portion of the foundation destined for a colossal edifice, he interweaves errors with sound doctrine, and neglects to build on the *whole* foundation — the defects in his doctrinal system induce defects in his heart and life — his work is burned. Still, “his heart and his innermost life-root remained with the Lord” (Olsh. on 1 Cor. 3:15) and his soul is saved, (for we here entirely look away from the impenitent, unbelieving and vicious). He will not, however, occupy the lofty “mansion” assigned to *him* whose “work” endured the test, and he will be one of the lowest in the celestial kingdom. “*Erunt enim discrimina gloriee sanctorum.*” Apol Augsb. Conf. p. 135, ed. Rech.

The result of this investigation is, that doctrines partake of the character of “fundamentals”—that they modify the character and the life of the individual — and that, as God has revealed no truths unless they are designed to be a practical benefit to the believer, and, as every doctrine, nearly or remotely, exercises a certain influence, therefore, *every doctrine taught in the Scriptures is a fundamental doctrine.* ⁶

The force of this general conclusion is not impaired by the language in Hebr. 6:1,2. “Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection: not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, — of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” The slightest glance at this English version, shows conclusively

that Paul does not, in the most remote degree, design to enumerate fundamental doctrines of *the Christian religion*, in the modern sense of the word. The key to the interpretation of the passage seems to be furnished by the words τὸν της ἀρχης του Χριστου, translated, “the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” and evidently identical with the subsequent word “foundation.” In 5:12 of the preceding chapter an analogous expression occurs: τὰ στοιχεια της αρχης των λογιων του Θεου, translated “the first principles of the oracles of God.” What are these “principles”?

The epistle is addressed *to the Hebrews*, that is, to persons who had originally been Jews, and who were familiar from early life with the contents of the Old Testament, the Mosaic ritual, etc. (The questions respecting the region of country in which they resided, the authorship of the epistle etc. do not affect our argument.) St. Paul, whom we here assume to be the author, reproaches them (5:12) for the inconsiderable progress which they had made in understanding the oracles of God, since their conversion from Judaism to Christianity. These “oracles,” as in the analogous passages, Acts 7:38 and Rom. 3:2, are exclusively the writings of the Old Testament. He exhorts them no longer to remain “babes,” but to strive after a fuller development of Christian knowledge and virtue, or go on unto perfection (τελειότης) of which, in Col. 3:14, he calls charity the bond, and which is equivalent to the “perfect man” in Eph. 4:13 as distinguished from the νηπιος, or “babe” in Heb. 5:13. They are, consequently, exhorted not to remain satisfied with the “first principles” *which they had previously possessed as Jews*, but “leave” these behind in their *Christian* course. He then enumerates, *as specimens*, several points of doctrine, which intelligent and devout Jews held previous to their conversion to the Christian religion, or would not attempt to deny:

1. “REPENTANCE,” a duty repeatedly inculcated by the prophets in various terms of equivalent import;
2. “FAITH TOWARD GOD,” by which Habakkuk, ch. 2:4, declared that the just should live — a sentence thrice quoted in the N. T.;
3. “THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS,” referring to the familiarly-known Jewish purificatory rites, and properly described in the plural, which so much perplexes those who prefer the more usual interpretation;
4. “LAYING ON OF HANDS,” practiced not only when the Jew brought his sin-offering, as a solemn typical act (Lev. 16:21, Numb. 8:12), but also

- when Joshua received his high commission from Moses (Numb. 27:18, 23; Deut. 34:9);
5. "RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD," a doctrine which the Saviour, in Mark 12:26, finds in Exodus 3:6, which Abraham understood, Hebr. 11:19, and which the Pharisees, in contradistinction from the semi-infidel Sadducees, tenaciously maintained, Acts 23:8,
 6. "ETERNAL JUDGMENT," a doctrine which, long before Daniel wrote the words, in ch. 12:2 of his book, Enoch had revealed, according to the testimony of Jude in 5:14, 15 of his short epistle.

These several doctrinal points, long known to reflecting and docile Jews, were assumed as a "foundation," simply in the sense, that they imparted to the Jews a receptivity for the more full New Testament doctrines; they were not precisely "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" as our English version speaks, as, rather, "the discourse or doctrine of the beginning of Christ," a somewhat awkward phrase in English, but which may be thus explained: the name "Christ," as in Rom. 16:7, 9 etc. is sometimes employed as a metonymy, to designate not so much the *personality* of the Saviour, as the *religion* of which he is emphatically the founder, precisely as "Moses" sometimes stands for the "law," e. g. Luke 16:29, or 2 Cor. 3:15, "Moses is read." In this sense Paul calls the doctrines now enumerated the *introduction to the Christian faith*, and his words are equivalent to the paraphrase: Leave behind those doctrines of the Old Testament which only prepared the way for the Christian religion, and advance in the knowledge of the doctrines of the new and better covenant.

From this examination of the passage in question, it appears that Paul does not here use the word "foundation" in the modern technical sense; indeed; when we consider the extraordinary emphasis with which he elsewhere speaks of Christ crucified, we cannot consistently suppose that he would omit the atonement and kindred doctrines in a professed list of fundamental Christian doctrines. As no other scriptural passages remain which introduce the word, or throw more light upon it, our previous conclusion stands uncontroverted — that, as far as Scripture language serves as a guide, we are required to regard every doctrine of the Christian religion as fundamental.

All Details and Ramifications of Any Scriptural Doctrine Are Also Strictly Fundamental.

It is, however, apparent from the discourses of our Lord himself, from the verbal addresses of the apostles recorded in the Acts, and from the epistles of the latter, that not only is every revealed doctrine fundamental in its general character, but that *all the details and ramifications of any Scriptural doctrine, are also strictly fundamental*. While this very important principle is not, we believe, usually admitted, or at least, not usually placed in a conspicuous situation, its correctness cannot be safely denied by orthodox Christians.

The invariable results of any abatement of the rigor of this principle are unintentionally illustrated by the eminent theologian Bretschneider. He desires to be emancipated from the imaginary bondage of the Symbolical Books, and devises an exceedingly liberal and *convenient* theory, which will, as he represents, without destroying the unity of the church, permit us to abandon our Lutheran Confessions, and yet remain faithful to the Scriptures! "The church," says he, (Dogm. I. p. 59. § 10. b.)

"does not lose her unity, even if her teachers according to the Scriptures abandon the theory of the Satisfaction of Christ taught by her Symbolical Books, and consider Jesus as the Redeemer from sin in a sense different from that in which he is so represented in the Symbols. . . . Her teachers do not cease to be evangelical, even if they do not understand by the word "Redeemer" (σωτήρ) precisely a vicarious bearer of punishment, or one who offers satisfaction for the guilt of men; or by the word "Sin" (ἁμαρτία) precisely Original Sin, (a term altogether foreign to the Scriptures) or the guilt and punishment of sin, but rather the act itself of sinning."

He also thinks, that the unity of the Church is not affected, if her teachers abandon, or *view in some other light*, many other tenets of the Church, and he specifies the doctrines of the *Trinity*, the *Person of Christ*, *Original Sin*, and *Baptism*, all which may, with perfect propriety be modified or entirely discarded, and that too, "on scriptural grounds" (*aus Gründen der Schrift*) by sound, orthodox Lutheran Christians!

Such latitudinarian views really undermine the whole foundation of our faith; while the naked scriptural term is readily adopted, it is divested of all

its hallowed associations, is ruthlessly torn from its position in the theological system, is thrust into the company of unclean doctrines which originate in pride and presumption, and is compelled to aid in the unholy work of demolishing that faith to which it owes its very existence. Who is Christ? The Unitarian answers that he is the Son of God. The answer is scriptural. Is Christ the judge of men? “The Father . . . hath committed all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22) the Universalist readily answers. Is he the Saviour of men? The Papist assures us that his church so believes. Will God have all men to be saved? Calvin fully admits that such words occur in 1 Tim. 2:4. Is Baptism a necessary and scriptural ordinance? None can doubt it, in the opinion of the Baptist. Is Christ the Head of the Church? The Puseyite wonders that any can deny it. Is man justified by faith? The Methodist does not attempt to contradict us. We might multiply instances in which scriptural words and phrases are unanimously adopted by sects the most hostile to each other.

All seem to agree with us in fundamentals. Still, we desire further information — these terms may have been vaguely employed. We propound more definite interrogations. Do you believe in the Trinity — in the union of two natures of Christ in one person, and the intercommunion of their attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*)—in Original Sin, or the entire depravity of man — in a general atonement — in the personality of the Holy Spirit? In what sense is Baptism connected with regeneration? In what sense is Christ truly present in the Lord’s Supper? A storm of rebuke overwhelms us. These terms, we are told, are foreign to the Scriptures, they are human inventions, they belong to the dark ages; the Bible knows nothing of the “Trinity,” the “*communicatio idiomatum*,” and similar theological expressions. Neither are these specifications of doctrine fundamental, we are informed; it is sufficient that we agree in fundamentals, in essentials. Still, what are these fundamentals? In what respect is the Augsburg Confession “substantially correct”? A direct answer is evaded. Grieved by such unwillingness to adopt the whole truth, but resolved to adhere to it ourselves, we most positively refuse to be associated, by any liberal unsectarian process, with those whose views, when rigorously sifted, are found to be subversive in our opinion of the whole Christian faith, as we understand that faith. We *do* differ in fundamentals.

In this emergency, when all our hopes of effecting a union have been cruelly disappointed, we resort once more to the Scriptures, and we think that *there* we find the solution of all the difficulties by which we are perplexed. The sacred writers regard *every feature* of a doctrine as essential; they believe that the soundness or integrity of a doctrine depends upon its reception *in all its aspects*, and that no jot or tittle of the doctrine can be abandoned without weakening the foundation on which the Christian character and life shall be established. If the Apollo Belvedere, which is perhaps the noblest work of art in existence, had been found in the mutilated condition in which the Torso of Michael Angelo appears, the trunk, divested of head and limbs, might still afford a study to the artist, but the grandeur, the grace, the eloquence of the statue, would no longer enrapture him — it would cease to be the Apollo, and would be only the fragment.

A doctrine revealed from heaven, but mutilated by human hands, loses its integrity, and is reduced to the condition of a body without limbs or an indwelling soul. Paul says of those who maintained that the resurrection was past already (2 Tim. 2:18), that they “overthrow the faith of some;” an error regarding the *time* of an event is here clearly a fundamental error. When “certain men . . . taught the brethren” (Acts 15:1) that the divinely appointed rite of circumcision ought to be retained, as essential to salvation, whether as a meritorious work, or as an indication that the divine revelations of the Old Testament had not been disowned, they were not charged with having otherwise interfered with the apostolic type of doctrine, and yet their error was fundamental — it “subverted souls.” (Acts 15:24). So little of our modern toleration did Paul possess, that he wished that such persons were “cut off,” Galat. 5:12, precisely as on other occasions he anathematized false teachers. Thus too, the “doctrine of the Nicolaitanes,” Rev. 2:15, which, possibly, demonstrated its unsoundness chiefly by its influence on the character and life of its adherents, is mentioned by the Lord “with abhorrence.” (Dr. J. G. Schmucker’s Expos, of the Rev. *ad loc.*)

When Paul refers, Acts 20:21, to the substance of his preaching, did he teach a “repentance” which the Papist can justly identify with his “penitence”? When Peter connects the “remission of sins” with the “name of Jesus Christ,” (Acts 2:38) the “many other words,” 5:40, doubtless unfolded the nature of that “repentance *and* baptism” which he also

mentioned. When Paul addressed the Athenians, and said (Acts 17:26) that God had “made of one blood all nations of men,” a doctrine so remote, apparently, from the Christian character and life as the “Unity of the Human Race,” is clearly regarded by him as fundamental. When Paul directs the attention of Timothy and Titus to the subjects which they should teach, (1 Tim. 4:11, 2 Tim. 2:14, s Titus 2:15; 3:8) he does not refer solely to doctrines which are now regarded as fundamental by orthodox churches, but also to detailed points or peculiar aspects of doctrine, not usually called “essentials,” in the sense of “leading doctrines.” Thus, while he warns against “doctrines,” δαιμονίων (1 Tim. 4:1) he states the truth “that every creature of God is good,” etc. 5:4, and of such apparent non-essentials Timothy is directed to “put the brethren in remembrance,” clearly meaning, as in 2 Tim. 2:14, that otherwise his hearers would be “subverted” or meet with an overthrow, *ἰπί χαταστροφῆ*.

Peter’s address to Cornelius and his friends, Acts 10:34-43, and Paul’s discourse to the Jews of Antioch, Acts 13:16-41, contain specifications of doctrine not found in modern lists of “fundamentals.” When James, ch. 1:26, says: “Pure religion and undefiled” etc. he does not intend to embrace in those few words a summary of all our Christian duties; and when the Saviour speaks of the knowledge of God and himself as eternal life, John 17:3, or Paul gives unusual prominence to a particular doctrine (e, g. that Christ died for our sins 1 Cor. 15:3, the resurrection of the dead, 5:12 sqq.) they do not design to furnish a summary of our whole Christian faith, or exclude other doctrines from the rank of fundamentals.

Indeed, there is another consideration which leads us to cling with unyielding tenacity to every minute portion of our doctrines, as fundamental in its character and influence. — “Every man’s work” is the peculiar character which he possesses in the eyes of God, and the life which he leads. But this character and this life of the individual will be essentially modified by his views of Christian doctrines *in their details*. We cannot conceive of true holiness in which love to Christ is not a distinct feature. The old Christological views of our Symbolical Books, which embrace the points of his two natures, distinct yet inseparable, his vicarious atonement, the intercommunion of the attributes of the two natures, etc., naturally afford a more exalted view of his unspeakable love, awaken a deeper humility, and far more powerfully and more divinely affect our feelings, than when we coldly assent that Christ is our Redeemer, and merely give a

vague definition of the term. The structure erected on the latter loose and narrow foundation, will never attain the grandeur, solidity, extent and harmonious beauty, which more expanded views alone can sustain. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ, in its barren abstract form, and distinguished from the Lutheran doctrine of the intercommunion of the attributes of his two natures, as taught in our Formula of Concord,⁷ can never have been all that Paul believed, when, after his abundant revelations (2 Cor. 12:7) he thought of the voice of *Him* who said: “I”—overall, God, Rom. 9:5—“I am (now) Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest,” Acts 22:8. The doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, which represents that ordinance as scarcely more dignified than a mere religious mnemonic rite, or any other mode of recalling Christ to the memory, or which finds in the Eucharist nothing more than a *spiritual* presence of Christ so highly etherealized or sublimated, that nothing but the mechanical manducation of bread, the deglutition of bread and wine, and the *word* “spiritual” are really retained, can never permit the communicant to be conscious of that depth of feeling; that profound veneration; that view of the high privileges of God’s children; that sense of man’s unworthiness and Christ’s abounding love; that strength and encouragement in the divine life, which are experienced by the devout believer who acknowledges in mind and heart that in, with, and under the unchanged bread and wine, he has also received the true body and blood of his Redeemer. The Sacrament of Baptism, when viewed merely as an initiatory rite, easily fades away from the affections. Unhappily, the views of the church, as detailed in the Symbolical Books are either unknown to, or untaught by, many who should know them; the ordinance is misunderstood; and ignorance of its nature and design, far more than the blight occasioned in some regions by the presence and practices of the various sects of immersionists, has led to the neglect of Infant Baptism, and the serious decay of spiritual life in many souls. If Baptism be merely the application of water to the body of flesh and blood, and be *only* a sign of the Christian religion, its value it would be sometimes difficult to demonstrate. The usual view of the ordinance affords a very contracted foundation for an extensive and lofty “work;” but when it is understood to implant in the soul of the baptized the germ of a divine life, and constitute a rich treasure, according to the profound doctrine of the church, it awakens new gratitude in the believer’s heart, in addition to the blessings which it otherwise imparts; the soul is powerfully attracted to the divine author of the ordinance, and a

foundation is furnished, by the fully developed doctrine of Baptism, on which a “work” may be reared, glorious to God, and blessed to the believer.

For, when Christian doctrines are studied and received in all their scriptural details, the truth, so generously imbibed, must naturally influence the character in an equally large proportion; when doctrines that enlighten the mind, control the conscience and melt the heart, are received in all the fulness of detail in which the church presents them in her Symbolical Books, as derived from Scripture, they must produce far more decided effects on the walk and conduct of the believer, than any mere general views could have accomplished. The latter, from their indefinite nature, not being sufficient to guide and control, nor being suited to the details of life and the ever varying emotions of the soul, connive at the presence of less spiritual and holy influences. Accordingly, the Hebrews (ch. 6:1) are exhorted to develop and extend their knowledge of revealed truth, in order that a larger and surer basis of a holy life may be secured. The Saviour’s prayer is: “Sanctify them through thy truth”. John 17:17. St. Paul prays that the Colossians (1:9) might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and regards their increasing in the knowledge of God (v. 10) as essential to the full development of their Christian character, and the exhibition of a holy walk. Timothy is urgently admonished by the Apostle (1 Tim. 4:13,15) to read and meditate. Such knowledge of divine truth, of which Christ in God is the sum and substance, received by the mind, believed by the heart, and embodied in the life, results in the gift by God of eternal life. (John 17:3.)

It is self-evident, that no doctrine is received in its integrity, when essential portions are absconded. He who denies the doctrine of the Providence of God is rightly regarded as an alien: he differs from us in a fundamental doctrine: our whole conception of the nature of the Deity, our views of the importance of prayer, and the efficacy of the means of grace, our motives to obey God, our preparations for eternity, are all of a different character from his own. In reality the identity between his religion and our own, is destroyed. For the purpose of securing an agreement in fundamentals, however, he may be induced to recognize the *title* of the doctrine. Various texts which we, perhaps, adduce, he cordially acknowledges to be authoritative decisions of the subject. Do we, then, agree in fundamentals? Scrutinize his opinions, by detailing the ramifications of the doctrine, and the agreement vanishes like a dream.

Even if the Scholastic concursus produces no difference in our views, he may admit the principle of a general Providence, but absolutely deny, on supposed philosophical grounds, the truth of our views respecting a special Providence; he derides the doctrine that, while God “delivers from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence,” (Ps. 91:3) he also literally “numbers the very hairs of our head,” (Matt. 10:30). Such views are inconsistent with the majesty of God, as he believes, and he concedes only a divine superintendence in general, but not a divine attention to particulars, forgetting the oft-repeated truth that particulars really constitute a general class. The whole doctrine is thus dimmed, attenuated, mutilated, and nothing but a lifeless trunk remains. In vain do we attempt to conceal the discrepancy of our views, — we do *not* accord in fundamentals with those who, in any degree, impair the integrity of a doctrine.

Church Government

The principle extends even to points which, in a certain sense, are not really stringently decided in Scripture. It is supposed that we may agree in fundamentals with others whose views of church-government differ from our own. It is true that no rule is distinctly announced in Scripture relative to the institution of Synods, Conventions, Presbyteries, Classes or Conferences. When however *Episcopal* ordination, (using the word in the Church-of-England sense), is regarded as the seal without which the preaching of the word and the administration of the Sacraments possess no validity, a fundamental error is introduced, which, while it attempts to dis sever us from the church of Christ, in reality vitiates and unchristianizes the whole system into which it has insidiously stolen.

Rigid Calvinistic Views

Thus too, rigid Calvinistic views of doctrine, embracing the reprobation of non-elect persons, are fundamentally distinct from our own. It is impossible, that a Calvinist and Lutheran can form the same conception of the nature of the Supreme Being. To the former he is not the benignant [kind and gracious], impartial God in whom the latter believes; the former

regard the atonement through a medium which dims its splendor and contracts its limits; the latter looks with cheerful confidence to his Redeemer, and confesses that the plan of salvation devised by God, in its grandeur and extent, is truly worthy of God. Indeed, a limb of the body does not more truly consist of nerves, muscles, bones and parts, of which the most minute cannot be extirpated without loss, than any special doctrine consists of particulars, none of which can be sacrificed without essential harm. The destruction of the smallest nerve in one of the extremities is felt throughout the system, the denial of any constituent portion of divine truth, essentially impairs the vitality of the whole system of faith, and introduces the seeds of death. The antipodal position of Lutheranism and Methodism, in regard not only to doctrines, but also, preeminently to usages, is obvious.

Inspiration of Scripture

The inspiration of the Scriptures is a fundamental doctrine. There is a sense of the term, however, in which even the Rationalist can adopt it. Or, individuals who conscientiously disavow that name, and confess that the Scriptures are inspired writings in a more favorable sense, may nevertheless entertain such low views of the infallibility of the canonical writers, or discover in them so many instances of a want of knowledge, that when this doctrine has passed through the process of filtration, the Scriptures hold no higher rank than the works of ordinary men of acknowledged wisdom and piety. Now, this result destroys all the authority of the Bible, and subverts our faith; we learn again that doctrines are fundamental in the sense that all their details are fundamental. Indeed, on such principles we refuse to acknowledge the orthodoxy of Socinians, who employ all the Scripture terms with which we are familiar, and freely admit that Christ is our Redeemer, but who are nevertheless fundamentally heterodox.⁸

If these principles are correct, it becomes a less embarrassing task to specify the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith in detail. We cannot dispose of the subject by simply taking the Bible as our Creed; when we confine ourselves to this course, all the mooted questions of controversial theology rise up again in their undetermined form, as phantoms of the night. We prefer to study, first, the Scriptures, and then, the ways of God in his Church. We discern his goodness in ultimately securing the victory to the

cause of truth after every conflict. We are profoundly impressed by his wonderful ways in guiding the progress of the great Reformation; we perceive with delight that he “left not himself without witness” (Acts 14:17) in the moral as well as the physical world, and that he raised up men, who understood and prized the truth; even as Luther, by his divine grace, had been taught to understand and prize it. We find the whole system of our holy faith elaborated in the most conscientious manner, in our Confessions, or Symbolical Books, from the Augsburg Confession to the Formula of Concord. This “foundation of God standeth sure;” the faith propounded in these books has been severely tested; has been rigidly compared with the Scriptures by adversaries and adherents, zealous, learned and able men; has been, further, tested by the religious experience of some of the most holy Christians whom the world has ever seen, and the results have been glorious. In the doctrine of these books, not an error, not a defect, has been discovered; and they now stand before us as a monument of wisdom and piety, guided in the whole course of construction, by the illuminating influence of the Spirit of God. To these confessions we appeal; in them fundamental doctrines are fully developed; *they* are the test which we apply to every doctrine. *All* the articles of faith which they maintain, are fundamental — all the questions, which they either do not introduce or do not decide, are of subordinate importance, and cannot claim the rank of essentials.

Non Fundamentals

We may now easily define the nature of *non fundamentals*. This term is liable to misconstruction, unless the principle advanced above be rigidly maintained, namely that details of doctrines are fundamental. For non-fundamental doctrines are in no case elevated to the rank of “articles” or “Loci”; they are merely subordinate propositions, which stand in a relation, often loose, to leading articles. They often assume the character of theological problems, they are sometimes merely exegetical difficulties, and they may be maintained or rejected, without, in any degree, impairing the solidity of the structure of our faith; they are decorations or blemishes which adhere merely to the surface. What was the precise purpose of the “descent of Christ into hell”? Can corporeity be predicated *in any sense* of

the angels? Was pride the cause of the fall of some angels? What is the precise nature of eternal punishment? etc. etc. The decision of such questions is not furnished by the Scriptures and not attempted by our Symbolical Books; it does not materially tend to the development of the Christian character and life, and, consequently, cannot be supposed to constitute a portion of the “foundation” or doctrinal system, by which our moral nature is influenced, and our external development controlled.

St. Paul, who does not confine himself to the figure of a “foundation” and superstructure, represents “unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, Eph. 4:13, as the great object which Christian teachers should labor to realize; those who are established in the faith are “full grown,” those who are “carried about with every wind of doctrine,” 5:14, are mere “children.” He does not appear to refer only to very grave departures from the faith, and yet he regards defects in the believer’s faith as a serious obstacle to his progress — or, to return to the former figure, any derivation from the truth, though it may seem so unimportant or non-essential a part of the doctrine, as to possess only a feather’s weight, and to be liable to be affected by every “wind” or worthless opinion of an errorist, materially contracts the “foundation,” and renders the full development of the Christian character and life impossible — the believer is sincere, but he remains an imperfect Christian — he is a human being, with a body and a soul, but in the immature state of childhood — he rears a “work” which may contain gold and silver, but either the foundation is weakened, or hay and stubble are mingled with more valuable materials — and his work is, in a large measure, liable to be burned.

The principles which we have here advanced, require us to watch with the utmost vigilance over the purity of our faith, as exhibited in our Confessions, and consequently demand at times painful sacrifices. We conceive it to be our highest duty to be faithful to God; we dare not connive at the suppression of any portion of the truth, which he condescended to reveal; and earnestly as we desire to see more than a nominal union of believers accomplished, we cannot contribute our aid to that work, if the least prejudice be thereby sustained by our holy faith. We offer the surest and best foundation for it — the word of God in its integrity. Indeed, no union can be real and permanent, which is founded on concessions reluctantly made, and, in practice, immediately retracted. Union will then exist, when God’s blessing completes it, when his truth is boldly

maintained, when pride and prejudice are permitted to become extinguished, and when no other desire actuates all believers than that of holding the truth as it is in Jesus, and of leading, by divine aid, a life of faith and love in conformity to it. May the Church of Christ speedily witness that blessed union!

1. This expression originated in the 17th century, when certain efforts were made either to re-unite Lutherans, Reformed and Roman Catholics into one ecclesiastical society, or to secure a virtual union, by the recession of doctrines that were diametrically opposed to each other, and the adoption of the meager confessions of the earlier centuries.

The eminent Calixtus, to whose movements the term Syncretism was applied, was, unfortunately, led by his zeal in the work of accomplishing a great and noble design, as it appeared to him, to assume the position that “the Lutherans and Roman Catholics did not differ about the *fundamental doctrines* of the Christian faith,” as his candid apologist Mosheim (Church Hist. Cent. 17. Sect. II. Part II. Ch. I. § 23. note f.) admits, while he regrets the circumstance.

It was in reference to such preposterous attempts at union that our admirable “Church Father,” Nicholas Hunnius, published in Wittenberg in 1626 his celebrated *Διάσχερις theol. de fundamentali dissensu doct. ev. etc.* consisting of 632 pages, without the index. This work, which is scarce, and to which we have not access, introduced or gave currency to the term “fundamental articles.”↵

2. In the 17th Century, the Arminians and others, who held their views on the subject of the divine decrees, were termed either absolute and categorical or hypothetical *Universalists*; the former regarded the grace of God as offered absolutely and universally, the latter imposed certain restrictions upon it.↵
3. “*Fides implicita sen informis*, i. e. assensus, qui omnia, quamvis ignota, quae ab Ecclesia probantur, amplectitur.”↵
4. We entirely disavow that sense of the term *fundamentals*, in which some writers have proposed to employ it, viz. that each distinct religious denomination may have its own fundamental doctrines by

which it is essentially distinguished from the rest. We recognize only one Lord, one faith, one Church, according to the Scriptures. To speak of the fundamental doctrines, respectively, of Christianity and of Mohammedism, is really to degrade the former to the level of a false religion; the two cannot be compared on equal terms; the former alone is true — the latter is only one of a thousand forms of error, combined, at best, with some rays of light originally derived from revelation. ←

5. Θεμέλιος, ου, ό, ή — ον, το. It is found in the following passages either in a literal sense, or in one not appropriate to the present question: Luke 6:48, 49; 14:29; Acts 16:26; Rom. 15:20; 1 Tim. 6:19; 2 Tim. 2:19; Hebr. 11; 10; Rev. 21:14, 19, 19. The other five passages, in which it occurs as a trope, are: 1 Cor. 3:10, 11, 12; Eph. 2; 20; Hebr. 6:1. The verb θεμελιοω is used in a literal sense in Matth. 7:25; Luke 6:48; Hebr. 1:10, and in a tropical, in Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:23; 1 Pet. 5:10. It signifies, in general, to build upon a certain foundation. The masc. of θεμέλιος, which is not a redundant noun, but an adjective with λίθος understood (Matthiae Gr. Gr. §95) appears to designate specially a foundation-stone, e. g. Rev. 21:19, and the neuter, e. g. Acts 16:26, a foundation viewed as an aggregate of these stones. ←
6. When the “World’s Evangelical Alliance” held its convention in London, August, 1846, a so-called “Doctrinal Basis” was ultimately adopted by the members, who exhibited in their ranks some of the most distinguished orthodox theologians of England and the Continent, as well as very eminent divines from America. A remarkable nervousness was shown by them in expressing their views of divine truth, or rather, a fraternal desire was felt to avoid the introduction of any doctrines which were not strictly “fundamental” in the most charitable and lenient sense of the word. The natural result was, that while various subordinate advantages were incidentally derived from this great meeting, not a solitary Gospel doctrine obtained a more favorable position than it had previously occupied in Christendom. Nay, divine truth was temporarily obscured. Their platform, it is true, even after being drawn out to the utmost extent which its caoutchouc [rubber] properties permitted, did not afford room for Unitarians, but the original “Basis,” which professed to set forth “Evangelical views,” was less *Evangelical* than the Koran or Plato’s *Dialogues*, at least in the remarkable suppression of the doctrine of the immortality of the

soul. If the “American Brethren” had not insisted on an appendix to the Creed proposed by the “British Brethren,” and eventually constrained the latter to recognize *some additional fundamental doctrines*, this famous Convention would have doubtless adjourned, after proclaiming to the world, that when they had, with infinite care, placed in juxtaposition the mere *titles* of doctrines in which they agreed in general, still, the Creed which they engendered, after such magnificent parturient labors, did not present an honest and direct contradiction of the turgid infidel proposition: Death is an eternal sleep. — The excuse was, that “some good men were in doubt about the eternal punishment of the wicked!” etc., etc. God forbid, that the “doubts” of any “good men” respecting Bible doctrines should have more influence, or more effectually lead to the obscuration of truth, than the unintelligible sounds emitted by a newly-born babe. ←

7. It is to be understood that specifications of doctrines, like those, for instance, of the Formula of Concord respecting the Sacraments, the Person of Christ, etc. which no Reformed church has adopted, but which nevertheless enter so profoundly into the very heart of revealed truth, are claimed by us as strictly fundamental. However orthodox others may be persuaded that they are, we still believe that an escape from the adoption of the dangerous Nestorian heresy of two persons in Christ is logically impossible, unless we adhere positively and unequivocally to the Lutheran doctrine of the *Communicatio Idiomatum*, the admirable presentation of which divine truth in the *Formula Concordiae* deepens the gratitude and veneration with which we regard that sacred Confession. ←
8. The excessive liberality of sentiment of our day, which assumes the name of charity, and prides itself on its freedom from sectarianism, is often, either only affectation, or really latitudinarianism. The zeal to adopt the smallest possible number of distinctive doctrines, for the purpose of accommodating the largest number of sects, at last retains as little of the actual stock of Bible doctrine, as the Wolfian school of critics retained of the real Homer, if even they grant the venerable bard permission *to have really existed*. This literary heresy of Wolf and his followers is, we are happy to persuade ourselves, discarded at least by British scholars, if we may judge from the tone, not only of Mure’s recent “Critical History of the Language and Literature of Ancient

Greece,” but also of the two very favorable reviews of that work, which appeared simultaneously (October, 1850) in the Edinburgh and the London Quarterly Reviews. The Homeric Controversy, respecting the unity of design and composition as well of the Iliad as of the Odyssey, and the common authorship of both, partially assumes a theological aspect, at least in so far, that the bold criticism which can sanction a theory destitute, as we have always thought, even of verisimilitude, when we regard the question in its general features, and can create many Homers, when the appearance of even one in the world is well nigh as wonderful as the appearance of one Luther or one Washington, and is precisely the same which, in various forms of practical unbelief, has attempted to violate the sacred Canon. ←

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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