

EDGAR YOUNG MULLINS: A BAPTIST EXPONENT  
OF THEOLOGICAL RESTATEMENT

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OF THEOLOGICAL RESTATEMENT

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Doctor of Theology

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by  
Bill Clark Thomas  
March, 1963

APPROVAL SHEET

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TO  
RUTH  
AND TO  
THE CHURCHES WHICH WE HAVE SERVED  
AT  
WHITLOCK AND WOODBURN

## PREFACE

## PREFACE

I am not certain when I first heard of Edgar Young Mullins and his theology. I received my first copy of one of his books as a "get-well" present from my friends in the Baptist Student Union at Murray State College while I was convalescing after a serious automobile accident in 1953. Little did I dream at that time, however, that one day I would make an intensive study of that book and of all the writings of its author.

Dr. James Leo Garrett first caused me to consider the theology of E. Y. Mullins as a subject for extended research by a casual remark which he made to our class in historical theology in the spring of 1961. Even after beginning the project, however, I had no idea that detailed study in this area could be so personally fruitful and rewarding as it has proven to be.

Therefore, I am grateful to Dr. Garrett for his original suggestion and for his continual service as supervisor of my graduate committee and of my thesis project. As the project nears completion, I am also aware of my debt to the other members of my committee who have guided me through my graduate program and to all those Southern Seminary professors at whose feet I have learned both as a student and as a teaching fellow. Indeed, the demands of

the last few years have reminded me that the list of my spiritual, intellectual, and academic creditors stretches back farther than does my memory and includes all those teachers, pastors, counselors, and Christian friends who have made an investment in my life, my thought, and my work. My parents, too, have always encouraged my ministry and my educational program; for them and to them, I am most grateful.

A number of people have facilitated in practical ways the actual production of this dissertation. Dr. Leo T. Crismon and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Library staff, especially Miss Betty McCoy and Mrs. Karen Joines, on whom I have imposed most often, have been completely cooperative and extremely helpful as I have gathered the materials for my investigation. Other persons have placed special materials at my disposal and have given me insight into the personality and achievement of Dr. Mullins. A trio of typists, Mrs. Wendell Arnett, Mrs. Robert L. Rosenbaum, and Mrs. Coleman Vick, have worked diligently in order that my manuscript might be ready on time.

But throughout the entire eighteen-month period in which this dissertation has been prepared and during the six years of seminary training which preceded it, my most patient, constant, and indispensable helper has been my wife, Ruth. It is for this reason that I have chosen to

dedicate this work to her and to the Bird's Creek Baptist Church at Whitlock, Tennessee, and the Woodburn Baptist Church at Woodburn, Kentucky, both of which have supported us and have accepted the limited service which we have been able to render during these past eight years.

Bill Clark Thomas

Woodburn, Kentucky

March, 1963



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## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

### The Significance of Edgar Young Mullins

Edgar Young Mullins died on November 23, 1928.<sup>1</sup> His career had been truly remarkable. As the inscription on his monument in the Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky, declares, he had been a pastor of Baptist churches from 1885 to 1889, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1899 to 1928, president of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1921 to 1924 and president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1923 to 1928.<sup>2</sup> He was renowned around the world as a "preacher, teacher, scholar, administrator, Christian statesman, world citizen, servant of God."<sup>3</sup> It was

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<sup>1</sup>The basic factual data on the life and career of Edgar Young Mullins are readily available in several sources. Unfortunately, however, the sources do not always agree on all details. Cf. the following articles entitled "Mullins, Edgar Young:" Baptist Biography, ed. B. J. W. Graham, I (1917), 259-67; The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, XXI (1931), 115; The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson, VIII (1950), 52-53; Who's Who in America, ed. A. N. Marquis, XV (1928), 1536; Who Was Who in America, ed. A. N. Marquis, I (1942), 878; Who's Who in Louisville, ed. W. T. Owens, (1926), 126; also Gaines S. Dobbins, "Mullins, Edgar Young," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, II (1958), 930; W. J. McGlothlin, "Mullins, Edgar Young," Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Dumas Malone, XIII (1934), 322-23.

<sup>2</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins: An Intimate Biography (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1929), p. 213.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. These words were inscribed on Mullins' monument as a brief description of his contribution to Christian service.

this amazing versatility, this ability to do many things well, combined with a surpassing excellence in several specific areas, which caused men to regard E. Y. Mullins so highly.<sup>4</sup>

His contemporaries often expressed their convictions concerning his greatness. Early in Mullins' career as seminary president and theological scholar, John Clifford of England, probably the most prominent Baptist of his time, cited him as "the man to watch" after hearing his address on "The Theological Trend" at the first Baptist World Congress in London in 1905.<sup>5</sup> Years later, another leading British Baptist, J. H. Rushbrooke, described Mullins as "the Baptist par excellence."<sup>6</sup> Mullins' colleague at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Professor A. T. Robertson, called him "the outstanding Baptist leader and statesman and theologian."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Z. T. Cody, friend to E. Y. Mullins since their seminary days together, speaking of him at his funeral, said that his greatest characteristic was versatility. "Funeral Service for Dr. E. Y. Mullins, November 25, 1928" (type-written copy of stenographic notes in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Isla May Mullins, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>6</sup>J. H. Rushbrooke, "The Baptist World Alliance in Retrospect and Prospect," Review and Expositor, XXV (July, 1928), 320.

<sup>7</sup>"Funeral Service . . . ," p. 15. N. B. This method of abbreviating titles by means of ellipses will often be used in this dissertation.

Another seminary colleague, W. O. Carver, who was not noted for extravagant compliments, characterized Mullins as being "the typical Baptist" for millions of people around the world.<sup>8</sup> Carver revealed his own reasoned opinion in the following words: "All in all, as teacher, theologian, Christian thinker, and inspiring leader, American Baptists have had no superior to E. Y. Mullins."<sup>9</sup> Gaines S. Dobbins, one of Mullins' younger colleagues, remembers him as "the tallest man, intellectually and spiritually, that I have known"<sup>10</sup> and says that during the 1920's, E. Y. Mullins was "Mr. Baptist" throughout the world.<sup>11</sup> George W. Truett, speaking at Mullins' funeral in 1928, paid tribute to him as "the outstanding Baptist leader in all the world in recent years."<sup>12</sup>

Edgar Young Mullins was a Baptist whose world-wide prestige was almost unique. Among the factors contributing to his prominence was his reputation as a theologian.

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<sup>8</sup>W. O. Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins--Leader and Builder," Review and Expositor, XXVI (April, 1929), 128.

<sup>9</sup>W. O. Carver, "Recollections and Information from Other Sources Concerning the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary" (typewritten copy of unpublished notes in the files of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 82.

<sup>10</sup>Gaines S. Dobbins, "Men Who Have Made Seminary History," Quarterly Review, XVIII (July, August, September, 1958), 36.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>12</sup>"Funeral Service . . . ," p. 15.

J. Gresham Machen voiced the view of many when he said of Mullins in 1926:

He has come to be spokesman not merely for the Southern Baptist Church or for the Baptist Churches in America, but also to a considerable extent for the Baptist Churches throughout the world. And there are many in other communions also who look to him as their spiritual guide.<sup>13</sup>

Doubtless, the faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary expressed the majority opinion of their contemporary Baptists when they hailed Mullins as "the greatest theologian of his time."<sup>14</sup>

The passing years have not altered this verdict. F. Townley Lord, writing in 1955, acknowledged Mullins' "magnificent contribution" to the Baptist life of the world, referred to the "wide influence" of his writings, and quoted with approval W. O. Carver's description of him as "the leading Baptist theologian of his time."<sup>15</sup> An editorial in the Review and Expositor that same year identified E. Y. Mullins and W. T. Conner as "the two leading theologians produced by

<sup>13</sup>J. Gresham Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," Princeton Theological Review, XXIV (January, 1926), 38.

<sup>14</sup>Faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Edgar Young Mullins: A Study in Christian Character (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.), p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>F. Townley Lord, Baptist World Fellowship: A Short History of the Baptist World Alliance (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), p. 69.

Southern Baptists in the last generation."<sup>16</sup> More recently, writers in the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists have called Mullins a "leading apologist and champion of 'Baptist soul competency',"<sup>17</sup> "the outstanding Southern Baptist apologist of recent times,"<sup>18</sup> and "the leading theologian among Southern Baptists at that time [ca. 1910]."<sup>19</sup>

The theology of Edgar Young Mullins is worthy of careful examination because of the tremendous achievement of the man himself if for no other reason. Surprisingly enough, no comprehensive, full-scale study of this subject has ever been undertaken.<sup>20</sup> Would such a study, however, be only an

<sup>16</sup>"Editorial Introduction," Review and Expositor, LII (April, 1955), 141.

<sup>17</sup>J. Leo Garrett, "History of Baptist Theology," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, II (1958), 1413.

<sup>18</sup>Bernard Ramm, "Apologetics," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, I (1958), 55.

<sup>19</sup>Wayne E. Ward, "Fundamentalism," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, I (1958), 516.

<sup>20</sup>The author has arrived at this conclusion only after careful investigation. In addition to brief essays and addresses on the general subject of E. Y. Mullins, three unpublished dissertations have been located. They vary in quality, but all are limited in scope. Cf. James Howell Perry, "Edgar Young Mullins" (unpublished Master's thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 1951); Julius H. Spears, "The Christology of Edgar Young Mullins" (unpublished Master's thesis, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, 1945); Russell Hooper Dilday, Jr., "The Apologetic Method of E. Y. Mullins" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1960).

academic exercise? Would its value be merely historical or does the theology of E. Y. Mullins have real contemporary relevance? Answers to these questions may be suggested by a consideration of the central problem and task of current theological endeavor.

### The Task of Theological Restatement

The prevailing mood of the present age is secularism, the thought-patterns of which are dominated by the categories of modern natural science. The fundamental problem of the theologian of today is that of communicating effectively with the modern, earth-bound mind which so easily accepts the explanations and achievements of scientific research but so often fails to comprehend the relevance of theological issues. Thus, the most challenging task confronting the contemporary theologian involves the restatement of theological truth in a manner which will be both meaningful and acceptable to modern man. This line of reasoning finds ample support in recent theological literature.

Georgia Harkness, in an analysis of secularism as the major modern rival of the Christian faith, defined it as "the ordering and conducting of life as if God did not exist."<sup>21</sup> Karl Heim saw a tide of secularism slowly but continually

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<sup>21</sup>Georgia Harkness, The Modern Rival of Christian Faith (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), p. 16.

rising in all civilized countries.<sup>22</sup> Emil Brunner has said that "the almost complete disappearance of the sense of transcendence" is an entirely new and distinctive characteristic of the present age.<sup>23</sup>

Most observers connect this disturbing situation with the dominance of modern science in the thinking of modern man. Georgia Harkness calls dependence on the methods and products of science "the dominant note of our age."<sup>24</sup> Heim said that mature secularism, which he saw as the logical antithesis to belief in a living, personal, governing God,<sup>25</sup> is fully convinced that it is "firmly based on the unshakable foundation of the modern scientific conception of the universe."<sup>26</sup> Brunner has observed that science plays a far greater part in human thought than it has ever done before:

. . . even one who has been only to a secondary school forms his ideas about what is true and untrue, certain and uncertain, in some way or another in accordance with an idea of scientific knowledge--and this means in terms of natural science. Whatever cannot be proved scientifically is either not quite true or not quite certain.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Karl Heim, Christian Faith and Natural Science, trans. N. Horton Smith (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. 24.

<sup>23</sup>Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>Harkness, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>25</sup>Heim, op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>27</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p. 5.

Obviously, the truth regarding the ultimate issues which are the principal concern of theology cannot be scientifically proved. Recent Christian confrontation with the "scientific" philosophy of logical positivism has served to explicate this point.<sup>28</sup> Thus arises the problem of relevance and irrelevance. The mind conditioned to respond to scientific demonstrations is often completely bewildered by theological affirmations. The positivist's criticism of the Christian's proclamation is not based on a charge of falsity but of meaninglessness.

In his inaugural address as professor in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Eric C. Rust raised this question:

How are we to relate the biblical categories and concepts to a world which has learned to look to modern science as its deliverer and which therefore thinks in forms quite remote from those of the biblical revelation?<sup>29</sup>

Obviously, some form of restatement of the Christian message is required if the modern Christian is to communicate effectively with the modern secularist. A literal reading of the biblical texts is not enough. Nor can the theological

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<sup>28</sup>David Elton Trueblood, Philosophy of Religion (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), pp. 189-202; E. L. Mascall, Words and Images (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1957); Arthur F. Smethurst, Modern Science and Christian Beliefs (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), pp. 251-59.

<sup>29</sup>Eric C. Rust, "The Apologetic Task in the Modern Scene," Review and Expositor, LVI (April, 1959), 178.



formulations of past generations be offered again as the timeless answer to the questions of every age. A relevant theology is one related to the age to which it is spoken.

Perhaps the most provocative exponent of theological restatement in recent decades has been Rudolf Bultmann. In an epoch-making monograph in 1941, Bultmann proposed that the New Testament proclamation be demythologized and reinterpreted in terms of modern existentialism.<sup>30</sup> The radical nature of this proposal produced the liveliest theological debate of the past twenty years.

Most scholars have not accepted Bultmann's particular program of theological restatement, but as Eric Rust, Amos N. Wilder, and others have pointed out, one does not have to accept Bultmann's solution in order to realize that the problem which he has fearlessly exposed can scarcely be ignored.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1960), pp. 1-44.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Rust, loc. cit., p. 195; "The Possible Lines of Development of Demythologizing," Journal of Bible and Religion, XXVII (January, 1959), 32; Amos N. Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 43; Kendrick Grobel, "Bultmann's Problem of New Testament 'Mythology'," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXX (June, 1951), 103; Erich Dinkler, "Existentialist Interpretation of the New Testament," Journal of Religion, XXXII (April, 1952), 87; W. Norman Pittenger, Rethinking the Christian Message (Greenwich, Connecticut: Seabury Press, 1956), p. viii. In general, this is also the view of those who reply to Bultmann in Kerygma and Myth. Cf. the essays there by Julius Schniewind, pp. 45-101; Ernst Lohmeyer, pp. 124-37; Helmut Thielicke, pp. 138-74; Friedrich K. Schumann, pp. 175-90; Austin Farrer, pp. 212-23.

As Kendrick Grobel has expressed it:

He [Bultmann] has brought into relentless focus a question that cannot be passed by: what has the Church to say to aggravatedly modern man? and how can she say it?<sup>32</sup>

Acknowledging the reality of stumbling-blocks on the path to faith, Paul Tillich has rightly expressed the Christian's main concern in the communication of the gospel:

There is always a genuine decision against the gospel for those for whom it is a stumbling-block. But this decision should not be dependent on the wrong stumbling-block; namely the wrong way of our communication of the gospel--or our inability to communicate. What we have to do is to overcome the wrong stumbling-block in order to bring people face to face with the right stumbling-block, and to enable them to make a genuine decision.<sup>33</sup>

Norman Pittenger speaks well for those modern theologians who believe that one of their most urgent contemporary tasks is the "re-thinking, re-interpreting, re-stating" of the essential affirmations of the Christian faith in the light of the best knowledge of the day.<sup>34</sup> He confidently affirms:

It is quite possible to state the central affirmations of Christianity very simply, yet with complete integrity of mind and with a keen awareness of their relationship to the whole of man's knowledge. This is the task to which we are called in this age of crisis and confusion.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Grobel, loc. cit.

<sup>33</sup>Paul Tillich, "Communicating the Gospel," Pastoral Psychology, VII (June, 1956), 16.

<sup>34</sup>Pittenger, loc. cit.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

Was E. Y. Mullins aware of a problem of theological communication in his day? Did he recognize the necessity of relating the formulation of theology to the thought of the times? Did he advocate the task of theological restatement and did he apply himself to it? At least a tentative affirmative answer to all these questions can be proposed on the basis of brief excerpts from the prefaces of four of Mullins' most significant books.

The first words of the preface to Mullins' first notable book, which dealt with Christian evidences, are these:

Many believers and many more would-be believers in Christianity are staggered by the assumptions and sometimes by the reasoned conclusions of current science or philosophy. The need is great for a restatement of the grounds of our Christian belief.<sup>36</sup>

He goes on to say that his book will attempt to state the argument for Christian belief from four leading standpoints.<sup>37</sup>

Many years later, surveying the confusion of issues in the post-World-War-I religious controversies, Mullins declared:

What is needed is a simple and clear statement of the present status of the debate between evangelical Christianity and its opponents, in the light of a sound

<sup>36</sup>Why Is Christianity True? (Chicago: Christian Culture Press, 1905), p. vii. (*Italics mine.*) N. B. Since the writings of E. Y. Mullins will be cited so often in this dissertation, and since the context will usually identify him as the author, his name will customarily be omitted in the footnote. When necessary to clarity it will be included.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. ix.

scientific scholarship. The following pages attempt this task.<sup>38</sup>

Mullins' book The Axioms of Religion bears the subtitle "A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith."<sup>39</sup> In the preface of this important work, the author affirms that he has felt for a number of years that a fresh statement of the Baptist position was possible which would enable the world to understand Baptists better.<sup>40</sup> In the first chapter of the book he challenges the various Christian bodies "to give a fresh account of themselves to the world, and in an entirely new way."<sup>41</sup> He frankly admits that the aim of his book is to make such a restatement from the Baptist point of view.<sup>42</sup>

In the preface to his manual of systematic theology, The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression, Mullins briefly surveys the growth and change of theology. He notes that truth does not change but contends that the apprehension and exposition of truth must change of necessity.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), p. v. (Italics mine.)

<sup>39</sup>The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1908).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 25. (Italics mine.)

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>43</sup>The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917), pp. vii-ix.

Methods have changed. New issues have arisen. Old issues have assumed new forms. New statements of truth are required.<sup>44</sup>

Mullins believes that the results of such restatement will be clearer understanding of the old gospel and new and stronger proofs of its truth and finality.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, it is evident that even a preliminary examination of the writings of E. Y. Mullins reveals his plainly professed interest in the problem of theological communication and his avowed intention to set forth a theological restatement in the areas of apologetic, polemic, and systematic theology.

#### The Purposes of This Study

Thus, two principal motives for a thorough study of the theology of E. Y. Mullins have been suggested and, therefore, it is possible at this point to indicate the twin purposes of this study. On the one hand, it is the intention of the author to examine the theology of this man simply because of his unquestioned significance for Baptist life and thought. On the other hand, however, a second purpose of this study will be to assess the value of Mullins' theology in the light of the current theological situation by determining to what extent he confronted the task of theological restatement and by

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. viii. (Italics mine.)

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

what means he sought to accomplish the task.

It is intended that the title of this dissertation should indicate the objectives of this study. The initial focus falls on "Edgar Young Mullins," the man and his theology. The fact that he was a "Baptist" helped to shape his whole theological contribution and has definitely helped to determine the interests of the author of this dissertation. The principal problem to be considered is the task of "theological restatement" which is necessitated by the modern need for a relevant, meaningful theology, capable of being effectively communicated to the modern mind.<sup>46</sup> If Edgar Young

<sup>46</sup>The phrase "theological restatement" which is being used repeatedly in this dissertation has been chosen with care and with special reference to E. Y. Mullins. It is intended to have less radical connotations than a phrase like "theological reconstruction" although the two terms might be used synonymously. Mullins was not intentionally technical in his use of such terms, but he does seem to make a distinction between the two ideas in an address delivered in 1901. He said:

"From a number of directions we hear it said that reconstruction is the most pressing of all duties in theology. Of course this term reconstruction does not mean the same thing as used by various writers. If it is meant that each generation should state in its own language its own thought as to the meaning of God's word; or that new aspects of old truth should be incorporated into our Christian theology, or that there should be steady advance and growth in our apprehension of the truth, and even new combinations with new emphasis, then the claim can be conceded without hesitation. But if it is meant . . . that those fundamental doctrines of evangelical Christianity, which have been and are now accepted by the most aggressive forces of the Christian world, are to be radically altered in the interests of new doctrines, then the claim cannot be allowed for a moment." The Task of the Theologian of Today [Louisville: Southern Baptist

Mullins can be demonstrated to be an "exponent" of theological restatement, one aware of the problem who not only advocated the task but also exemplified it by his own efforts, then the two major terms of the subject of this dissertation can be held together and the major thesis of the author can be maintained.

### The Plan of This Study

The plan by which this study will be pursued must now be indicated. The study will consist of three major parts. Part one will investigate the formation of Mullins' theology. The first three chapters will deal with his times, his life and work, and his contribution to the Christian world. The fourth chapter will suggest several factors which exerted great influence on the formation of Mullins' theology.

Part two will expound the structure and content of Mullins' theology. The fifth chapter will indicate some presuppositions and general characteristics of Mullins' theology. Chapters six, seven, and eight will review Mullins' systematic, apologetic, and polemic theology in turn.

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Theological Seminary, 1901], p. 2.

E. Y. Mullins would doubtless reject many of the programs of restatement which are being proposed today, including some which have already been referred to in this introduction. However, the purpose of this thesis is not to identify Mullins with any particular modern advocate of theological restatement but rather to demonstrate his concern for the same general task. Differences in method and degree need not contradict similarity in purpose and direction.

Part three will deal with the significance of Mullins' theology. Chapter nine will present an evaluation of his theology with special reference to the task of theological restatement. Finally, a concluding statement will be made regarding the contemporary relevance of the theological work of E. Y. Mullins.

### The Sources for This Study

The method of study will be inductive. Therefore, the primary materials will be Mullins' own writings which are fortunately quite numerous. They include his twelve books; about thirty booklets and pamphlets; hundreds of articles in periodical literature; many articles and addresses which were published in various annuals, collections, or other reference books; dozens of book reviews; his varied correspondence as seminary president; and a few other unpublished materials.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>It has been the intention of the author to amass and utilize a definitive bibliography of the writings of E. Y. Mullins. Only two limitations have been imposed. First, since Mullins' articles for the Baptist press were printed in so many papers in the various Southern states, the papers published in Louisville have been used as representative of them all. All of Mullins' contributions to the Baptist Argus (later the Baptist World) have been located through August 22, 1919, when that paper was merged with the Western Recorder. From that date on, Mullins' contributions to the Western Recorder have been located and used. To this list of articles have been added a few significant ones which were only published elsewhere. The author is convinced that this method has resulted in the collection of practically all of Mullins' articles without unnecessary duplication



Secondary sources will include the writings of various other men which will be used to provide introduction and background, commentary, contrast, and comparison. With their aid the theology of E. Y. Mullins will be set in context, explained, illuminated, and analyzed.

The form which will be followed in the presentation of this study will be that recommended in the manual of style published by the University of Chicago and in the briefer manual written by Kate L. Turabian.<sup>48</sup>

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of references. Second, the search for Mullins' book reviews has been limited to the Review and Expositor of which he was editor from 1904 to 1928. He rarely reviewed for any other publication.

<sup>48</sup>A Manual of Style (11th ed. rev.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

PART I

THE FORMATION OF MULLINS' THEOLOGY

CHAPTER I

THE WORLD OF EDGAR YOUNG MULLINS

## CHAPTER I

### THE WORLD OF EDGAR YOUNG MULLINS

Theology is not adequately understood as an isolated phenomenon. A man's theology is formulated in relation to his total life-experience. Moreover, the individual's drama of life occurs on a stage which has for its backdrop the larger life of the world of the time. Therefore, a theology is best understood when the whole broad context is considered.

The purpose of these first three chapters is to help explain the formation of the theology of Edgar Young Mullins by indicating the nature of the world in which he lived, the leading events of his life, the scope of his work, and the extent of his contribution as a servant of God.

The life of E. Y. Mullins spans the years from 1860 to 1928. These were tumultuous, crucial, revolutionary years in the history of the world. Much light can be shed on Mullins' career by a survey of some of the major developments of the period. The areas included for consideration will be national and international events, the progress of science, philosophy, and theology, and the life and activity of the American churches during these seven decades.

## National and International Events<sup>1</sup>

### The Civil War and Reconstruction

Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States the year E. Y. Mullins was born. Then in the spring of 1861, the irrepressible conflict between the North and the South erupted into a war between the states which raged back and forth across the country until exhaustion ended the fighting in April, 1865.

In the years immediately following the Civil War, the victorious North enjoyed a period of unprecedented prosperity as an industrial revolution swept through urban America. The defeated South, meanwhile, found itself devastated and impoverished. Institutions as well as individuals had to make new starts and had to struggle for their very survival. A whole new social and economic structure had to be built on the basis of the changed conditions. To compound the South's discomfort, the painful political procedures of "reconstruction" had to be endured. For many individuals emigration

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<sup>1</sup>Since the material of this section falls in the category of general historical fact, only a few special citations have been made. However, the following works have been consulted: Harry J. Carman and Harold C. Syrett, A History of the American People (2 vols.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952); Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (2 vols.; 4th ed. rev.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1957); John D. Hicks, The American Nation (2nd ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949); Nelson Manfred Blake, A Short History of American Life (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1952).

seemed to be the only solution.

### The continental Union

However, by 1877, the last Federal troops were removed from Southern soil, and during the next quarter of a century the South was economically reintegrated into a new, truly continental United States. By the end of the nineteenth century the American frontier had been effectively pushed all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Railroad companies had tied the country together with ribbons of steel. Miners, cattlemen, and farmers successively invaded the newly-opened territories. The development of industry in the "new" South and the new West contributed greatly to the destruction of the economic sectionalism that had characterized the antebellum period. The Union, now "more nearly perfect" than ever before, stood on the threshold of world power.

### The American empire

The United States had been an expansionist nation from its birth. Having rounded out its natural boundaries in North America and having gotten Alaska besides, the nation by the 1890's was eager to acquire outposts in both the Caribbean and Pacific oceans. The Spanish-American War of 1898 afforded the great opportunity to fulfill this ambition. By treaty with Spain, the United States secured Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. The Hawaiian Islands had been annexed the same year. The United States had gained an empire

but, as the developments of the following years demonstrated, it did not know exactly what to do with it.

### "The good years"

The era between the turn of the century and the beginning of World War I has been recently portrayed as "the good years" by Walter Lord.<sup>2</sup> The spirit of unbounded optimism regarding America's future was enhanced by the national achievements during this period. Secretary Hay's proclamation of an "open door" policy regarding China and Theodore Roosevelt's service as mediator in the Russo-Japanese War emphasized America's new role in the Orient. The building of the Panama Canal, together with American military and political interventions in several Latin American countries, indicated the predominance of the United States in the western hemisphere. When the "great white fleet" of American naval vessels circled the globe in 1908, the world saw evidence of the United States' sea power. At the same time, a progressive movement, which came to a peak in the election of 1912, was bringing about needed social and political changes within the American nation itself. The young giant of the Western world believed he had come of age.

### The Great War

Meanwhile, the imperialistic urges of the United States had been counterbalanced by active national

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<sup>2</sup>Walter Lord, The Good Years: From 1900 to the First World War (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

participation in efforts for world peace. Thus, when war broke out in Europe in 1914, popular sentiment in the United States was overwhelmingly in favor of non-intervention. Even in 1916, the most effective slogan of President Woodrow Wilson's successful campaign for re-election declared that he had kept the country out of the war. When America finally entered the war actively on the side of the Allies in April, 1917, her soldiers went willingly to fight in Europe only because their leaders told them they must "make the world safe for democracy" by means of "a war to end war."

America's brief participation in the war resulted in comparatively heavy casualties, and the total impact of the war effort brought about a radical disruption of the traditional way of life in the United States. These facts, together with American disappointment with the unidealistic conduct of the victorious Allies at the peace tables, help explain why the United States Congress, changed in complexion by the election of 1918, rejected the Treaty of Versailles with its proposed League of Nations and why the American voters in 1920 renounced Wilsonian idealism in favor of Warren G. Harding's call for a "return to normalcy."

#### The search for normalcy

Isolationism prevailed in the United States in the decade following World War I. By declining to join the League of Nations, America refused to assume responsibility for world



events. The nation preferred preoccupation with its own business, institutions, and private pursuits. In politics, an embarrassing series of scandals under the inept Harding ended when the sterner Calvin Coolidge succeeded to the presidency in 1923. The automobile and other inventions, together with a general postwar relaxation in the moral code of the country, contributed to a veritable revolution in the life and conduct of the American people. National prohibition went into effect when the Eighteenth Amendment was adopted in January, 1920, but it was ultimately to founder on the rock of inadequate enforcement. The fate of the prohibition experiment was a key issue in the election of 1928 which saw Herbert Hoover defeat the Roman Catholic Alfred E. Smith, who favored the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment.

Economic factors greatly affected the life of the nation during this decade. The wartime boom continued until 1920 when a period of depression and unemployment began. Although farm prices remained unsatisfactory, business enjoyed a brisk recovery after Harding was elected, and during the Coolidge administration the recovery swelled into a season of remarkable prosperity which lasted until the sudden stock-market collapse of October, 1929. Since he died in November, 1928, Edgar Young Mullins was spared the problems which the Great Depression brought to every area of American endeavor.

### The Changing Ocean of Ideas

The realm of human thought is never a static one but in recent generations it has shifted most rapidly. During the lifetime of E. Y. Mullins, revolutionary developments in the field of physical science helped bring on various innovations in philosophy and theology.

#### The rising tide of scientism

By the end of the Civil War, the transformation of American life by the discoveries and inventions of science was well under way. But the major impact of modern science upon American thought did not begin to be felt until a decade or so later.

Charles Darwin's Origin of Species had been published in 1859, but at first it had provoked relatively little discussion in America. It was not until the 1870's that a variety of circumstances pushed the evolution question onto the stage of public attention. As Nelson Blake succinctly describes it:

In 1871 Darwin published his Descent of Man, which was much more specific in applying the evolutionary theory to the human species than the earlier book had been. The ponderous volumes of Herbert Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy, then being widely read in America, not only assumed Darwinism to be true but extended the evolutionary theory far beyond the biological field. John Fiske began his career as the great American popularizer of the new thesis with lectures at Harvard in 1869 and 1870. English science was directly presented to American audiences when John Tyndall made a lecture tour in 1872 and 1873; Thomas Huxley, "Darwin's bulldog," followed

in 1876, and Herbert Spencer arrived in 1882.<sup>3</sup>

Once accepted, the new doctrine could not be confined to biology alone. As had Newtonian physics in the previous century, so now Darwinian evolution created a new intellectual norm. As Samuel Morison and Henry Commager have pointed out, science during this period produced a whole new climate of opinion.

It was not merely the change in man's views as to his origin on this planet that mattered. The implications of evolution were incorporated into every field of thought--law and history, economics and sociology, philosophy, religion, and art.<sup>4</sup>

Scientism, an almost idolatrous reverence for the methods, mental attitudes, and characteristics of the scientists, came rapidly to the fore in every intellectual field. The most relevant of these must now be examined.

#### Waves of philosophical thought

The most notable result of the period under consideration in the domain of American philosophy was the transition from transcendentalism to pragmatism,<sup>5</sup> but, quite naturally, many other waves were washing the shore while this major displacement was being achieved.

<sup>3</sup>Blake, op. cit., p. 496.

<sup>4</sup>Morison and Commager, op. cit., II, 269.

<sup>5</sup>This is the thesis of Morison and Commager, op. cit., II, 269-72. It is confirmed by Carman and Syrett, op. cit., II, 216-17.

Transcendentalism, with its absolutes and certainties capable of being intuitively perceived, had seemed quite satisfactory to the antebellum mind. But once Darwin's view of a changing and evolving world was accepted, it became necessary to elaborate a new philosophy which would conform to the new notions of an organic world and a dynamic society. Morison and Commager describe the situation and its outcome in this way:

Between transcendentalism, as expounded by Kant and Coleridge and Emerson, and the new doctrine of organic evolution as expounded by Darwin and Huxley and John Fiske, there could be no logical compromise. The St. Louis school of philosophy, founded in 1867 by William T. Harris, simply ignored the new science and devoted itself to the futile task of sowing the seeds of Hegelian idealism in the unfertile soil of the Middle West. The Scotch, or 'common-sense' school of philosophy, represented in the United States by President James McCosh of Princeton, attempted to effect a compromise and failed as lamentably as had the St. Louisians. It was clearly necessary to formulate a new philosophy, one which would harmonize with science and yet avoid the pitfalls of materialism. This task was undertaken and concluded by a brilliant group of philosophers who came to maturity in the last third of the nineteenth century: Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. Pragmatism is the name of the philosophy that they formulated; . . .<sup>6</sup>

Doubtless, this description is an oversimplification if intended as a summary of philosophical activity during the period from 1860 to 1928. For one thing, it omits several other developments of the period which were also significant, such as the personalism of Borden Parker Bowne, the absolute

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<sup>6</sup>Morison and Commager, op. cit., II, 270.

idealism of Josiah Royce, and the naturalism of George Santayana. But viewed strictly from the standpoint of the impression made on the nation and on the world at large, the great new fact on the American philosophical scene during these decades was the appearance of pragmatism.

### Crosscurrents in theology

The effect of the rising tide of scientism on Protestant theological thought in the United States, first felt in connection with the introduction of the scientific theory of evolution, was further intensified by the development of the scientific disciplines of biblical "higher criticism" and comparative religion.<sup>7</sup> Taken all together, these new innovations meant that traditional theology was being challenged at the vital points of its view of the nature of man and his relation to the world, its understanding of the character of the Bible, and its assumption of the uniqueness of the Christian religion itself.

Protestant reaction to these challenges took many forms in the course of time. Robert T. Handy has characterized five theological movements which emerged during the

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<sup>7</sup>A thoroughly secular interpreter such as Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 166, recognizes these three factors as major problems for American Christianity during this period, although he is generally unsympathetic with the responses which were made by the churches.

period from 1865 to 1930.<sup>8</sup> Listed "from left to right," rather than in chronological order of appearance, they are: scientific modernism, evangelical liberalism, conservative evangelicalism, strict conservatism and fundamentalism. Perhaps an examination of these parties in their logical order of development affords the best approach to an understanding of the period.

Conservative evangelicalism.--The separation of faith and reason which occurred in the eighteenth century had produced two main movements: a rationalistic movement and one that can be conveniently called "evangelical pietism." The latter was definitely predominant in the nineteenth century prior to 1860. Bible-centered, emphasizing faith, conversion, and the emotional experiences of religion, strengthened by periodic revivals from the days of the Great Awakenings, this kind of conservative evangelicalism was able to appeal to many people.<sup>9</sup> Even the scientific onslaught of the post-war decades did not quench the spirit of the movement. In

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<sup>8</sup>Robert T. Handy, "Fundamentalism and Modernism in Perspective," Religion in Life, XXIV (Summer, 1955), 385-93. John Dillenberger and Claude Welch interpret the developments of the period in a similar, though not quite parallel fashion. See their Protestant Christianity Interpreted Through Its Development (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), pp. 200-206, 224-31. The two discussions might well be compared.

<sup>9</sup>Handy, loc. cit., pp. 383-85.

rural towns and in the South especially, conservative theology firmly held its grip. A man like Dwight L. Moody is a notable example of its continuing power.<sup>10</sup>

Evangelical liberalism.--Others, however, sought a theology more suited to the new scientific age. They, too, were evangelicals, accepting the divinity of Christ and the authority of the Bible in religious matters, but they were also congenial to the new knowledge of their day and were willing to restate their beliefs in a new idiom.

The widest divergences between them and the more conservative group appeared with regard to the understanding of the Bible itself. The liberals were influenced by the critical scholars to interpret the Bible as the record of men's experiences with God, a record certainly inspired but not necessarily infallible in all factual details. Since the conservatives resisted this critical approach, tensions inevitably arose between the two groups.<sup>11</sup>

Scientific modernism.--Meanwhile, some of the liberals found their position difficult to keep balanced. Finding their inherited evangelical emphases no longer relevant, they discounted or even abandoned the idea of special revelation, preferring to seek out the general revelation of God in

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 385, 388.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 385-87. Handy suggests Henry Ward Beecher as an eloquent spokesman for this group.

nature and history instead of concentrating solely on the revelation of God in Christ. This group was always comparatively small, but they gained such notoriety that the larger group of liberals were sometimes identified along with them as "modernists" in the popular mind.<sup>12</sup>

Strict conservatism.--Liberal excesses in biblical and theological thinking caused conservatives to become increasingly more militant. Sensing a threat to their historic faith in the contemporary culture, they began to emphasize deliberately the very doctrines which the liberals sought to modify. Against the progressive, evolutionary predictions of the liberals, they heralded their faith in premillennialism and the imminent bodily return of Jesus. The conservative mood was intensified by the work of many traveling evangelists and by great Bible conferences which soon became annual affairs. It was at the Niagara Conference in 1895 that the statement was prepared which included the famous "five points" which were later dogmatized by fundamentalism. This statement stoutly championed the inerrancy of Scripture in every respect, the deity of Jesus Christ, his virgin birth, his substitutionary atonement, his physical resurrection and his bodily return.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 387. Dillenberger and Welch, op. cit., pp. 224-26, cite late nineteenth century Unitarianism as an extreme example of the modernist trend.

<sup>13</sup>Handy, loc. cit., pp. 388-90. J. Gresham Machen perhaps belongs in this group although Handy classifies him as a fundamentalist.



Fundamentalism.--The main distinction between strict conservatism and the later fundamentalism was more a matter of mood and spirit than of basic theological differences.

Both subscribed to orthodox Protestant theological tenets, but the fundamentalists were more aggressive, more intransigent, more certain that they had the whole truth and their opponents had none. . . . Conservatives had many men of scholarly temperament in their ranks; fundamentalists tended to be less and less concerned with scholarship as the movement reached its climax in the 1920's.<sup>14</sup>

The inception of "fundamentalism" as a new self-conscious movement may be dated from the year 1910 when a dozen small paper-bound volumes entitled The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth began to be published. These booklets, generally anti-evolution, anti-liberal, and anti-social-gospel in tone, were widely read and were influential in rallying many of the conservatively inclined to an extreme position.<sup>15</sup> The pressures of the first World War tended to distract the nation from theological concerns for a while, but during the decade following the war fundamentalists exerted a determined effort to stop the further progress of

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 390.

<sup>15</sup>The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth (4 vols.; Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1917). This edition was issued after the first printing of the paper-bounds had been distributed. The original essays, some now revised, abridged, or emended, have been recently republished as The Fundamentals for Today, ed. Charles L. Feinberg (2 vols.; Jubilee Year Edition; Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1958). It should be noted that E. Y. Mullins was the author of one of the essays. Infra, p. 102.

liberalism. The World's Christian Fundamentals Association was founded in 1918. The Watchman-Examiner, a conservative northern Baptist paper, in an editorial of July 1, 1920, marshalled all men "who mean to do battle royal for the fundamentals."<sup>16</sup> As the conflict between "fundamentalism" and "modernism" became intensified, all parties tended to gravitate toward one extreme or the other. Theological classifications of the past seemed to be obscured by the smoke of the current battle. Some fundamentalist leaders, such as R. A. Torrey, even suggested that the old denominational divisions should be forgotten and that a new twofold alignment of Christians should be made on the basis of whether or not the Bible was accepted as the inerrant word of God. Liberal leaders generally stood against division although they acknowledged that there were two versions of the faith in conflict.

The crucial issue of the controversy was the continuing dispute over evolution. The celebrated trial of John T. Scopes in Dayton, Tennessee, in the summer of 1925, which pitted the self-appointed fundamentalist spokesman, William Jennings Bryan, against the skeptical reasoning of Clarence

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<sup>16</sup>"Convention Side Lights," Watchman-Examiner, July 1, 1920, p. 834, cited in O. W. Heick, History of Protestant Theology (Vol. II of J. L. Neve and O. W. Heick, A History of Christian Thought [2 vols.; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946]), p. 325.

Darrow, probably represented the climax of the controversy. Quite predictably, the fundamentalists won the verdict in the trial, but the victory proved to be a hollow one. The weaknesses of the fundamentalist leadership had been exposed to public ridicule. By 1930, it was clear that fundamentalism had greatly declined although the movement survived as a minority party in several major denominations and through the formation of several splinter groups.<sup>17</sup>

An attempt will be made to locate E. Y. Mullins on this scale of theological positions as this study develops.

#### Life and Activity in the Churches<sup>18</sup>

Tremendous growth in membership was one of the most notable characteristics of the American churches during this period. Despite the social problems created by urbanization

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<sup>17</sup>Handy, loc. cit., pp. 391-93. For a history of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy from a liberal point of view see Stewart G. Cole, The History of Fundamentalism (New York: R. R. Smith, 1931). A more comprehensive recent study is that of Norman F. Furniss, The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954).

<sup>18</sup>Recognized authorities on the religious life of America since the Civil War include Winfred E. Garrison, The March of Faith: The Story of Religion in America Since 1865 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1933); Willard L. Sperry, Religion in America (New York: Macmillan Company, 1946); William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950); Winthrop Hudson, The Great Tradition of the American Churches (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953). For the purposes of this survey, the outline which has proven most helpful has been that of Nelson Manfred Blake, op. cit., pp. 490-508, 620-41.

and industrialization and despite the theological disturbances caused by the scientific and intellectual revolution, church membership increased even more swiftly than America's swelling population. All major denominations shared in the growth, although the Baptist and Methodist ranks expanded most rapidly. Both Baptists and Methodists were alert to the opportunities for denominational extension in the westward movement after the Civil War. In addition, the simplicity of Baptist doctrine and polity made it easy for that communion to retain the newly-freed Negro masses.

Large-scale immigration brought the greatest gains to the Lutherans among Protestant denominations. However, the majority of the newcomers to America during this period were not Protestants. To the stream of Irish and German Catholics who had been making their way to this country for many years was added a torrent of Catholics from Eastern Europe after 1880.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, immigration was multiplying the American Jewish population also.

The astonishing growth of the cities brought new responsibilities and opportunities to organized religion. The last third of the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of the institutional church with its varied activities in a

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<sup>19</sup>Nelson Blake quotes a statement by Gerald Shaughnessy that the American Catholic population for some time doubled every twenty years. Blake, op. cit., p. 492.

multi-purpose building. If the complexities of city life made such developments necessary, the increasing wealth of America, in which the churches shared, made them possible.

Various agencies were created to minister to the social as well as the spiritual needs of the urban populations. The Young Men's Christian Association first appeared in America in 1851, the Young Women's Christian Association in 1866, and the Salvation Army in 1880. The settlement house movement made great progress during the 1890's. In the decades just before and after the turn of the century, the churches came to accept more direct responsibility for dealing with social problems as a result of the stimulus provided by the spokesmen for the "social gospel" such as Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch. Denominational commissions to study social problems were established, theological seminaries introduced new courses in sociology and social ethics and the preaching of the social gospel contributed to the new climate of opinion in which political progressivism flourished.

Laymen's organizations began to appear in the churches shortly after the Civil War and lay leadership gradually became more prominent both in the churches and in the church-related schools and other agencies. "Efficiency" became the warchword as ideals of business began to be applied in the churches. Concern for greater efficiency in the teaching and

training program of the churches created a "religious education" movement and led to the organization of the national Religious Education Association in 1903, and the Inter-denominational Council of Religious Education years later in 1922. Meanwhile, throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, foreign mission interest and activity continued unabated, stimulated by John R. Mott and his Student Volunteer Movement. The common concern for the cause of foreign missions produced considerable denominational cooperation both in this country and on the various mission fields.

Evangelism at home was not neglected, either, despite the influence of Horace Bushnell's "Christian nurture." Dwight L. Moody, greatest of the post-war nineteenth century evangelists, conducted great nonsectarian revivals in all the American cities as well as in England. His successors included Wilbur Chapman, Reuben Torrey and, most spectacular of all, Billy Sunday, who stormed back and forth across the country during the first two decades of this century.

Perhaps a number of these last-named developments combined to help produce new trends toward denominational unions and federations. W. W. Sweet points out that twelve church unions were accomplished in the United States between 1906 and 1940.<sup>20</sup> The federation movement, meanwhile, led to

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<sup>20</sup>Sweet, op. cit., pp. 424-26. Of course, a number of other unions have taken place since 1940 and still others are presently in progress.

the establishment of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America in 1908. Through this agency, some thirty Protestant denominations, although maintaining their full autonomy, found it possible to cooperate in a wide area of service and to speak with a single voice on important issues of the day.<sup>21</sup> Evidences of increased cooperation and coordination were being manifested within the different denominations also.

However, the unifying trend was paralleled by instances of disunion as the founding of new sects continued in America. Of the many "holiness" and "Pentecostal" groups which sprang up after 1880, the Church of the Nazarene has been the most prominent. Christian Science, Russellism, and numerous other cults made their appearance in the period between the Civil War and World War I.

When American entry in the European war became inevitable sometime after 1914, the American churches generally supported the war with idealistic enthusiasm. Ministers of all denominations helped disseminate the wartime propaganda. The postwar spread of pacifism among the American clergy is to be interpreted in the context of the general postwar disillusionment.

The membership of the conservative evangelical

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<sup>21</sup>It must be remembered that Southern Baptists were not among this group. However, during this period, Southern Baptists were playing an active role in securing greater understanding within the world-wide Baptist fellowship.

churches was doubtless the major force in the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment, which began the national prohibition of the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquor early in 1920. Dry forces, led by the powerful Anti-Saloon League, had long worked toward this victory. As W. W. Sweet says, "the year 1920 was the soberest in the history of the United States."<sup>22</sup> However, inadequate enforcement made possible such flagrant violation of the Amendment that popular sentiment, skillfully influenced by the "wet" metropolitan press, gradually turned against the experiment and brought about the repeal of prohibition in 1933.

Enthusiasm generated by the war and optimism regarding the possibilities of the postwar world, together with the opportunity afforded by the easy money of the decade following the war, caused most of the denominations to overexpand. New church buildings were built, religious institutions were enlarged, ambitious missionary projects were envisioned by all Christian groups. Methodists, Presbyterians and Disciples launched financial drives similar to the Southern Baptist Seventy-five Million Campaign, all of which had the same unsatisfactory result although some permanent gains were made. On the interdenominational level, the fund-raising campaign of the Interchurch World Movement ended in dismal failure.

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<sup>22</sup>Sweet, op. cit., p. 411.



Nor was the decline in financial contributions the only evidence of the weakening position of the American churches during the 1920's. When measured by the yardsticks of church attendance, the winning of converts and reception of new members, missionary zeal, respect for the ministry, and adherence to the proclaimed standards of morality and ethics, it appears evident that a severe depression had already overtaken the American churches several years before the economic calamity began in 1929.<sup>23</sup>

More details of specific developments in Southern Baptist life during the period from the Civil War to the Great Depression will emerge as the life of E. Y. Mullins is now examined.

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<sup>23</sup>For a discussion of this thesis, see Robert T. Handy, "The American Religious Depression, 1925-1935," Church History, XXIX (March, 1960), 3-16.

CHAPTER II

MULLINS' LIFE AND WORK

## CHAPTER II

### MULLINS' LIFE AND WORK<sup>1</sup>

#### His Birth and Ancestry

Edgar Young Mullins was born on January 5, 1860, in

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<sup>1</sup>Although an objective, thorough, carefully-documented biography of E. Y. Mullins remains to be written, the story of his life and work has been given more attention than that of most Baptist leaders. In addition to the tender, sentimental, reminiscent biography prepared by his wife (Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins: An Intimate Biography [Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1929]), the story of his boyhood and youth has been romanticized by Augusta Stevenson (The Telegraph Boy, illus. Harold Minton [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1956]) and fictionalized by Mrs. Isla May Mullins (Captain Pluck [Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1923]). Numerous articles and addresses outlining the career of E. Y. Mullins have been printed in the Review and Expositor, in other Baptist denominational literature, and in various other publications. See, e.g., A. T. Robertson, "A Sketch of the Life of President Mullins," Review and Expositor, XXII (January, 1925), 7-10; W. O. Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins--Leader and Builder," Review and Expositor, XXVI (April, 1929), 125-41; Henry W. Tiffany, "The Service and Servants of the Seminary," Review and Expositor, XLVIII (April, 1951), 197-203; Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins," Review and Expositor, XLIX (April, 1952), 125-38; C. Oscar Johnson, "Edgar Young Mullins," Review and Expositor, XXXIX (April, 1942), 141-50; Porter Routh, "Meet the Presidents: Edgar Young Mullins," Baptist Training Union Magazine, XXV (February, 1950), 67; Gaines S. Dobbins, "Men Who Have Made Seminary History," Quarterly Review, XVIII (July, August, September, 1958), 31-33. William T. McElroy, "Great Preachers of Today: Dr. E. Y. Mullins," Onward, September 27, 1923, p. 2. At the time of Mullins' death, the following biographical sketch was widely published: Charles F. Leek, "The Life of Edgar Young Mullins," Religious Herald, November 29, 1928, pp. 3, 6-7. For a biographical sketch of Mullins in Swedish, see George Fridén, "Edgar Young Mullins," in Andliga märkesmän, Vol. 1: I Nordamerikas nutida soder (Stockholm: B.-M:s Bokforlags A.-B., 1930), pp. 5-28.

a country home in Franklin County, Mississippi.<sup>2</sup> He was the fourth child and first son in a family of eleven children. His father, Seth Granberry Mullins, was a Baptist minister, school teacher, and farmer who had received a Master of Arts degree at Mississippi College.<sup>3</sup> His mother, Cornelia Blair Tillman Mullins, was the daughter of Stephen Tillman, who had served many years in the Mississippi State Legislature, as had his father before him. Mullins' paternal grandfather had been a preacher and a farmer and his paternal great-grandfather had been another Mississippi state legislator. Thus the blood of pioneer statesmen, educators, ministers and farmers flowed in Edgar Mullins' veins.<sup>4</sup> Most of his ancestors for several previous generations had been staunch

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<sup>2</sup>A primary source for determining significant dates in the Mullins family history is the Family Record of Edgar Young and Isla May Hawley Mullins in the Family Bible of Mr. and Mrs. A. Wheeler Hawley (in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

<sup>3</sup>An article by S. G. Mullins in an early issue of the Review and Expositor suggests that he was a man of simple, evangelical piety and faith, conservative in his theology, actually old-fashioned in his outlook, yet concerned about the efficiency of the ministry and strong in his support of ministerial education. See "The Call to the Ministry," Review and Expositor, IV (October, 1907), 548-54. In a eulogy written shortly after his father's death in 1912, E. Y. Mullins indicates something of his father's character and of his own debt to him. It seems likely that no one influenced E. Y. Mullins more than he. See "Rev. S. G. Mullins: The Home-Going of a Christian Optimist," Baptist World, September 19, 1912, pp. 8-9. For a brief factual sketch of his life, see "A Soldier Laying Down the Armor," ibid., p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Tribble, loc. cit., p. 126.

Baptists.<sup>5</sup> Of most immediate importance was the fact that his parents were devout, cultured Christians. Shortly after the boy's birth, his parents joined together in a prayer that God would make their son a preacher of the gospel. Years later, after he had been preaching for about ten years, his father shared this secret with him in a letter written on his thirty-fifth birthday.<sup>6</sup>

#### His Boyhood and Youth

When Edgar Mullins was eight years old, his father decided to move his growing family to the young state of Texas. They settled in Corsicana, where the preacher-teacher-father was instrumental in establishing both a church and a school. This meant that Edgar Young was indebted to his father for both his religious and his academic training during his early years.

With his father's encouragement, Edgar also began to work at an early age. Isla May Mullins later said that by the age of eleven, Edgar had already demonstrated a knack for both study and business.<sup>7</sup> An eager reader, he learned rapidly, but he spent his spare time working as a printer's devil, newsboy, typesetter, printer, messenger boy and telegrapher. By the time he was fifteen he was in full charge of a telegraph

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<sup>5</sup>"Why I Am a Baptist," Forum, LXXV (May, 1926), 725.

<sup>6</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., p. 9.

<sup>7</sup>Isla May Mullins, "Dr. Mullins as a Student," Review and Expositor, XXVI (April, 1929), 142.

office, earning a man's pay. However, he was still a boy and he found opportunity to engage in sports and other outdoor activities.

For some time Edgar had been helping finance the education of his three older sisters at Baylor. But in 1876, he was able to enter the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College where he received a general liberal arts course together with strict military training. He graduated in 1879 at nineteen years of age. After graduation he continued his work in telegraphy for some time in Galveston, Texas, and then decided to study law.

#### His Conversion and Call to Preach

Although he had been surrounded by Christian influences all his life and was now twenty years old, Edgar Mullins had not yet made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. It was while he was in Dallas, Texas, studying law and supporting himself by part-time telegraphy work, that he was suddenly converted to Christ in a revival meeting held by the layman lawyer-evangelist, Major W. E. Penn in the First Baptist Church.<sup>8</sup> Conversion was soon followed by baptism at the hands

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<sup>8</sup>Mullins sometimes referred to his conversion experience in his writings in later years. In one such description he says he was passing through a period of skepticism and intellectual doubt regarding various Christian teachings at the very time his conversion occurred. Although his intellectual difficulties had not been positively dealt with, he found when he yielded his will to Christ that his previous

of his father at Corsicana on November 7, 1880. These experiences in turn prepared him for an awareness of a definite call to be a preacher and upon answering this call, Edgar Mullins reluctantly gave up his plans for a legal career and turned toward a program of preparation for the Christian ministry.

### Preparation for the Ministry

Edgar Young Mullins arrived at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, in the fall of 1881. He had money in hand for a year's theological study which he first thought would satisfy his needs. However, he soon realized he could be content with nothing less than the full seminary course. This became possible through unexpected means when he was elected manager of "Waverly Hall," the

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problems were simply transcended by his spiritual experience. Then, in the context of his new spiritual life, they did not appear so formidable as they had before. Mullins says this impressively taught him a fundamental truth: on their intellectual side the problems of religion cannot be solved apart from a genuine religious interest. Indeed, in the effort to intellectualize religion without a genuine religious experience or interest, the major premise is lacking.

Mullins denied that his conversion was produced by an emotional cataclysm but declared that it completely transformed his purposes and plans. See "Why I Am a Baptist," pp. 725-26.

For another description by Mullins of both his conversion and his baptismal experience, see "The Spiritual Meaning and Value of Baptism," Baptist World, September 10, 1914, pp. 10-11.

For a brief characterization of Major Penn, see A. B. Culbertson, "William Evander Penn," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, II (1958), 1084.

students' dormitory, at the end of his first year at Southern Seminary. Rearranging his academic program to include four years instead of the usual three, Mullins proved so effective as a mess hall administrator that he held the position without competition throughout his seminary term.<sup>9</sup>

At the Seminary's commencement exercises in early June of 1885, Edgar Young Mullins, being declared a Full Graduate of the institution, was recognized as one of the student speakers on the program. He delivered a brief address on "Manliness in the Ministry."<sup>10</sup>

For several months prior to graduation, Mullins had been serving as supply preacher for the Baptist Church at Harrodsburg, Kentucky. He had long dreamed of going to Brazil as a foreign missionary and had offered himself to the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention during his

<sup>9</sup>Mullins' admirers later interpreted this first demonstration of administrative ability to have been a prophecy of greater things to come. See the statement of E. M. Poteat, one of Mullins' classmates, quoted in Isla May Mullins, "Dr. Mullins as a Student," p. 143. Cf. A. T. Robertson, loc. cit., pp. 7-8.

<sup>10</sup>For an abstract of Mullins' address, see the Western Recorder, June 4, 1885, p. 2. The diplomas presented to Mullins on this occasion reveal that he had studied Greek, Greek and English New Testament, and Homiletics under John A. Broadus; Church Government and both English and Latin Systematic Theology under James P. Boyce; Hebrew, English Old Testament, and Biblical Introduction under Basil Manly, Jr.; and Church History and Polemics under William H. Whitsitt. See Diplomas of Degrees Conferred on Edgar Young Mullins by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).



final year of seminary studies. But now, having been told that there was little prospect of anyone being sent by the Board to Brazil at that time and having been advised also by a doctor that he was not physically suited for service in a warm climate, Mullins accepted the call extended to him by the Harrodsburg Baptist Church and submitted to ordination at their hands on June 6, 1885.<sup>11</sup>

#### Pastor of Churches, 1885-1899

Thus Mullins began a very successful ministry as a pastor of Baptist churches. On June 2, 1886, almost exactly one year after going to Harrodsburg, he married Isla May Hawley, whom he had met and courted while he was a seminary student.<sup>12</sup> Other highlights of his years at Harrodsburg

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<sup>11</sup>The account of Mullins' ordination appears in the Western Recorder, June 18, 1885, p. 4. This response of Mullins to an opportunity which he had not chosen was a demonstration of his belief in the advice he often gave to young ministers during his later years: "Enter whatever door is open!" See "A Dynamic Ministry," Record of Christian Work, XLVII (January, 1928), 34.

<sup>12</sup>Most students of Mullins' life and career have given great praise to Mrs. Mullins for the helpful role she played in her husband's development and achievement. Harold W. Tribble calls attention to the way she met his needs for support and sympathy, restraint and encouragement. See Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins," Review and Expositor, XXVI (October, 1929), 415. W. O. Carver refers to Mrs. Mullins' role as "helper" and "mentor" to her husband. See W. O. Carver, "Recollections and Information from Other Sources Concerning the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary" (typewritten copy of unpublished notes in the files of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 44. A. T. Robertson acclaimed the union as "a fortunate

included a very fruitful revival meeting which was followed by the purchase of the church's first parsonage.<sup>13</sup> During the late summer of 1887, E. Y. Mullins made his first trip abroad, touring western Europe with a seminary classmate.

In the spring of 1888, Mullins received a call to the First Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas. He first accepted the call but then reconsidered shortly afterward when it became evident that Mrs. Mullins, now in the early stage of pregnancy, would find it difficult to make the long move to the Southwest.<sup>14</sup> Later in the year, however, when called by the Lee Street Baptist Church of Baltimore, Maryland, they found it possible to accept and moved there in August.

event all around." See Robertson, "A Sketch of the Life of President Mullins," p. 8. A successful author in her own right, she served as his "sounding-board" in the preparation of his sermonic and literary contributions. See Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., pp. 53-54, 152-54.

<sup>13</sup>Western Recorder, September 30, 1886, p. 4, reports: "There have been nearly 100 additions to the church in Harrodsburg, E. Y. Mullins, pastor, since the commencement of the meeting held there a few weeks ago by Bro. Fred D. Hale." Some time later Mullins wrote an article for the Recorder describing the advantages which the purchase of the parsonage had brought the Harrodsburg church. See the Western Recorder, September 27, 1884, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>The providential nature of these circumstances has often been pointed out by those who later realized that location in the Southwest would almost certainly have mitigated against his being selected to succeed President William H. Whitsitt in 1899. Cf. Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins . . .," pp. 130, 138; Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins," Review and Expositor, XLIX (April, 1952), 128; William A. Mueller, A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 179.

Mullins' ministry in Baltimore continued for seven years. Busy about the duties of a downtown pastorate, Mullins nevertheless found time for writing, newspaper reporting, creative fellowship with other ministers, and speaking engagements outside his own church.<sup>15</sup> He took advantage of his proximity to Johns Hopkins University and took courses there in inductive logic and in expression during 1891-92. His interest in both of these courses indicates his passion for clarity of expression, a goal toward which he was constantly striving in all his public speaking.<sup>16</sup>

Both of Mullins' sons were born in Baltimore and both were buried there. Edgar Wheeler Mullins, born on October 28, 1888, shortly after his parents moved to Baltimore, died on February 20, 1896, while his parents were living in Richmond, Virginia, but was returned to Baltimore for burial. Roy Granberry Mullins, the second son, was born on May 30, 1891, but died less than a month later on June 26 due to a tragic mistake in the druggist's preparation of a prescription.

E. Y. Mullins declined an invitation to consider the

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<sup>15</sup>His first assignment to speak to a southwide audience came in May, 1890, when he delivered a committee report before that body on "Pagan Missions." Southern Baptist Convention, Proceedings, 1890, p. 32.

<sup>16</sup>Mullins came to be noted for his belief that truth accurately and convincingly stated always wins. Cf. Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., p. 54; Henry W. Tiffany, loc. cit., p. 199.

pastorate of the First Baptist Church of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the spring of 1895, but later that year, seeing an opportunity to exercise his long-time interest in foreign missions, he accepted a call to become Associate Secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. This necessitated a move to Richmond, Virginia, in the fall of 1895.

Mullins believed that the great need of the Southern Baptist mission program was the education of the people to the challenge of the task. He soon delivered a series of lectures at Richmond College along these lines and began to propose through the press a "new departure" in missions, a plan for missionary education in denominational colleges.<sup>17</sup> However, Mullins soon became aware that, needful as his educational program was, he would have difficulty carrying it out successfully within the structure of the Foreign Mission Board as then organized. Thus, when extended a call by the First Baptist Church of Newton Centre, Massachusetts, early in 1896, he reluctantly ended his brief mission experiment and took up the work in Newton Centre in March of that year.

During his three year ministry in Newton Centre, Mullins was challenged by the general intellectual climate

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. the following articles in which Mullins' proposals are unfolded: "A New Departure in Missions," Religious Herald, October 17, 1895, p. 2; "Missions in the Colleges," ibid., November 14, 1895, p. 1; "Missions in the Colleges-- A Method Proposed," ibid., November 28, 1895, p. 1.

of that area and by the educational level of his own congregation to do the best preaching of which he was capable. He enjoyed his contacts with many prominent and cultured people and benefited by his location near many fine schools, including Newton Theological Institution, the oldest Baptist theological seminary in America. Many of the Institution's professors and students helped compose Mullins' congregations every Sunday. Other opportunities came to Mullins during this period. He was granted a D.D. degree by Carson and Newman College (Tennessee) in 1896,<sup>18</sup> and in the summer of 1897, he took a second trip abroad. Then on June 29, 1899, E. Y. Mullins was startled by a sudden unexpected invitation to become president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,  
1899-1928

The circumstances which caused Mullins to be called back to Southern Seminary grew out of the "Whitsitt controversy" which had poisoned the atmosphere throughout the whole Southern Baptist Convention from 1896 to 1899 and had forced

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<sup>18</sup>In later years McMaster University in Toronto, Canada, also conferred a D.D. upon Edgar Young Mullins. He was granted the LL.D. degree by both Richmond College (Va.) and Baylor University (Tex.). Brown University (R.I.) offered him a D.D. in 1914, but he was unable to make the trip to receive it. See Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., p. 190.

a cloud of uncertainty regarding the future to settle over the Seminary itself.<sup>19</sup> The immediate cause of the controversy had been an article published by the Seminary's president, William H. Whitsitt, in Johnson's Universal Cyclopedia in 1893 in which, on the basis of research done by himself in England in 1880, he declared that believer's baptism by immersion was "invented" by English Baptists in 1641.<sup>20</sup>

Whitsitt's opponents, who felt that his statements threatened their cherished belief in an unbroken succession of Baptist churches which could be traced back to the apostolic era, used the denominational press<sup>21</sup> to fan the flames of Baptist suspicion to such a point that Whitsitt felt compelled to

<sup>19</sup>For surveys of the life and career of William Whitsitt see E. B. Pollard, "The Life and Work of William Heth Whitsitt," Review and Expositor, IX (April, 1912), 159-84; W. O. Carver, "William Heth Whitsitt: The Seminary's Martyr," Review and Expositor, LI (October, 1954), 449-69; Gaines S. Dobbins, "Whitsitt, William Heth," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, II (1958), 1496; Mueller, op. cit., pp. 143-78, especially pp. 155-76 on the Whitsitt controversy.

<sup>20</sup>William H. Whitsitt, "Baptists," Johnson's Universal Cyclopedia, ed. Charles Kendall Adams, I (1898), 489-93. Years earlier Whitsitt had reported his findings by means of anonymous editorials in the Independent, June 24, 1880, p. 15; ibid., September 2, 1880, p. 17; ibid., September 9, 1880, pp. 16-17; ibid., October 7, 1880, p. 17. After the controversy erupted, Whitsitt spelled out his position more fully in A Question in Baptist History (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1896).

<sup>21</sup>See the various issues of the Western Recorder during the period. Editor T. T. Eaton, one of the leaders of the attack on Whitsitt, published most of the writings of both camps of controversialists.

break his ties with the Seminary for the sake of the institution. His resignation, first offered on July 13, 1898, was finally accepted by the Seminary trustees on May 11, 1899, despite the fact that both trustees and faculty had firmly endorsed him.

The task of selecting a successor to President Whittitt proved to be difficult and complicated. The first attempt ended in failure when J. P. Greene, president of William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri, declined the proffered election by the trustees on June 2, 1899.

The trustees met again in Atlanta on June 29 to make a second attempt. They knew that the man of their choice should be someone capable of rallying all parties behind the Seminary, a man who had proven his worth to the South but who was not identified as a partisan on either side of the current controversy. Thus, when William E. Hatcher of Virginia dramatically nominated Edgar Young Mullins as the one man meeting the qualifications imposed by the crisis, a sense of relief swept across the assembled body of trustees.<sup>22</sup> Vague

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<sup>22</sup>The selection of E. Y. Mullins for the seminary presidency proved to be so obviously providential that the origination of it later aroused considerable curiosity. Moreover, the evidence for Providence is further confirmed by the inconclusive testimony of the witnesses and reporters. The following accounts should be compared.

Mrs. Mullins believed that William E. Hatcher's support of Mullins was influenced by impressions which his wife had received when she had visited the Mullins household some months before. See Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., pp. 102, 106. However, Mrs. Mullins also quoted a

references by one of the members to articles written by Mullins on the issues in question did not deter the unanimous approval of Hatcher's nomination.<sup>23</sup> E. Y. Mullins, thus

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statement by Henry W. Battle who described a conversation he had with Dr. Hatcher during which he suddenly became convinced that E. Y. Mullins was the man for the task and communicated the idea to Hatcher. Battle admits that he had been impressed by Mullins during a recent boat trip with him but affirms that he had not consciously thought of him for the seminary presidency until that moment. Ibid., pp. 106-107. W. O. Carver gave an account in which he credited J. S. Dill with first proposing Mullins' name to the Baptist Ten Club, a small group of Baptist leaders in Richmond, Virginia, which included R. H. Pitt, editor of the Religious Herald. This group agreed to sponsor an article in the Herald, thus placing Mullins' name in nomination. After being put in type however, the article was "killed" at the suggestion of a Baptist layman, Walter T. Booth, the foreman of the printing plant, who convinced Dr. Pitt that Mullins' candidacy should not be publicized until the proper strategic moment. Carver considered this a significant and wise decision. See Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins . . .," pp. 138-39. Carver later published a letter from Dill in which he admitted placing the name of Mullins before the Ten Club but declares that the original idea had been given to him earlier by H. W. Battle who had already spoken to W. E. Hatcher about it. Dill's letter makes no mention of the role of Walter Booth which Carver had considered so important. See W. O. Carver, "The Nomination of Dr. Mullins for the Seminary Presidency," Review and Expositor, XXVI (July, 1929), 301-303. Mrs. Mullins also reported that Carter Helm Jones and R. J. Willingham were among the first to suggest the suitability of E. Y. Mullins for the position. See Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., pp. 106, 108. Henry W. Tiffany evidently had all of these stories in mind when he declared that "Dr. Henry W. Battle, Dr. William E. Hatcher, Dr. Carter Helm Jones and Dr. R. J. Willingham were instrumental in the call of Dr. Mullins as President of the Seminary." See Tiffany, op. cit., p. 208. At any rate, it is certain that W. E. Hatcher made the actual nomination and it seems likely that he was influenced to do so by the Richmond group, especially H. W. Battle.

<sup>23</sup>John R. Sampey, Memoirs (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1947), p. 101. The articles here referred to are evidently



elected, accepted the office after a midsummer conference with the seminary faculty, resigned his pastorate in Newton Centre, and began his duties as seminary president and professor in the fall of 1899.

Mullins came to Louisville convinced that the course for the school must be straight ahead toward the goal of new achievement and wider service and certain that his own responsibility was to steer that course without waiting for approval or disapproval from either side. That he successfully weathered the storm is demonstrated by the obvious

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those published in the Religious Herald, May 21, 1896, p. 1; July 16, 1896, p. 1; October 8, 1896, p. 1; April 14, 1898, p. 2. W. O. Carver said years later that, since the articles appeared in a paper friendly to Whitsitt and at a time when so much was being written on the subject, they were evidently largely overlooked by both groups of debaters. See Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins . . . ," pp. 130-31. It is certain that a reading of the articles in the trustees' meeting would have damaged Mullins' candidacy for in them he had clearly showed his colors. In the second of the articles referred to above, under the title, "A Roman Catholic Party Among the Baptists," he says that those who attack Whitsitt no longer hold the Baptist position of locating all authority in the Bible alone but have instead adopted the Roman Catholic standard of the Bible plus a certain tradition. He draws a further parallel between Whitsitt's opponents and a pontifical commission which was currently debating the validity of Anglican orders. He concludes that in both cases the question is not a biblical one but a question of church history only. He says:

"The only difference between the Roman Catholic commission in Rome and the Roman Catholic party among the Baptists is that the former pursue the investigation in the interest of peace with the Anglicans, and the latter wage their war in the interest of discord among their brethren."

See E. Y. Mullins, "A Roman Catholic Party Among the Baptists," Religious Herald, July 16, 1896, p. 1.

progress of the Seminary under his guiding hand and confirmed by the testimony of many who made the voyage with him.<sup>24</sup>

Mullins' colleagues have testified that his early years as seminary president presented many trials as attacks continued to be made on both the school and its personnel.<sup>25</sup> However, by the time the Southern Baptist Convention met in Louisville in 1909 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Seminary (and, incidentally, the close of the first decade of Mullins' administration), the danger period had passed for the Seminary and its president. John R. Sampey said years later:

The atmosphere of the 1909 Convention was far different from that of the 1899 Convention, when the Whitsitt controversy reached its climax. Within a decade the Seminary had regained its hold upon the rank and file of Southern Baptists.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup>W. F. Powell reported a conversation in which W. E. Hatcher, who died in 1912, expressed his gratitude for the skill with which Mullins led the Seminary. After hearing Hatcher review his role in the nomination of Mullins, Powell said: "Dr. Hatcher, Dr. Mullins has certainly justified your confidence in him." Powell described Hatcher's reply in this way:

"The dear old man was silent for a bit, then he sat up in bed [he was ill at the time] and in true Hatcher style he proudly exclaimed: 'Justified it? Mullins has glorified my confidence in him!'"

W. F. Powell, "The Seminary an Expression of Southern Baptist Life," Review and Expositor, XXIV (April, 1927), 178.

<sup>25</sup>Carver, "Recollections . . . ," pp. 79-80.

<sup>26</sup>Sampey, Memoirs . . ., p. 127. The optimistic spirit of that convention can be caught from a reading of the record of proceedings in the Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1909, especially the resolutions concerning the Seminary on pp. 23-24.

Mullins' days as seminary president were filled with many demands and many opportunities in addition to his stated duties as administrator and teacher. He interpreted all his civic activities, all his public appearances, and even his social contacts as advertisements for the Seminary.<sup>27</sup> He was active at all levels of Baptist life and work.<sup>28</sup> He

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<sup>27</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., pp. 145, 155. One of his favorite social organizations was the Conversation Club of Louisville to which he was elected on December 5, 1901. The list of subjects discussed by the group under his leadership through the years reveals that the Club provided a forum for the development and exercise of his many interests in religion, politics, education, science, philosophy, and sociology. See Conversation Club, List of Members and Activities, 1879-1935 (Louisville: Western Recorder, 1935), pp. 6, 49.

<sup>28</sup>E.g. the records of the Broadway Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky, of which E. Y. Mullins was a member from 1910 until his death, reveal that Mullins participated regularly in the worship, ministry, and business of the church. He preached there on occasion, served on ordination councils, and represented his church at the Southern Baptist Convention. See Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, Minutes, 1910-1928. A survey of the Long Run Association of Baptists, Minutes, 1899-1928 reveals Mullins' activity at the associational level of Baptist organization. He was often a messenger from Broadway Baptist Church to the Association. He often addressed the Association and often participated in the deliberations and business decisions of the Association, engaging from time to time in appointed committee work. However he never served as moderator of the Association nor did he ever preach the "annual sermon." A similar picture of Mullins' activities at the state level emerges from a study of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky, Proceedings, 1900-1928. His contribution to the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance will be described elsewhere in this dissertation. See infra, pp. 114-20.

also built a new president's home, wrote several books and numerous articles, and made two more trips abroad before 1921. In the summer of 1905, he attended the First Baptist World Congress in London; then he toured Switzerland and spent the fall term studying at the University of Berlin. After World War I, in 1920, he and J. B. Gambrell toured devastated Europe on behalf of Southern Baptists. During the war, he had donned a uniform and served as Religious Director at Camp Zachary Taylor in Louisville.

He did not escape religious controversy either. During the early years he was drawn into disputes about "alien" immersion, open communion, the universal church, and Christian union, all of which are concerns of ecclesiology and are probably to be interpreted as aftermaths of the Whitsitt controversy. In later years he was involved in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and the discussion of millennialism, and he played a most significant part in the Southern Baptist debate about evolution in the 1920's.<sup>29</sup>

President of the Southern Baptist Convention,  
1921-1924

Throughout all these years, as a natural result of his official position and as a consequence of his participation

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<sup>29</sup>Mullins' position on all of these questions will be brought out in the course of the further development of this dissertation. See *infra*, pp. 356, n. 48; 347-48, n. 37; 359-61; 361f., n. 55; 304-307; 63-69; 313-16.

in so many Baptist endeavors, E. Y. Mullins had achieved great prominence in the Southern Baptist Convention. Therefore it is not surprising that the Convention, meeting at Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1921, elected him as its president and re-elected him in 1922 and again in 1923.

Mullins had been nominated for this position several years earlier, but as W. O. Carver pointed out, the period in which he was actually called on to serve was far more crucial and demanding than the earlier period would have been.<sup>30</sup>

In an article written in 1926, Mullins noted that during the 1920's two main problems, in addition to the Seventy-Five Million Campaign, had engaged the attention of Southern Baptists. One was the concern for greater efficiency and the other was the controversy over evolution.<sup>31</sup> Throughout the period, Mullins participated actively in efforts to improve the organizational structure of the Convention, its relations with the various Baptist state-wide organizations, and its methods of work.<sup>32</sup> A review of his role in the

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<sup>30</sup>Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins . . . ," p. 140.

<sup>31</sup>"The Houston Convention and the Kingdom," Western Recorder, June 17, 1926, pp. 4-5.

<sup>32</sup>For an indication of the variety of Mullins' interests and efforts in this area, see, e.g., Edgar Young Mullins, "A Backward Look in Convention History," Western Recorder, October 4, 1923, pp. 8-9; "The Southern Baptist Convention as a Self-Governing Body," ibid., October 11,

evolution controversy is appropriate at this point.

During the early 1920's, the fundamentalist-sponsored drive to have the teaching of evolution in the public schools prohibited by state legislation met with mixed reactions in the South.<sup>33</sup> The counterpart to this campaign within the Southern Baptist Convention was the attempt to secure from the Convention an unqualified condemnation of the evolutionary theory and an iron-clad rule to forbid the teaching of such in Baptist schools.

An indication of the growing concern over the issue came during the 1922 Convention when the authors of one major report declared their belief that Southern Baptists were ready "to take a definite stand with reference to the preservation of correct teaching in all of our schools" and called for the preparation of textbooks which would "rightly relate science to the Bible" and show that "Darwinism is only

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1923, pp. 5, 16; "Co-Ordinating and Unifying Convention Interests," *ibid.*, October 18, 1923, pp. 8, 16; "Suggested Improvements in the Southern Baptist Convention," *ibid.*, November 8, 1923, pp. 3-4; "Safeguarding the Functions of the Southern Baptist Convention," *ibid.*, May 6, 1926, pp. 5, 16; "Keeping on the Main Track," *ibid.*, August 4, 1927, pp. 4-5; Edgar Young Mullins, *et al.*, "Report of Executive Committee," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1924, pp. 24-26. Edgar Young Mullins, *et al.*, "Report of Committee on Changing Basis of Representation," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1926, pp. 31-34.

<sup>33</sup>For an account of the developments in the various Southern states see Norman F. Furniss, The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 78-95.

an unproven working hypothesis."<sup>34</sup> In the same report, the warm response given to certain passages of Mullins' presidential address to the Convention is cited as a case in point.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps alarmed by this interpretation of his position, Mullins made several attempts during the next year to clarify the issues through the means of the Baptist press. In numerous articles, he affirmed that the crucial test for a scientist from the religious standpoint is whether or not he accepts the reality of the supernatural. Teachers should be judged on the basis of this fundamental presupposition rather than on the basis of their scientific theories.<sup>36</sup> When Mullins reiterated these views at the close of his next presidential address to the Convention in 1923, that body adopted his statement on "Science and Religion" as the official embodiment of its belief.<sup>37</sup> Later in the session, the

<sup>34</sup>See "The Report of the Committee on the Report of the Education Board," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1922, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid. It can be contended, however, that the sentiment of the Report indicates an incomplete understanding of the intention of President Mullins' remarks. For the text of the presidential address, see Edgar Young Mullins, "Southern Baptists at a Crucial Hour," Western Recorder, May 18, 1922, pp. 1-2.

<sup>36</sup>See, e.g. "Evolution and Belief in God," Western Recorder, March 22, 1923, pp. 3-4.

<sup>37</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1923, pp. 19-20. For the text of this address, see Edgar Young Mullins, "The Dangers and Duties of the Present Hour," Western Recorder, May 24, 1923, pp. 28-29, 32.

Convention considered and rejected a resolution which made a more explicit condemnation of evolutionary teaching.<sup>38</sup>

Mullins expressed a hope that no further discussion of the matter would be needed,<sup>39</sup> but the 1924 Convention, after reaffirming the "Fraternal Address" of 1919 and the presidential statement of 1923 as sufficiently comprehensive and definite and after rejecting several doctrinal resolutions on the subject of evolution by C. P. Stealey, editor of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger, finally appointed a committee "to consider the advisability of issuing another statement of the Baptist faith and message . . ."<sup>40</sup> Mullins was named as chairman of this committee and Stealey was included on it. When the committee presented its report to the Convention in 1925, Stealey, in a minority report, offered an amendment. The third article of the majority report on the subject of "The Fall of Man" read as follows: "Man was created by the special act of God as recorded in Genesis . . . (Gen. 1:27) . . . (Gen. 2:7) . . ."<sup>41</sup> Stealey proposed that the article be entitled "The Creation and Fall of Man" and read thus:

<sup>38</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1923, pp. 62-63.

<sup>39</sup>"A Convention Retrospect," Western Recorder, May 31, 1923, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1924, p. 95.

<sup>41</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1925, p. 72.



We believe that man came into this world by direct creation of God and not by evolution. This creative act was separate and distinct from any other work of God and was not conditioned upon antecedent changes in previously created forms of life. . . .<sup>42</sup>

Mullins and Stealey debated the matter before the Convention. Stealey's amendment was decisively defeated by a vote of 2,013 to 950.<sup>43</sup> On the specific subject of "science and religion" the report offered no new article but rather submitted again Mullins' 1923 statement as an appendix, contending that "matters of science have no proper place in a religious confession of faith."<sup>44</sup>

During the coming months, Mullins and Stealey engaged in a vigorous and sometimes vicious newspaper duel as each defended his own position and motives and attacked those of his opponent. Stealey accused Mullins and the rest of the majority group of the committee of being anxious to word the doctrinal statement so as to leave room for theistic evolution. He declared that the real issue within the committee was whether or not to condemn evolution in no uncertain terms.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. For a digest of each man's arguments, see Edgar Young Mullins, "Address of President E. Y. Mullins, at the Southern Baptist Convention, in the Support of the Majority Report on Baptist Faith and Message," Western Recorder, June 25, 1925, pp. 3-5; C. P. Stealey, "Synopsis of Address of Dr. C. P. Stealey at Southern Baptist Convention in the Support of the Minority Report on Baptist Faith and Message," ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>44</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1925, pp. 75-76.

Mullins, meanwhile, continued to maintain as he had at the Convention that all the members of the committee were equally antagonistic to any theory of evolution as opposed to special creation. But he contended that the majority of the committee did not agree with Stealey that the reference to evolution should be inserted directly into the doctrinal statement. For this reason they restricted their pronouncement on science and religion to the position of an appendix.<sup>45</sup>

As the time for the 1926 Convention approached, Selsus E. Tull of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, a supporter of Stealey, announced that another attempt would be made to get the Convention to repudiate evolution as both unscriptural and scientifically false.<sup>46</sup> Before any resolutions could be presented, however, George White McDaniel, the Convention's president, concluded his annual address with the following statement:

This Convention accepts Genesis as teaching that man was the special creation of God, and rejects every theory, evolution or other, which teaches that man originated in, or came by way of, a lower, animal ancestry.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Cf., e.g., Edgar Young Mullins, "Evolution and Special Creation," Western Recorder, August 6, 1925, pp. 8, 28; Edgar Young Mullins, "Dr. Stealey and the Committee on Baptist Faith and Message," ibid., August 20, 1925, p. 6; Edgar Young Mullins, "Science and the Truth," ibid., September 17, 1925, pp. 10, 24-25; C. P. Stealey, "And Not by Evolution," Western Recorder, July 16, 1925, pp. 5, 29; C. P. Stealey, "Dr. Mullins and the Committee on Baptist Faith and Message," ibid., October 1, 1925, p. 16.

<sup>46</sup>Selsus E. Tull, "The Evolution Issue Will Come Up at Houston," Western Recorder, April 22, 1926, p. 10.

<sup>47</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1926, p. 18.

Once again the Convention seized upon a presidential statement and claimed it as its own expression.<sup>48</sup> The motion to accept the statement included the hope that the subject would be given no further consideration; nevertheless, Selsus E. Tull was able during a later session to promote a resolution which called for "a hearty and individual acceptance" of the McDaniel statement by all institutions and boards of the Convention.<sup>49</sup>

Seeking to implement this resolution in the strictest fashion, the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, at its annual meeting in November, 1926, adopted a resolution by C. C. Morris which authorized their corresponding secretary, J. B. Rounds, to withhold funds from Southern Baptist institutions until faculty members and other representatives of such institutions "signed up" as endorsing the McDaniel statement.<sup>50</sup> Although Mullins protested that the Tull resolution was unnecessary and that it would be improper for the seminary faculty to "sign up" as the Morris resolution demanded,<sup>51</sup> nevertheless, the Seminary was able to report to

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>50</sup>For text of the "Morris resolution," see Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, Minutes, 1926, p. 24. This was aimed specifically at Southern Seminary and at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, neither of which had "signed up."

<sup>51</sup>See Edgar Young Mullins, "The Houston Convention and the Kingdom," pp. 4-5; Edgar Young Mullins, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Oklahoma Resolutions (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1927).

the Southern Baptist Convention in 1927 that both the faculty and the trustees of the Seminary had passed separate resolutions to "assure the Convention of their acceptance of the McDaniel statement as to the origin of man."<sup>52</sup> However, the matter was not settled in Oklahoma until a letter written by Mullins on March 14, 1928, which was also signed by the seminary faculty, convinced the Oklahoma leadership, including C. C. Morris, that Southern Seminary had met the requirements of Southern Baptists and of Oklahoma Baptists.<sup>53</sup>

By this time the evolution controversy had largely subsided throughout the Convention as a whole. The subject of evolution does not seem to have been discussed at the annual meeting in 1928. Other problems were claiming the attention of Southern Baptists.<sup>54</sup> The details of E. Y.

<sup>52</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1927, p. 105.

<sup>53</sup>At their 1927 Convention, Oklahoma Baptists had reaffirmed the Morris resolution and resolved further to send all withheld funds to the Baptist Bible Institute unless Southern and Southwestern Seminaries signed up by April 1, 1928. See Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, Minutes, 1927, pp. 31-32. However, a change in attitude began to be evident when C. P. Stealey was removed from the editorship of the Baptist Messenger by the Executive Board of the Oklahoma Convention on December 13, 1927, about one month after the Convention had met. For Stealey's account of these circumstances, see the brief announcement in the Baptist Messenger, December 14, 1927, p. 1; also C. P. Stealey, "The Editor Let Out," ibid., December 21, 1927, p. 2. For the text of Mullins' letter to Secretary Rounds, see J. B. Rounds, "Oklahoma and the Seminaries Reconciled," Baptist Messenger, March 28, 1929, pp. 1-2.

<sup>54</sup>Norman Furniss lists several causes for the rapid decline of the evolution controversy among Southern Baptists. These reasons include: the growing seriousness of

Mullins' views on evolution will be examined more carefully when his apologetic theology is studied in a later chapter.

Not all of Edgar Mullins' energies were absorbed by controversy during these years. He continued to teach and write books, to travel widely and to speak often. Early in 1922, he participated prominently in the informal conference of Northern and Southern Baptist leaders which was held at Columbia, Missouri.<sup>55</sup> In the summer of 1922, Mullins made a brief visit to London to confer with other Baptist world leaders on vital matters.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile "The Beeches," the new site for the Seminary on Louisville's Lexington Road, had been purchased on August 21, 1921, and plans began to be made for the construction of the new campus.

#### President of the Baptist World Alliance, 1923-1928

Mullins had been a leading figure in the Baptist world organization since the first international gathering in London

the financial situation, the reappearance of the prohibition issue after 1926, the desire for unity within the Convention, and the waning prestige of some of the fundamentalist leaders. See Furniss, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>55</sup>See "A History of the Columbia Conference: An Informal Meeting of Northern and Southern Baptist Leaders Held at Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri, January 24-26, 1922" (typewritten volume in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

<sup>56</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., p. 174.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

in 1905. He had been considered for the presidency of the Alliance at the Second Congress in 1911. But, according to W. O. Carver's later interpretation, he was providentially saved for more vital service in later years.<sup>58</sup> At any rate, Mullins was enthusiastically elected at the Third Baptist World Congress in Stockholm in 1923.

Shortly after his return to Louisville, that city, now acclaiming him as its "first citizen," honored him at a great public banquet which was held on the evening of Friday, November 23, 1923.<sup>59</sup> Mullins was now simultaneously the president of three major Baptist organizations: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Baptist World Alliance.

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<sup>58</sup>Quite obviously retrospectively grateful that Mullins had not served a BWA presidential term earlier, Carver said:

"In 1923 he was called to this position when the Baptists were far more numerous, when their position in the world was more significant, when the after-war conditions called for more skill and wisdom, when through his office he could do great service for the principle of religious freedom and check persecution of Baptists, Jews and others in some of the European states. Thus he came again into high office at the time when it meant most fruitful service, in his own supreme maturity and when it could be the crowning service of his career."

See Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins . . . ," p. 140.

<sup>59</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., pp. 184-85. See, also "Community Banquet in Honor of Edgar Young Mullins, Friday, November twenty:third, 6:30 p.m., Brown Hotel, Louisville, Ky. (1923)" (bound copy of invitation and program in the Kentucky Room of the Louisville Free Public Library, Louisville, Kentucky).

In September of 1924, Southern Seminary celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the administration of E. Y. Mullins. Guests came from all over the United States to take note of the Seminary's quarter-century of progress and to predict great things for her future under the leadership of her world-famous president.<sup>60</sup>

Formal "ground-breaking" for the new Norton Hall, the Seminary's new administration and classroom building at "the Beeches," took place on November 29, 1923. Almost a year later, on November 5, 1924, the cornerstone for the building was laid. The new seminary dormitory, later to be named Mullins Hall, was begun in the spring of 1925. All this work of construction progressed under the watchful eye of President Mullins until at last on March 26 and 27, 1926, Southern Seminary moved into its new quarters.<sup>61</sup>

Despite his many other commitments, Mullins applied himself vigorously to his BWA responsibilities. J. H. Rushbrooke credited him largely for the increased strength and improved morale with which the Alliance approached its Fourth World Congress at Toronto in 1928.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>For information about the celebration and the texts of the major addresses, see the Review and Expositor, XXII (January, 1925). It is the "Mullins Commemoration Number" of the journal.

<sup>61</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., pp. 185, 188.

<sup>62</sup>J. H. Rushbrooke, "The Baptist World Alliance in Retrospect and Prospect," Review and Expositor, XXV (July, 1928), 318-19.

In 1926, President Mullins, along with J. H. Rushbrooke, Eastern Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, and others, made an extended tour of Europe, holding regional conferences in Barcelona, Budapest, Lodz, Riga, and the German cities of Königsberg, Berlin, and Gelsenkirchen. Finally the party arrived in London where Mullins addressed several public gatherings, one of which was presided over by Prime Minister Lloyd George. After a brief excursion to Scotland, Mullins returned to his responsibilities in Louisville.<sup>63</sup>

A tour of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand had been planned for the BWA president, but Dr. Mullins' declining health made it impossible for him to travel that extensively.<sup>64</sup>

An important by-product of Mullins' European tour was the campaign which he led for religious liberty for minority groups in Roumania. In an article for the New York Times, written shortly after his return to America in 1926, and widely reprinted, E. Y. Mullins expressed his amazement at the "reactionary and medieval" attitude of the Roumanian government toward minority groups. He expressed an opinion that the creation of public sentiment against such abuses is the best way to deal with them and announced that the Baptist

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<sup>63</sup>For the itinerary and events of this tour cf. Isla May Mullins, op. cit., pp. 191-95; Rushbrooke, loc. cit., p. 319; J. H. Rushbrooke, "The Baptist World Alliance," Home and Foreign Fields, XII (June, 1928), 180.

<sup>64</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., p. 202.



World Alliance would circulate a petition which would finally be presented to the League of Nations asking for better treatment of persecuted religious minorities everywhere, but especially in Roumania.<sup>65</sup> So vigorous was his leadership in this cause that when Roumanian non-conformists were granted rights of toleration in 1928, a delegation from that country came to Louisville to pay tribute to E. Y. Mullins in a special service which was conducted at the Broadway Baptist Church, July 15, 1928.<sup>66</sup>

The Southern Baptist Convention met in Louisville in May, 1927, anticipating the formal presentation of the new Seminary plant by its president. Unfortunately, however, Edgar Mullins was too ill to attend a single session of the Convention.

During the next year, although his activities were severely curtailed, Mullins recovered sufficiently enough to be able to participate vigorously in the 1928 Southern Baptist Convention and also to engage effectively in the national presidential campaign of that year. However, he collapsed early in June, 1928, while on a speaking tour in North

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<sup>65</sup>Edgar Young Mullins, "Baptists Will Appeal for Rights in Roumania," Western Recorder, December 2, 1926, pp. 5, 9. Cf. Edgar Young Mullins, "Persecution of Baptists Continues in Roumania," Western Recorder, August 18, 1927, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup>Charles F. Leek, "Thanks Extended Dr. Mullins by Roumanians," Western Recorder, August 2, 1928, p. 19. This was the last public service in which E. Y. Mullins took part.

Carolina, and he was under a doctor's care the rest of his life.

It was utterly impossible for him to be present to preside at the Fourth Baptist World Congress at Toronto in July. However, his carefully-prepared presidential address, which was read by his old friend, George W. Truett, was regarded by many as the capstone of his career as the world's foremost interpreter of Baptist belief.<sup>67</sup>

During the summer and autumn of 1928, Edgar Mullins' activities became more and more limited. His wife took care of his correspondence and other details. The last piece of business Edgar Mullins transacted was the deeding of a lot to the Seminary for the building of a home for the school's presidents. He was afflicted by a final stroke on November 9, and then, after a period of quiet lingering, he lapsed into unconsciousness and passed away at high noon, on November 23, 1928.<sup>68</sup> Funeral services were conducted on Sunday, November

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<sup>67</sup>F. Townley Lord, Baptist World Fellowship: A Short History of the Baptist World Alliance (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), pp. 69-70. For the text of this address see "Baptist Life in the World's Life," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Fourth Congress (Toronto, 1928), pp. 55-63.

<sup>68</sup>The story of the last season of Mullins' life is poignantly described by his wife in Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., pp. 208-211. Naturally his death was widely reported and greatly lamented. See "Dr. Mullins' Illness Fatal," New York Times, November 23, 1928, p. 13; "Dr. E. Y. Mullins Translated," Watchman-Examiner, November 29, 1928, pp. 1513-14. The articles reporting his death and

25, and then the body of Edgar Young Mullins was laid to rest in the Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky, not far from the school around which so much of his life had centered.<sup>69</sup>

So he passed over  
And all the trumpets sounded on the other side.<sup>70</sup>

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funeral and the concern of his community which appeared in the Louisville papers, the Courier-Journal, the Times, and the Herald Post from November 23-25, have been collected. See "Newspaper Clippings Concerning the Death and Funeral of Edgar Young Mullins" (in the pamphlet files of the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky). Editorial tributes to Mullins appeared in all the Southern Baptist papers. For a sample of those which appeared elsewhere see "The Passing of Edgar Young Mullins," Baptist (Chicago), December 8, 1928, pp. 1488-89; "Death of a Liberator," Outlook and Independent, December 12, 1928, pp. 1320-21; "The Passing of a Scholarly and Irenic Personality," Christian Century, December 6, 1928, pp. 1480-81.

<sup>69</sup>For a description of the funeral ceremonies, see "Funeral Service for Dr. E. Y. Mullins, November 25, 1928" (typewritten copy of stenographic notes in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

<sup>70</sup>This quotation from The Pilgrim's Progress is a part of the inscription of E. Y. Mullins' monument at Cave Hill Cemetery. For the complete text of the inscription, see Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., p. 213.

CHAPTER III

MULLINS' CONTRIBUTION

## CHAPTER III

### MULLINS' CONTRIBUTION

The characteristics ascribed to Mullins in the inscription on his tombstone provide a set of categories by which the extent of his contribution as a Christian minister can be indicated. His achievements were made through his various roles as "preacher, teacher, scholar, administrator, Christian statesman, world citizen, servant of God."<sup>1</sup> A survey of his total contribution will further define the significance of the man and will help to demonstrate why his theological restatement was bound to be influential.

#### Preacher

To E. Y. Mullins the call to the ministry was essentially a call to be a preacher of the gospel of Christ.<sup>2</sup> He interpreted his own initial call as a call to preach.<sup>3</sup> For fourteen years he served as a preacher in a succession of three significant pastorates and yet, ironically, it was after he became a seminary president and professor that his

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<sup>1</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins: An Intimate Biography (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1929), p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>Choosing a Life Calling (N.p.: Baptist Theological Faculties Union of the United States and Canada, 1907), pp. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup>"A Dynamic Ministry," Record of Christian Work, XLVII (January, 1928), 33.

preaching ministry was most greatly enlarged and extended. Not only was he influential as a molders of young preachers, but his new position, on which his inherent abilities enabled him to capitalize, opened for him the doors to pulpits all across the country and, finally, around the world.

The sight of E. Y. Mullins and the sound of his message became familiar to audiences of all sizes and to listeners of all ages. The circumstances under which he spoke ranged all the way from social gatherings to worship services and from graduation ceremonies to denominational conventions. He spoke often before the Southern Baptist Convention after delivering the annual sermon to that body in 1901.<sup>4</sup> He was on the Baptist World Alliance program at the Congresses of 1905, 1911, 1923, and 1928.<sup>5</sup> His sermons and addresses were often printed in the newspapers and religious journals. Two collections of them have been published, one during his lifetime, the second shortly after his death.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1901, p. 15. For the text of his sermon on "Kings and Priests unto God," see the Baptist Argus, May 16, 1901, pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup>See "The Theological Trend," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, First Congress (London, 1905), pp. 145-52; ["The Task of the Baptist Denomination"], Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Second Congress (Philadelphia, 1911), pp. 108-11; "The Lordship of Jesus," ibid., pp. 377-92; "The Baptist Conception of Religious Liberty," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Third Congress (Stockholm, 1923), pp. 66-72; "Baptist Life in the World's Life," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Fourth Congress (Toronto, 1928), pp. 55-63.

<sup>6</sup>The Life in Christ (New York: Fleming H. Revell

He was generally conceded to be one of the most effective preachers of his generation. F. M. Powell called him "the most scintillating preacher and lecturer one ever heard."<sup>7</sup> A. T. Robertson spoke admiringly of Mullins' brief talks to ministerial students at graduation time:

I think that was the best speaking he ever did, full of pith and point, and it stuck through all of the years.<sup>8</sup>

W. O. Carver praised Mullins' chapel addresses as being "uniformly fresh, stimulating and in the highest sense spiritual." He expressed a desire that they might be collected and put in print.<sup>9</sup> Harold W. Tribble analyzes the secrets of Mullins' pulpit power in the following way:

He was great as a preacher because of his knowledge of God and God's word, his knowledge of men and their needs, and his ability to simplify and illustrate great truths.<sup>10</sup>

Company, 1917); Faith in the Modern World (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1930).

<sup>7</sup>F. M. Powell, "The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Completes Seventy-Five Years of Struggle and Achievement," Review and Expositor, XXXI (July, 1934), 343.

<sup>8</sup>"Funeral Service for Dr. E. Y. Mullins, November 25, 1928" (typewritten copy of stenographic notes in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>W. O. Carver, "Recollections and Information from Other Sources Concerning the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary" (typewritten copy of unpublished notes in the files of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 82.

<sup>10</sup>Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins," Review and Expositor, XXVI (October, 1929), 421.

Edgar Mullins definitely believed in a divine call to the ministry. He often spoke of his own call, describing the impression which came to him as akin to that expressed by the apostle Paul: "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."<sup>11</sup> He defined a call to preach in terms of an abiding conviction that one can and should serve God in this way; personal fitness in body, mind, and spirit; and an outward call or opportunity to do Christian work.<sup>12</sup>

But Mullins was also profoundly convinced that a call to preach is a call to prepare to preach, and thus he came to dedicate himself to the task of providing ministerial training and a trained ministry.<sup>13</sup> An example of his own personal awareness of the necessity for disciplined mastery of the techniques of preaching is seen in Mrs. Mullins' revelation that her husband's "gift" of sermonic illustration, so greatly admired by his contemporaries, was actually the result of a determined effort to overcome what he had regarded as a chief deficiency in his earliest pulpit work.<sup>14</sup> This is

<sup>11</sup>"A Dynamic Ministry," p. 33.

<sup>12</sup>Edgar Young Mullins and John R. Sampey, The Call to the Christian Ministry ([Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.]), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>See, e.g., Edgar Young Mullins, "The Task of Providing a Trained Ministry," Southern Baptist Handbook, 1922, ed. E. P. Alldredge (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board), pp. 330-40.

<sup>14</sup>Isla May Mullins, op. cit., pp. 30-31.



the kind of thing he called "cultivating one's weak points."<sup>15</sup>

Mullins always took a pragmatic view of the purpose of preaching. He spoke often of "efficiency" in this as in other matters.<sup>16</sup> In an article which he wrote shortly after beginning his pastoral work in Baltimore, he defined the aim of preaching as being "to influence and move others."<sup>17</sup> In another article written early in his career as seminary president he said: "The test of the sermon is its power to win men to Christ and develop them in Christian life."<sup>18</sup> In the same article he praised John A. Broadus as being most influential in creating pulpit ideals for the Baptist ministry in the South. Evidently he would claim Broadus, under whom he had studied, as being his principal mentor in the philosophy and art of preaching.<sup>19</sup>

In view of his lifelong interests and activities as a preacher, it is hardly surprising that President Mullins and his wife provided the sum of \$13,000 for the establishment of a memorial lectureship on preaching at the Southern

<sup>15</sup>"A Dynamic Ministry," pp. 35-36.

<sup>16</sup>See, e.g., "Value of Self-Forgetfulness in Preaching," Seminary Magazine, II (November, 1889), 206.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>18</sup>"The Seminary and Preaching," Baptist Argus, May 8, 1902, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>20</sup>

### Teacher

Mullins saw a clear distinction between the task of the preacher and that of the teacher.

Preaching is not identical with teaching. To teach is to cause another to know. To preach is to cause another to act--at least that is the aim of preaching.<sup>21</sup>

Mullins did not freely choose the teaching role despite the fact that others had predicted it for him since his seminary student days.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, he was so fully committed to the preaching and pastoral aspects of the ministry that he felt he accepted the teaching task only because compelled to do so. However, he soon found the work immensely satisfying. Years later he described the transition in a message to ministers:

I refused to go into educational work. Half a dozen

<sup>20</sup>See the Will of Isla May Mullins (copy in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 1, for a statement of the manner of this bequest. The lectureship was finally inaugurated in the academic year 1941-42.

<sup>21</sup>"The Pastor's Best Point of Contact With the Sunday School," Homiletic Review, LI (April, 1906), 283.

<sup>22</sup>According to Mrs. Mullins, Dr. John A. Broadus had said to Edgar Mullins shortly before his graduation in 1885, "Wherever you are, I think your work will be educational." See Isla May Mullins, op. cit., p. 19. Some years later in Baltimore, Dr. Franklin Wilson, after hearing Mullins read a doctrinal paper at a Minister's Conference, told him, "You will be a teacher of theology some day." Ibid., p. 55.

times I refused it because I said that was not what I wanted to do. But I got in, finally. I had not been in it two months until I felt it was the greatest work in the world, and I have been at it ever since.<sup>23</sup>

Upon assuming teaching duties, Mullins threw himself into the task with his usual wholehearted zeal and gradually achieved great proficiency in it. His students and colleagues soon recognized his polished talents in this area. Gaines S. Dobbins remembers Mullins' "brilliant lectures."<sup>24</sup> W. O. Carver testified that Mullins' immense popularity in the classroom was well-deserved. He attributed it to Mullins' "clear discernment, his forceful thinking and his speaking ability."<sup>25</sup> Mullins' art of illustration also served him well in his teaching work.

Mullins once described the teacher's task as consisting of four elements: detection, protection, direction and infection:

To detect latent powers, hidden riches of character, unseen marks of talent and genius . . .

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<sup>23</sup>"A Dynamic Ministry," p. 34. This is confirmed by Mrs. Mullins, who had been assured by Dr. William N. Clarke, Professor of Theology at Colgate Theological Seminary, that such would be her husband's response to the challenge of teaching young ministers. See Isla May Mullins, op. cit., pp. 114, 118-19.

<sup>24</sup>Gaines S. Dobbins, "Men Who Have Made Seminary History," Quarterly Review, XVIII (July, August, September, 1958), 32.

<sup>25</sup>Carver, "Recollections . . . ," p. 80.

To protect from hurtful ideals and false standards  
of taste and of living . . .  
To direct into the highest and best channels of  
effort . . .  
To infect with lofty ambitions and high purposes and  
with a burning enthusiasm for achievement.<sup>26</sup>

Presumably he interpreted his own responsibilities as a  
teacher along such lines as these.

When Mullins was first elected to succeed Dr. Whitsitt  
as president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, it  
was first agreed that he would succeed him as professor of  
church history also. He began to prepare with this in view.  
However, when F. H. Kerfoot resigned his duties at the Seminary  
shortly after Mullins' election to the presidency, the depart-  
ment of theology was left vacant. According to W. O. Carver,  
Mullins, preferring the latter field, initiated the request  
which secured it for him.<sup>27</sup> Carver readily acknowledged the  
wisdom of this change.<sup>28</sup>

Mullins began almost immediately to restructure the  
seminary's teaching program in the field of theology. As  
soon as possible the course in polemic theology was dropped,

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<sup>26</sup>"Baptist and Education," Baptist World, September 28,  
1911, pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup>Mrs. Mullins relates some of these developments.  
Isla May Mullins, op. cit., pp. 113, 118. Cf. W. O. Carver,  
Out of His Treasure: Unfinished Memoirs (Nashville: Broadman  
Press, 1956), p. 65.

<sup>28</sup>W. O. Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins--Leader and  
Builder," Review and Expositor, XXVI (April, 1929), 132.

much of its material being absorbed by the new course in comparative religion and missions which was begun in 1900 by Professor W. O. Carver. In the advanced theology class the required reading of the Latin works of Anselm and Francis Turretin was gradually reduced and finally discontinued as the course itself evolved into a study in biblical theology. The graduate theology course developed from a study of separate doctrines into a study of the various types of theology. The structure of content remained largely the same in the regular course in systematic theology, but the method of instruction was altered upon the arrival of Mullins as professor.<sup>29</sup>

Students of Mullins have described his teaching procedure. He did not wholly abandon the method of memorization and recitation which had been traditional at Southern Seminary since the time of James P. Boyce and which had been continued in the department of theology by F. H. Kerfoot. However, Mullins relieved and supplemented this rather dull and dry practice by his own brilliant lectures which finally furnished the basis for his book, The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression.<sup>30</sup> Mullins' new book replaced

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<sup>29</sup>This outline of developments has been obtained by a comparison of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Catalogues, 1898-1929.

<sup>30</sup>The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917).

Boyce's Abstract of Systematic Theology<sup>31</sup> as a text book in 1917, but the professor continued to require the memorization of the text although he did not insist so rigidly upon literal recapitulation as had his predecessors.<sup>32</sup> W. O. Carver criticized Boyce's teaching method as being "purely didactic, not creative or stimulating to original thought or research." He said it was suitable for passing on a theological tradition but it tended to stifle independent experience and thought. Carver implied that Mullins should have broken more decisively with the method.<sup>33</sup> However, it can be logically contended that Mullins' more gradual method of reworking the teaching technique was more consistent with his usual approach to problems involving both continuity and change.

#### Scholar

In a sense the principal subject of this entire dissertation is the contribution of E. Y. Mullins as a theological scholar. However, it will be helpful at this point to examine systematically the literary production of E. Y. Mullins which supports his reputation as a scholar and which furnishes the material for an understanding of

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<sup>31</sup>James P. Boyce, Abstract of Systematic Theology, rev. F. H. Kerfoot (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1899).

<sup>32</sup>Carver, "Recollections . . . ," pp. 19, 80; cf. Dobbins, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

<sup>33</sup>Carver, "Recollections . . . ," p. 19.

his theology. His writings can be grouped into several distinct categories.

### Books

Mullins' first book, Christ's Coming and His Kingdom, was a brief monograph published while he was still pastor at Baltimore.<sup>34</sup> It grew out of a sermon series on the second coming of Christ which had attracted considerable local attention. His first major book was Why Is Christianity True? which appeared in 1905 while Dr. Mullins was attending the first Baptist World Congress in London.<sup>35</sup> It was a study of Christian evidences (an area of Christian apologetics) which had been prepared at the request of the Baptist Young People's Union of America for use in their Christian Culture courses. In it he sought to meet the skeptical challenges to the Christian faith of modern science and philosophy by restating the argument for Christian belief from the standpoints of the Christian view of the world, the New Testament revelation which centers in Jesus Christ, the evidence of Christian experience and the evidence from Christian history. The book served as a textbook at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary until the mid-1920's.

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<sup>34</sup>Christ's Coming and His Kingdom (Baltimore: C. W. Schneidereith and Sons, 1894).

<sup>35</sup>Why Is Christianity True? (Chicago: Christian Culture Press, 1905).

In 1908, Mullins presented his new interpretation of the Baptist faith in The Axioms of Religion.<sup>36</sup> As John R. Sampey pointed out, Mullins here moves from a defense of the common Christian faith as presented in his previous book to a notable restatement and defense of the distinctively Baptist message.<sup>37</sup> In this book, Mullins attempts to show that Baptist doctrine and polity are based on broad, primary, universal principles which are derived from the Scriptures and which find an answering echo in the understanding human heart. W. O. Carver judged this book "for general purpose and for widest reading the greatest publication of Dr. Mullins."<sup>38</sup>

Four years later Mullins issued a slender volume entitled Baptist Beliefs.<sup>39</sup> He described it as "a restatement and interpretation for the general reader" of the Baptist creeds currently in existence.<sup>40</sup> (He is evidently referring here to the Philadelphia Confession and the

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<sup>36</sup>The Axioms of Religion (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1908).

<sup>37</sup>John R. Sampey, review of Edgar Young Mullins' The Axioms of Religion, in Review and Expositor, V (April, 1908), 321.

<sup>38</sup>W. O. Carver, "Recollections . . . ," p. 82.

<sup>39</sup>Baptist Beliefs (Louisville: Baptist World Publishing Company, 1912).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 6.



New Hampshire Declaration of Faith which he mentions elsewhere in the book.)<sup>41</sup> This material had been previously published in the Baptist World, the weekly paper edited in Louisville by J. N. Prestridge, to which Mullins often contributed.<sup>42</sup>

Mullins produced two books in 1913. The first was a small commentary, Studies in Ephesians and Colossians, which was one in a series suitable for study course use which was currently being published by the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>43</sup> The other was entitled Freedom and Authority in Religion.<sup>44</sup> It dealt in a scholarly way with what many were calling the central theological issue of the time. Mullins sought to meet head-on the most significant current writings on the subject. W. O. Carver joined Mrs. Mullins in testifying to the extensive labor which went into the making of the book.<sup>45</sup> Carver declared his opinion

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>42</sup>The series begins in the Baptist World, October 5, 1911, pp. 5, 9, and continues consecutively (with a few interruptions in the succeeding issues) through December 28, 1911. An editorial in the Baptist World, October 5, 1911, p. 16, indicates that Baptist Beliefs was prepared by Mullins at the express request of the editor of that publication.

<sup>43</sup>Studies in Ephesians and Colossians, The Convention Series, I. J. Van Ness, General Editor (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1913).

<sup>44</sup>Freedom and Authority in Religion (Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland Press, 1913).

<sup>45</sup>Carver, "Recollections . . . ," p. 81; cf. Isla May Mullins, op. cit., p. 152.

that the reception given the book was a serious disappointment to its author,<sup>46</sup> but, nevertheless, it still remains a significant factor in Mullins' scholarly contribution.

The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression was published in 1917.<sup>47</sup> It is Mullins' chief work on systematic theology, the subject he taught for over a quarter of a century, and it is generally conceded to be his magnum opus. Upon its appearance it replaced James P. Boyce's Abstract of Systematic Theology as the standard textbook in systematic theology in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and it continued to be used as such for approximately thirty years.

The Life in Christ, a compilation of Mullins' sermons and addresses, also appeared in 1917.<sup>48</sup> E. C. Dargan noted that this book demonstrated four of Mullins' best qualities as a speaker and writer: his depth of intellect, his excellence of style, his skillful use of illustration and his deep personal experience of the religion he taught.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Carver, "Recollections . . . ," p. 81.

<sup>47</sup>The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917).

<sup>48</sup>The Life in Christ (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1917).

<sup>49</sup>E. C. Dargan, review of Edgar Young Mullins' The Life in Christ, in Review and Expositor, XIV (July, 1917), 401-402.

Two small books by Mullins appeared in 1920. His Talks on Soul Winning reproduces material which he had first given before a group of Y. M. C. A. secretaries who were engaged with him in religious activities at Camp Zachary Taylor during World War I.<sup>50</sup> In Spiritualism--A Delusion, he dealt with a pseudo-religious problem which was aggravated by the World War and its aftermath. Mullins' purpose was to show the sorrowing who had lost loved ones during the War that the only sure hope of life and reunion beyond the grave is provided by the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>51</sup>

In 1924, Mullins produced Christianity at the Cross Roads, his last important book on apologetics, in which he sought to make "a simple and clear statement of the present status of the debate between evangelical Christianity and its opponents, in the light of a sound scientific scholarship."<sup>52</sup> Mullins deplored the modern attempt to reduce Christianity by the methods of modern science, modern philosophy, historical criticism and comparative religion. As opposed to this, he set forth the irreducible Christ, who is known through the experience of Christian men, through

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<sup>50</sup>Talks on Soul Winning (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1920).

<sup>51</sup>Spiritualism--A Delusion (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1920).

<sup>52</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), p. v.

the New Testament records, in the larger spiritual life of the world, and in Christian history. Many have agreed with the Presbyterian professor, Thornton Whaling, that this book is "the crown and completion of all of Dr. Mullins' labors and publications as author and student."<sup>53</sup>

Edgar Mullins published no more books during his lifetime. However in 1930, his wife, aided by his teaching successor, Harold W. Tribble, and by some instructions left by Dr. Mullins himself, issued a second collection of his sermons and addresses entitled Faith in the Modern World.<sup>54</sup>

Mullins' books were widely used and their influence was great, not only in America but throughout the Western world. Gilbert Laws, writing in the British Weekly, testified that Mullins' books were "much read in England."<sup>55</sup> George W. Truett commented on his observation of the use of Mullins' books by European leaders of various denominations.<sup>56</sup> The Axioms of Religion and Baptist Beliefs were

<sup>53</sup> Thornton Whaling, review of Edgar Young Mullins' Christianity at the Cross Roads, in Review and Expositor, XXII (January, 1925), 108.

<sup>54</sup> Faith in the Modern World (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1930).

<sup>55</sup> Gilbert Laws, "Baptist Congress at Stockholm," British Weekly, August 2, 1923, p. 375.

<sup>56</sup> George W. Truett, "A Quarter of a Century of World History," Review and Expositor, XXII (January, 1925), 61-62.

both translated into Spanish.<sup>57</sup> The latter was also translated into Norwegian and Italian.<sup>58</sup> Several of the books have seen several printings in various editions. The Axioms of Religion was rewritten and adapted by Harold W. Tribble and published under the title The Baptist Faith in 1935.<sup>59</sup> Later it was combined with The Furtherance of the Gospel by W. O. Carver and published as The Faith and Its Furtherance bearing the names of E. Y. Mullins, H. W. Tribble and W. O. Carver as joint authors.<sup>60</sup> Studies in Ephesians and Colossians was published as two separate study course books in 1935: Studies in Ephesians and Studies in Colossians.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Edgar Young Mullins, Axiomas de Religion, trans. Felix Buldain and J. E. Davis (Leon: Gto.: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1912); Mullins, Creencias Bautistas, trans. Jaime C. Quarles (Buenos Aires: Junta de Publicaciones de la Convención Evangélica Bautista de las Repúblicas del Plata, 1927).

<sup>58</sup>Mullins, Hvad vi tror: En kort fremstilling av baptistenes laere (Christiania: Norsk litteraturselskaps aktietrykkeri, 1913); Mullins, "Credenze Battiste," in D. G. Whitinghill, E. Y. Mullins and G. B. Taylor, I Battisti (Roma: Scuola Teologica Battista, 1913), pp. 43-135.

<sup>59</sup>Edgar Young Mullins and Harold W. Tribble, The Baptist Faith (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1935).

<sup>60</sup>Edgar Young Mullins, Harold W. Tribble, and W. O. Carver, The Faith and Its Furtherance (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1936).

<sup>61</sup>Studies in Ephesians (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1935); Studies in Colossians (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1935).

In 1936, Mullins' Studies were combined with Studies in Romans by B. H. Carroll and published as Studies in Romans, Ephesians and Colossians.<sup>62</sup> Baptist Beliefs and The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression have been reprinted by the Judson Press as recently as 1959.

The use of some of the books as textbooks in the Southern Baptist Seminary has already been noted. Mullins' books were sometimes used as texts in non-Baptist schools also. Leander S. Keyser, a Lutheran professor at Hamma Divinity School, Springfield, Ohio, tells of using Why Is Christianity True? as a textbook in his Christian Apologetics class for a number of years.<sup>63</sup> Harold W. Tribble relates the following story of a Presbyterian's appreciation for the same book by Mullins:

One day a candidate for a degree in Harvard University asked the Professor of Philosophy to recommend the best book available in Christian Apologetics. Without a moment's hesitation the professor referred the student to Dr. Mullins' book "Why Is Christianity True?" Many years later that student, a Presbyterian, told Dr. Mullins that every year since he left Harvard he had taught that book to a class of seniors in college.<sup>64</sup>

#### Booklets and pamphlets

Writings by E. Y. Mullins in the form of the small

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<sup>62</sup>Edgar Young Mullins and B. H. Carroll, Studies in Romans, Ephesians and Colossians (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1936).

<sup>63</sup>Western Recorder, December 6, 1928, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup>Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins," p. 416.

booklet, pamphlet, or tract seem to have begun to appear first during the brief period in which he was employed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1895-96. The subjects of those early pamphlets, quite naturally, were missions and stewardship.<sup>65</sup>

When Mullins became president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1899, his inaugural address was published along with an address delivered by another speaker on that occasion.<sup>66</sup> His opening address to the Seminary on October, 1901, was entitled "The Task of the Theologian of Today," and was deemed worthy of publication as a booklet.<sup>67</sup> In following years he often prepared pamphlets which described and promoted various phases of the Seminary's history and program.<sup>68</sup>

Some of Mullins' most significant addresses were

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<sup>65</sup>See, e.g., Africa: Opportunities and Dangers (Baltimore: Maryland Baptist Mission Rooms, n.d.); Spoiling the Sermon (Richmond, Va.: Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, n.d.).

<sup>66</sup>Inaugural Address (Louisville: Baptist Argus, [1899]).

<sup>67</sup>The Task of the Theologian of Today (2nd ed.; [Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1901]).

<sup>68</sup>The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: What the Seminary Is, What It Has Done, and What It Needs (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.); The Seminary Building Emergency (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.); Edgar Young Mullins (ed.), Editorials on the Seminary Building Emergency (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.).

preserved and circulated in booklet form. These include his address to the National Congress of Disciples of Christ in April, 1906,<sup>69</sup> his address to the Virginia Baptist Historical Society in November of that year,<sup>70</sup> and his address before the Baptist Convention of North America in 1907.<sup>71</sup>

Some of Mullins' utterances to the Baptist World Alliance were widely distributed, the most notable being his presidential address which illness kept him from reading at Toronto in 1928.<sup>72</sup>

More than one important doctrinal statement prepared by Mullins and others for the Southern Baptist Convention was issued in tract form.<sup>73</sup> Other tracts by Mullins were used in various Convention campaigns.<sup>74</sup> Some of his tracts

<sup>69</sup>Baptism and the Remission of Sins (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, [1906]).

<sup>70</sup>The Historical Significance of the Baptists (Richmond, Va.: Virginia Baptist Historical Society, 1907).

<sup>71</sup>The Contribution of the Baptists to American Civilization (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.).

<sup>72</sup>Edgar Young Mullins, J. H. Rushbrooke and Charles Brown, Baptist Life in the World's Life (London: Baptist World Alliance, n.d.). Mullins' contribution to this booklet is the title address, pp. 5-13.

<sup>73</sup>Edgar Young Mullins, et al. Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists ([Richmond, Va.: Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919]); Mullins, et al. Report of a Committee on Baptist Faith and Message (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1925).

<sup>74</sup>Soul Freedom Applied to Church Life and Organization (Nashville: Baptist 75 Million Campaign, n.d.); What the Tithing Movement Means (n.p.: Layman's Missionary Movement of



continue to be reprinted from time to time.<sup>75</sup>

Articles in periodical literature

Mullins wrote prolifically for various papers and other periodic publications. He seems to have begun writing for the Kentucky Baptist paper, the Western Recorder, shortly after assuming the duties of his first pastorate at Harrodsburg, Kentucky, in 1885.<sup>76</sup> In 1889, actively engaged in his pastorate in Baltimore, Maryland, he began to write a regular column called "Our Signal Station" for the Baptist paper published there, which was known successively as the Baltimore Baptist, the Baptist and the Evangel. Mullins continued the column until he left the Baltimore church. Frequent contributions by Mullins to Virginia's Religious Herald began to appear when he assumed the position of Associate Secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1895. As Mullins' ministry and reputation widened,

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the Southern Baptist Convention, n.d.); Why Education Should Have a Place in the Church Budget (n.p.: Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, n.d.).

<sup>75</sup>E.g., A True Denominationalism (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1952); Baptists and the Bible (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, n.d.). This latter tract has recently been included in the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, I (1958), 141-43.

<sup>76</sup>Mullins' report of a church dedication service at Salvisa, Kentucky, in the Western Recorder, May 13, 1886, p. 5, seems to be one of the earliest printed pieces bearing his name.

and especially after he became president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1899, articles and addresses by him were frequently printed in almost all of the Baptist papers, both in the South and in the North.<sup>77</sup> The papers of other denominations occasionally published something by E. Y. Mullins. Prominent among these were the Presbyterian Christian Observer and the Methodist Quarterly. The secular press also found some of Mullins' writings worthy of space. Quite naturally, this was especially true of the Louisville papers, the Courier Journal, the Herald-Post and the Louisville Times, but newspapers in other cities sometimes ran articles or statements by Mullins also. Then when his influence assumed international proportions as a result of his prominence in the Baptist World Alliance, foreign papers began to report his activities and publish his material. These papers include the British Weekly, the Baptist Times of London, the Canadian Baptist, and the Australian Baptist.

While Mullins was still serving as a Baptist pastor, the Seminary Magazine, which was published monthly by the

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<sup>77</sup>In addition to the papers which have since become the familiar official organs of the various Baptist state conventions, this list includes the Baptist Argus, a Louisville paper which became the Baptist World in 1908 and was merged with the Western Recorder in 1919; the Outlook, published at Indianapolis, Indiana, which was merged with the Standard of Chicago in 1901; the Baptist which succeeded the Standard; the Watchman of Boston and the Examiner of New York which merged together in 1913 to become the Watchman-Examiner.

students at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, used several articles by him. Later, when he was president of the institution, the Magazine was replaced by a new quarterly journal, the Review and Expositor, and he became the editor-in-chief. At least twenty-two articles by Mullins appeared in this journal between 1904 and 1928. During the years of his seminary presidency, his writings were also published by many other religious journals in this country and abroad. These include Home and Foreign Fields, the missionary journal of the Southern Baptist Convention, Religious Education, the journal of the Religious Education Association, the Biblical Review, the Homiletic Review, the Review of the Churches of London, the Hibbert Journal, and D. L. Moody's Record of Christian Work. Secular magazines such as the Independent, the Forum, and Woman's Home Companion also published an occasional article by E. Y. Mullins.

Doubtless, this wide distribution of material added to the stature of E. Y. Mullins as well as that of the causes with which he was identified. These periodical writings are not all of equal significance but among them are included some of the most important products of his pen.

#### Articles and addresses in annuals, collections, and other reference books

Several reports and statements by Mullins were printed in the Annuals of the Southern Baptist Convention through the

years.<sup>78</sup> Articles by him appear in the various Southern Baptist Handbooks.<sup>79</sup> Important addresses and statements by him appear in the Records of Proceedings of the Baptist World Congresses of 1905, 1911, 1923, and 1928.<sup>80</sup> Two public discussions by Mullins can be found in the Proceedings of the Baptist Congresses which met annually in the United States from 1882 until 1912.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>E.g., Edgar Young Mullins, "Science and Religion," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1923, pp. 19-20; Edgar Young Mullins and J. B. Gambrell, "Report of J. B. Gambrell and E. Y. Mullins, Fraternal Messengers to Europe," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1921, pp. 73-75. Edgar Young Mullins, et al., "Report on Relations with the Northern Baptist Convention," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1912, pp. 46-54; Edgar Young Mullins, et al., "Report of Committee on Baptist Faith and Message," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1925, pp. 71-77.

<sup>79</sup>E.g., "The Baptist Program Outlined: Its Application to Present World Conditions," Southern Baptist Handbook, 1921, ed. E. P. Alldredge (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1921), pp. 171-75; "The Task of Providing a Trained Ministry," Southern Baptist Handbook, 1922, pp. 330-40; "The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1922-1923," Southern Baptist Handbook, 1923, pp. 232-34; "The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," Southern Baptist Handbook, 1924, pp. 177-81; "The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," ibid., pp. 257-60.

<sup>80</sup>"The Theological Trend," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, First Congress (London, 1905), pp. 145-52; "The Lordship of Jesus," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Second Congress (Philadelphia, 1911), pp. 377-92; "The Baptist Conception of Religious Liberty," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Third Congress (Stockholm, 1923), pp. 66-72; "Baptist Life in the World's Life," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Fourth Congress (Toronto, 1928), pp. 55-63; Edgar Young Mullins et al., "A Message of the Baptist World Alliance to the Baptist Brotherhood, to Other Christian Brethren, and to the World," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Third Congress (Stockholm, 1923), pp. 223-28.

<sup>81</sup>"What Should the Churches Demand of the Theological

An article by Mullins on "The Testimony of Christian Experience" was included in The Fundamentals, a collection of conservative writings first published in 1910-12.<sup>82</sup>

Mullins was one of two assistant editors of The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, a set edited by James Orr which appeared in 1915. Five articles by him were included in this work, all of them dealing with the Holy Spirit.<sup>83</sup> He was a contributor to The System Bible Study or The Busy People's Bible which was published in 1922.<sup>84</sup> Articles by him were also included in various doctrinal symposiums which appeared from 1895 to the close of his career.<sup>85</sup>

Schools?" Baptist Congress, Proceedings, 1904, pp. 20-29; "The Relation of Theology to Religion," ibid., pp. 92-95.

<sup>82</sup>"The Testimony of Christian Experience," The Fundamentals: A Testimony To The Truth (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1917), IV, 314-23.

<sup>83</sup>"Advocate," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. James Orr, I (1915), 65; "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," ibid., 399-401; "Comforter," ibid., II (1915), 679; "Holy Spirit," ibid., III (1915), 1406-17; "Paraclete," ibid., IV (1915), 2245-46.

<sup>84</sup>"The Bible and Education," The System Bible Study or The Busy People's Bible (Chicago: System Bible Study, 1922).

<sup>85</sup>"A Kingdom Built on a Cross," The Southern Baptist Pulpit, ed. J. F. Love (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1895), pp. 246-54; "An All-round Baptist View," The Baptist Message (Nashville: Sunday School of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1911), pp. 10-13; "The Final Perseverance of the Saints," Ten Fundamental Doctrines, ed. B. J. W. Graham (Atlanta, Ga.: Index Printing Company, 1918), pp. 121-26; "Why I Am a Baptist," Twelve Modern Apostles and Their Creeds, by Gilbert K. Chesterton et al. (New York: Duffield and Company, 1926), pp. 89-109; "The Father Almighty," My Idea of God: A Symposium of Faith, ed. Joseph Fort Newton (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1926), pp. 193-203.

Book reviews

A book review may not be the most original form of writing but it is often quite revealing, nevertheless, because in it the reviewer may commit himself quite emphatically by the judgment he passes on the book in question. The student of the theology of E. Y. Mullins can gain considerable insight into the preferences, prejudices and thought-patterns of the man by a study of this segment of his literary production. Mullins' reviews appear in many publications but, quite naturally, the best collection of them, some 185 in all, can be found in the Review and Expositor which he edited and to which he regularly contributed for about twenty-five years.<sup>86</sup> Many of the books reviewed are insignificant, and many of the reviews are unimportant, but a number of notable books are reviewed in a discriminating way. These include: Borden P. Bowne, Theism; Auguste Sabatier, Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit; H. R. Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ; P. T. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority in Relation to Certainty, Sanctity and Society; Theodore Haering, The Christian Faith; James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation; William Temple, Christ the Truth; Sydney Cave, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ; J. G. Machen, What is Faith?

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<sup>86</sup>As previously indicated, the search for Mullins' book reviews for the purposes of this study has been limited to the Review and Expositor. Supra, p. 17f., n. 47.

John Oman, Grace and Personality; and Albert C. Knudson, The Philosophy of Personalism.<sup>87</sup>

Unpublished materials

Mullins prepared an outline of his lectures to the graduate theology class at Southern Seminary on four types of theology. In these lectures he dealt with Augustinian or Latin theology, Greek theology, sacramental theology, and the theology of experience. This outline was distributed in typewritten form but was never actually published.<sup>88</sup>

His presidential correspondence, on file at Southern Seminary, affords some insight into his thought.<sup>89</sup> In addition to

these materials, the author of this thesis has had access to a few papers and notes in the Library of Southern Seminary and a few others in the files of a Southern Seminary professor, R. Inman Johnson, which were evidently never published.<sup>90</sup> It seems likely that other unpublished writings

<sup>87</sup> See the Review and Expositor, I (July, 1904), 244-50; ibid. (October, 1904), 370-78; ibid., X (January, 1913), 112-14; ibid. (October, 1913), 584-87; ibid., XI (July, 1914), 427-29; ibid., XV (October, 1918), 481-83; ibid., XXII (April, 1925), 261-62; ibid., XXIII (January, 1926), 88-89; ibid. (April, 1926), 198-205; ibid. (July, 1926), 359-60; ibid., XXV (January, 1928), 81-83.

<sup>88</sup> Edgar Young Mullins, "Outline of Lectures to Graduate Theology Class" (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.). (Typewritten.)

<sup>89</sup> Edgar Young Mullins, Presidential Correspondence, 1899-1928 (in files in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

<sup>90</sup> The list of these several items may be found in the "Unpublished Materials" section of the "Writings of Edgar Young Mullins" in the bibliography of this dissertation.

of E. Y. Mullins must remain in existence in private collections.

Administrator

Replying to an interviewer from The Baptist World in 1918, E. Y. Mullins described his great ambition for the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary:

I want to put into it every conceivable feature that an ideal seminary should possess, carried to the highest point of efficiency and with a sufficient financial equipment and working force.<sup>91</sup>

Most observers would agree that great strides toward the realization of this ambition were made during Mullins' era of service as president and financial agent of the Seminary. Indeed, the principal terms of Mullins' statement furnish the outline by which the most significant contributions of his administration can be indicated.

"Features of an ideal seminary"

Mullins was always ready to emphasize the practical aspect of theological education. He said:

The seminary which does not relate teaching to life, theories to conditions, the book world to the world of men, women, and children, the thought realm to the realm of practical effort, misses its calling.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup>Edgar Young Mullins, quoted in "Our Great Seminary: An Interview with Dr. E. Y. Mullins," Baptist World, September 19, 1918, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup>"The Actual Relation of the Pastor to the Sunday School," Homiletic Review, LI (February, 1906), 122.



Motivated by such a philosophy, Mullins secured a number of important changes in the Seminary's curriculum. A series of annual lectures on Sunday School work led to the establishment of a chair of Sunday School pedagogy, the forerunner of modern-day courses in religious education.<sup>93</sup> This was a world-wide "first" for Southern Seminary. The Seminary was also among the first to establish a chair of comparative religion and missions early in the twentieth century, and it was among the first to introduce the study of sociology into the theological curriculum. Through the years, courses in biblical theology, church efficiency, and music were added to the curriculum. A series of lectures on evangelism was inaugurated in 1907. As a result of its offerings on the graduate level, the school began to attract large numbers of students from Northern seminaries who wished to pursue graduate work.

Early in Mullins' administration, a daily chapel

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<sup>93</sup>An editorial entitled "The Origin of the Sunday School Chair in the Seminary," in Baptist World, October 14, 1909, p. 17, declared that the credit for the original conception of the idea of the lecture course and later the chair belongs to President Mullins. It was submitted by him to the faculty of the Seminary. In a Letter of E. Y. Mullins to J. M. Frost, May 31, 1901 (filed in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), the first proposal for such a lecture course was apparently made. Mullins suggested that the Baptist Sunday School Board provide an annual appropriation of \$200 to \$250 for this purpose. He believed the course would benefit the seminary students, the Board, and Sunday School work in general.

period was initiated for the benefit of the Seminary's students and faculty. The student-sponsored Seminary Magazine was replaced by a faculty-edited theological quarterly, the Review and Expositor, in 1904.<sup>94</sup> Founders' Day, commemorating the memory of the great leaders, ideals, and traditions of the school, was begun in 1907. A new system of quarterly examinations was arranged, partially for the benefit of those pastors who might want to take short courses of study at the Seminary. The academic requirements for degrees were modified so as to make the degrees more meaningful.<sup>95</sup> W. O. Carver remembered this dynamic era quite well:

During the first decade of the 20th Century . . . catalogues and other sources reflect an era of expanding thoughts, plans, projects, revisions and advances,

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<sup>94</sup>In one of the last issues of the Seminary Magazine, President Mullins explained the reasons for the inauguration of the new journal. See "The Need for a High Class Theological Journal," Seminary Magazine, XVII (December, 1903), 61-63. In the first issue of the Review and Expositor he outlined the theological standpoint of the new journal, pledging that it would avoid the extremes of theological indifference on the one hand and of narrow traditionalism, sectarianism or sectionalism on the other. [Edgar Young Mullins], "Introductory," Review and Expositor, I (April, 1904), 2.

<sup>95</sup>Cf. the lists of these innovations in "Our Great Seminary: An Interview with Dr. E. Y. Mullins," Baptist World, September 19, 1918, p. 3; Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., p. 125; [W. O. Carver], "A Foreward," Review and Expositor, XXII (January, 1925), 4; Edgar Young Mullins, "The Seminary, Past Present and Future," Home and Foreign Fields, IX (May, 1925), 135; Edgar Young Mullins, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: What the Seminary Is, What It Has Done, and What It Needs (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.), pp. 9-11.

probably not matched by any similar period in our history until the decade following the election of Dr. Fuller to the presidency.<sup>96</sup>

"The highest point of efficiency"

Even during the early years of his administration, Mullins' ideal of efficiency in the Seminary's operations caused him to envision a new location and a new plant for the Seminary. In a tract evidently written in 1924, he reviewed the reasons why removal from the downtown locations was desirable. These reasons included the overcrowded conditions in the old plant, the age and disrepair of the old buildings, the excessive cost of attempting repairs, the distracting noise of down-town Louisville, and the lack of outdoor facilities for exercise for the students.<sup>97</sup> In the same tract he outlined the history of the building project. First conceived in the imagination of seminary personnel during the latter part of the first decade of the twentieth century, the dream began to take shape when a lot was purchased on Brownsboro Road on February 13, 1911. However, the coming of World War I and various other factors caused a re-examination of the building plans which resulted in the purchase of a second, more desirable site on Lexington Road on August 21, 1921. Confusion in connection with the

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<sup>96</sup>Carver, "Recollections . . . ," p. 114.

<sup>97</sup>The Seminary Building Emergency (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.), pp. 3-5.

Seventy-five Million Campaign, compounded by the incomplete success of the same, caused the financial campaign for the building project to be delayed and difficult. However, the formal ground-breaking for the new administration building took place on November 29, 1923, and then at last on March 26-27, 1926, the transfer by faculty and student body to the new location at "The Beeches" was finally made.<sup>98</sup>

Although the task of further developing the new facilities has continued long after Mullins' lifetime, still the marvelous feat of relocating and rebuilding the Seminary remains the crowning achievement of Mullins' administrative career.

"Sufficient financial equipment"

Even before actually coming to Louisville to assume the presidential duties, Mullins had said, "One of the very urgent needs of the Seminary at this time is financial enlargement."<sup>99</sup> He saw that an increase in the permanent endowment was imperatively needed.<sup>100</sup> He immediately applied himself to the task of meeting this need, and he found the task continuing throughout his career.

Harold W. Tribble has given a good brief survey of

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2, 6-9; Cf. Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., pp. 176-90.

<sup>99</sup>"A Statement as to the Theological Seminary in Louisville," Baptist Argus, August 17, 1899, p. 4.

<sup>100</sup>"The Seminary and the Outlook for the New Century," Seminary Magazine, XIV (February, 1901), 205.

Mullins' financial campaigns for the Seminary. He made his first major appeal for funds at the Southern Baptist Convention in 1903. As a result of it, the Twentieth Century Endowment Fund drive was launched which ultimately added about \$200,000 to the Seminary's resources. Then, in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the institution, he promoted a Jubilee Campaign which secured the sum of \$600,000 in 1909 and the years following. Although Mullins was constantly at work soliciting gifts for the school, there were no more major projects until the Seventy-five Million Campaign. This latter campaign actually benefited the school comparatively little, however, and the drive to finance the purchase and development of the Seminary's new campus had to be made separately. Mullins' skill, strength, and prestige kept the drive moving.<sup>101</sup>

As Harold Tribble points out, one of Mullins' wisest and most significant decisions during those years was to sell part of the downtown property and retain part for income-bearing purposes. The part sold helped provide for the present need of the Seminary and the part retained helped

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<sup>101</sup>Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins," Review and Expositor, XLIX (April, 1952), 129-31. Since two articles by Harold W. Tribble with identical titles have now been cited, they will be distinguished as (1929) or (1952). Cf. Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins . . ., pp. 126-27, 141-43, 163; John R. Sampey, "A Brief History of the Seminary," Review and Expositor, VII (January, 1910), 20-21.

secure the Seminary's future.<sup>102</sup>

The following summary helps to indicate the importance of Mullins' contribution as administrator of the financial affairs of the Seminary.

When he came to the presidency the endowment of the school was approximately \$471,000. At his death it was \$1,814,000. The total assets increased from \$796,000 to \$4,622,000. Or to put it differently, from 1899 to 1928 the endowment of the Seminary increased about 300 per cent. . . . From 1899 to 1928 the total assets increased about 500 per cent. . . .<sup>103</sup>

"A sufficient working force"

During the 1923-24 session, the Seminary's enrollment reached the record number of 442 persons, the highest attained during the presidency of E. Y. Mullins.<sup>104</sup>

A. T. Robertson expressed the enthusiasm of the personnel of the growing institution in these glowing words:

The student body went over one hundred under Boyce, over two hundred under Broadus, over three hundred under Whitsitt, and is already over four hundred under Mullins. We shall soon have five hundred young ministers out on Lexington Road. That will be the dream and prophecy of Boyce come true at last.<sup>105</sup>

To care for this increased enrollment and to maintain the increased curriculum offerings required an enlargement of

<sup>102</sup>Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins" (1952), p. 131.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>John R. Sampey, Memoirs (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1947), p. 180.

<sup>105</sup>A. T. Robertson, "A Sketch of the Life of President Mullins, Review and Expositor, XXII (January, 1925), 9.

the instructional staff. W. O. Carver pointed out in 1925 that during Mullins' administration the number of full professors in active service had increased from seven to ten. In addition a system of fellowships had been introduced (in 1915) by which the teaching force was increased to approximately sixteen to eighteen members.<sup>106</sup>

Harold Tribble seeks to indicate the quality and productivity of Mullins' faculty by noting that more faculty-authored books were produced during his administration than during any other period of the Seminary's history.

From 1859 to 1898 the faculty of the Seminary wrote 22 books; from 1899 to 1928 they wrote 89 books; from 1929 to 1951 they produced 57 books.<sup>107</sup>

A. T. Robertson felt that Mullins stimulated his faculty to do creative writing by setting the example himself.<sup>108</sup> He encouraged them in more practical ways also. When it appeared that Robertson's big Grammar, on which he had spent twenty-six years of his life, might not be successfully published because of insufficient funds, Mullins led the seminary trustees to establish a Faculty Publishing Fund, the purpose of which was to aid in the cost of faculty

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<sup>106</sup>[W. O. Carver], "A Foreword," Review and Expositor, XXII (January, 1925), 3-4.

<sup>107</sup>Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins" (1952), pp. 131-32.

<sup>108</sup>A. T. Robertson in the "Funeral Service for Dr. E. Y. Mullins . . . ," p. 46.

publications on condition that the Fund be repaid out of the royalties earned by the books.<sup>109</sup>

There are many evidences that Mullins and his faculty worked well together,<sup>110</sup> although various circumstances combined to make the roles of seminary president and seminary professor more separate and distinct during his administration than they had ever been before at Southern Seminary. However, most of the persons involved seem to have accepted this new situation as a product of the changing times.<sup>111</sup>

The combined efforts of them all were necessary to achieve the progress that was evidenced. Doubtless, W. W. Barnes recognized the work of president and faculty alike

<sup>109</sup>William A. Mueller, A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 204; Carver "Recollections . . . ," pp. 43-44.

<sup>110</sup>F. M. Powell, a member of Mullins' faculty, said that Mullins generally planned so wisely that his colleagues were happy with his decisions. F. M. Powell, "The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Completes Seventy-Five Years of Struggle and Achievement," Review and Expositor, XXXI (July, 1934), 343.

<sup>111</sup>W. O. Carver traced the process of development at Southern Seminary from the faculty method of administration to the gradual concentration of great power in the hands of the President. He noted various factors which accelerated this process during Mullins' administration: the rapidly increasing size of the school, the abnormalities produced by World War I, and the building of the Seminary's new campus. He noted that administration and instruction increasingly became two departments of Seminary life and work, but he seemed to regard this as inevitable even if somewhat regrettable. See Carver, "Recollections . . . ," pp. 7-11.



when he said:

Under his leadership, the Seminary attained a standing, materially, spiritually, doctrinally, and intellectually which commanded the respect and devotion not only of Southern Baptists but of Christian leaders around the world.<sup>112</sup>

### Christian Statesman

E. Y. Mullins himself once defined statesmanship in the following way:

Statesmanship means the large, broad view of a situation and the adaptation of means to the ends and objects called for by the situation. Statesmanship requires profound and serious consideration of a problem which has many sides and many values.<sup>113</sup>

In his dealings with various situations and problems which confronted the Christian world and particularly the Baptist denomination during his years of leadership, Edgar Mullins proved himself to be a Christian statesman of the highest order. Mullins' statesmanship was demonstrated at all levels of Baptist life and activity, but most especially in the context of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance.

### In the Southern Baptist Convention

The Annals of the Southern Baptist Convention reveal

<sup>112</sup>William Wright Barnes, The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), p. 139.

<sup>113</sup>"Denominational Statesmanship Demands an Adequate State Mission Program," Kentucky Mission Monthly, XV (October, 1915), 5.

that Mullins was actively engaged in most of the problems and projects which exercised that body during the first three decades of the twentieth century. He played a key role in the conception, foundation, location, and guidance of the Woman's Missionary Union Training School for Christian Workers which began its operations in Louisville in 1907.<sup>114</sup> He was chairman of a committee on "Relations with the Northern Baptist Convention" which in cooperation with a Northern Baptist committee in meetings at Old Point Comfort, Virginia, in 1911, and at Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1912, drew up a joint statement of principles of comity between the two bodies which has never been officially superseded.<sup>115</sup> He was for many years the chairman of a committee whose work finally resulted in the establishment of the American Baptist

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<sup>114</sup>W. O. Carver, in whose honor the school was later renamed, gave Mullins a large share of the credit for its origin and development. See W. O. Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins," Baptist Training Union Magazine, XX (September, 1945), 391; Carver, "Recollections . . .," p. 119. Cf. Edgar Young Mullins, "Training School for Women: Why Louisville Is the Place," Baptist Argus, April 7, 1904, p. 1; also Letters of Edgar Young Mullins to James Marion Frost, May 21, 1904, and April 30, 1904, in Edgar Young Mullins, Presidential Correspondence (in files in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

<sup>115</sup>See Edgar Young Mullins, et al., "Report on Relations with the Northern Baptist Convention," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1912, pp. 46-54. Robert A. Baker, Relations Between Northern and Southern Baptists [Fort Worth: Seminary Hill Press, 1948], pp. 200-202, says there has been no further advance in the development of principles of comity since the two conventions approved the report of these committees in 1912.

Theological Seminary for Negroes in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1924.<sup>116</sup> He was the principal author of two important doctrinal statements issued by the Southern Baptist Convention, the "Fraternal Address" of 1919<sup>117</sup> and the oft-published "Baptist Faith and Message" which was first adopted in 1925.<sup>118</sup> In 1920, Mullins, along with J. B. Gambrell, was appointed by the Convention as a "fraternal messenger" to visit the Baptists of the world in the name of Southern Baptists, conveying to them the concern and good wishes of that body.<sup>119</sup> Some attention has already been given to Mullins' great interest

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<sup>116</sup>The first step in this direction was the adoption of a resolution offered by Mullins at the 1913 Convention which led to the appointment of a committee of which he was chairman. See the Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1913, p. 21. For a survey of the various steps by which this project was finally brought to fulfillment, see L. S. Sedberry, "American Baptist Theological Seminary," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, I (1958), 42-44.

<sup>117</sup>L. R. Scarborough, J. B. Gambrell, Z. T. Cody, and William Ellyson were also on the committee which drew up this statement. See Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1919, p. 84. However, it was common knowledge that the actual work of composition was done by E. Y. Mullins, the chairman. See Western Recorder, February 26, 1920, p. 9. For the text of the address, see Edgar Young Mullins, et al., Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists [Richmond, Va.: Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919].

<sup>118</sup>The statement of 1925 was produced by a committee consisting of E. Y. Mullins, chairman; S. M. Brown; W. J. McGlothlin; E. C. Dargan; L. R. Scarborough; and C. P. Stealey. However, Mullins' correspondence with these men indicates that it was he who served as draftsman of the report. See his Letters to S. M. Brown, November 19, 1924; December 3, 1924; to L. R. Scarborough, December 3, 1924; March 21, 1925; April 24, 1925; to C. P. Stealey, February 21, 1925; March 24, 1925; March 25, 1925.

<sup>119</sup>For an account of their trip, see Isla May Mullins, op. cit., pp. 164-72.

in the attainment of greater denominational efficiency among Southern Baptists.<sup>120</sup>

However, it was in the midst of two great Southern Baptist crises that E. Y. Mullins' talents for statesmanship received their sternest tests. Some indication has already been made of the way in which Mullins' conduct and prestige helped hasten the recovery from the disruption caused by the Whitsitt controversy and helped prevent the evolution controversy of the 1920's from possibly splitting the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>121</sup>

#### In the Baptist World Alliance

E. Y. Mullins never claimed any credit as an originator of the Baptist World Alliance, although he was close to the men in this country to whom such credit is usually attributed.<sup>122</sup> However, he was active in the Alliance from

<sup>120</sup>Supra, pp. 62f., n. 32.

<sup>121</sup>Supra, pp. 58-59, 63-69. Z. T. Cody declared on the occasion of E. Y. Mullins' funeral that Mullins' service in these two crises was invaluable. See "Funeral Service for Dr. E. Y. Mullins . . .," p. 7. R. Inman Johnson has recently said that it was largely because of Mullins' influence that the Convention remained intact despite the evolution controversy. See Inman Johnson, Of Parsons and Profs (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 33.

<sup>122</sup>The question of BWA origins has been much discussed and disputed. Cf., e.g., J. H. Rushbrooke, "The Baptist World Alliance in Retrospect and Prospect," Review and Expositor, XXV (July, 1928), 316-17; A. T. Robertson, "The Real Origin of the Baptist World Alliance," Review and Expositor, XXV (July, 1928), 469-72; "Re Origin Baptist World Alliance," Review and Expositor, XXVI (January, 1929),

the start and made significant contributions to the program of each of the first four Baptist World Congresses. F. Townley Lord calls Mullins' address on "The Theological Trend" the "one address [which] deserves to be singled out" from the group presented at the First Congress in London in 1905.<sup>123</sup> In it Mullins first proclaimed his "axioms of religion" to a world-wide Baptist audience. They soon became normative for Baptists the world over. Lord goes on to say that Mullins' sermon on "The Lordship of Jesus," delivered at the Second Congress in Philadelphia in 1911, actually deepened the impression he had already made.<sup>124</sup> The Third Congress, meeting in Stockholm in 1923, issued as its official

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52-54. Probably the statement of J. H. Rushbrooke remains true: "no individual may claim to be its founder." Rushbrooke, op. cit., p. 316. Some trace the idea of a Baptist world gathering back as far as a statement made by John Rippon in 1790. See F. Townley Lord, Baptist World Fellowship (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), pp. 1-2. However, the modern interest in the idea which bore practical fruit seems to have its roots in an unsigned editorial published in the Baptist Argus early in 1904 and followed up with vigorous promotion by Editor J. N. Prestridge. See "Why Not a World's Baptist Conference," Baptist Argus, January 14, 1904, p. 8. Later, A. T. Robertson unabashedly identified himself as author of the idea and of the key editorial. Robertson said he showed the editorial to both Mullins and Prestridge prior to its publication and they both approved it heartily. See Robertson, "The Real Origin . . .," pp. 470-71. Mullins confirmed Robertson's story in an article entitled "The Baptist World Alliance," Review of the Churches, V (July, 1928), 356-62.

<sup>123</sup>Lord, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

proclamation a statement of Baptist principles and purposes which had been prepared by a committee headed by E. Y. Mullins.<sup>125</sup> The Fourth Baptist World Congress, which met at Toronto in 1928, instead of drawing up a series of resolutions, decided to publish three of the addresses delivered at the Congress as representing its message to the world. The title address was "Baptist Life in the World's Life," the presidential address prepared by E. Y. Mullins.<sup>126</sup>

Harold W. Tribble says that Mullins:

. . . had written in whole or in part every doctrinal statement published in the minutes of the Baptist World Alliance up to the time of his election to the presidency in 1923.<sup>127</sup>

In addition, he was responsible for numerous important interpretative statements about the distinctive contributions of the people called Baptists and the purposes and work of the Baptist World Alliance.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup>Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Third Congress (Stockholm, 1923), p. 195; for text of the statement, see "A Message of the Baptist World Alliance to the Baptist Brotherhood, to Other Christian Brethren, and to the World," ibid., pp. 223-28. Z. T. Cody describes the way the "Message" was prepared, leaving no doubt that it was largely the product of the mind and pen of E. Y. Mullins. See Z. T. Cody, "The Stockholm Alliance Congress," Review and Expositor, XXI (January, 1924), 36-37.

<sup>126</sup>Edgar Young Mullins, J. H. Rushbrooke and Charles Brown, Baptist Life in the World's Life (London: Baptist World Alliance, n.d.), p. 4.

<sup>127</sup>Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins" (1952), p. 137.

<sup>128</sup>See, e.g., Edgar Young Mullins and J. H. Rushbrooke, The Baptist World Alliance: Its Significance and Its Service (London: Kingsgate Press, 1928).

After Mullins became president of the Alliance in 1923, his official position enabled him to render a still more dramatic service to the Baptists of the world. Possibly the most significant activity of Mullins as BWA president was his tour of Europe in 1926. J. H. Rushbrooke later declared that, so far as European Baptists were concerned, nothing since the work of Oncken could compare with the range and depth of the regional conferences which highlighted the presidential tour.<sup>129</sup> It was also widely acknowledged that Mullins led the subsequent campaign which caused the Roumanian government to liberalize its policy toward religious minority groups.<sup>130</sup> J. H. Rushbrooke referred to these contributions and others when he hailed E. Y. Mullins as "the Baptist par excellence."<sup>131</sup>

#### World Citizen

E. Y. Mullins often spoke of the civic responsibility of the Christian minister.<sup>132</sup> He proved himself to be a world

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<sup>129</sup>Rushbrooke, "The Baptist World Alliance . . . ," p. 319.

<sup>130</sup>Charles F. Leek, "Thanks Extended Dr. Mullins. . . ." The Roumanian delegation credited Mullins with originating and promoting the petition sent to the League of Nations and with having started the newspaper publicity which brought public opinion to bear on the Roumanian government. Cf. Edgar Young Mullins, "The Power of Baptist Public Opinion," Western Recorder, April 5, 1928, pp. 4-5.

<sup>131</sup>Rushbrooke, "The Baptist World Alliance . . . ," p. 320.

<sup>132</sup>See, e.g., "Training the Ministry for Civic Leadership," Religious Education, IX (December, 1914), 558-60.

citizen whose interests led to activity at every level of civic life.

In the Louisville community where the greater part of his mature years were spent, he served for over twenty years as a trustee on the board of the Louisville Free Public Library, and for several years he was president of the advisory board for Simmons University, the local Negro institution for higher education. He spoke out clearly on the moral issues of the day<sup>133</sup> and his views were heard with considerable respect by his fellow citizens.<sup>134</sup>

Mullins sometimes felt compelled to play an active part in Kentucky state politics. When bills were introduced in the legislature in 1922 which would have outlawed the teaching of evolution in the public schools of the state, Mullins helped draft an alternative measure which would prohibit not the teaching of evolution per se but rather the undermining of the religious faith of pupils by their

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<sup>133</sup>See, e.g., "Race Track Gambling in Kentucky," Western Recorder, January 26, 1922, p. 2. Mullins here expressed his support for a bill then pending in the Kentucky legislature which would abolish pari-mutuel betting at race tracks. He urged Kentucky Baptists to use their opinions to influence legislators.

<sup>134</sup>William T. McElroy, "Great Preachers of Today: Dr. E. Y. Mullins," Onward, September 27, 1923, p. 2, said: "Never a great moral question comes up before the city, but the newspapers want to know what Dr. Mullins thinks--and they want to know because their readers want to know."



teachers in the public schools. However, neither of these proposals was enacted into law.<sup>135</sup>

Mullins' interest in civic concerns extended to the national level also. Although definitely not a chauvinist, E. Y. Mullins had a profound interest in the European war from its beginning, and he vigorously supported the position of President Wilson once the American decision to enter the war had been made.<sup>136</sup> Reference has already been made to his personal activity in the war effort, his service as Religious Director at Camp Zachary Taylor.<sup>137</sup>

After the war, Mullins played a lively role in the campaign to win and maintain national prohibition of alcoholic beverages.<sup>138</sup> During the national presidential campaign of 1928, he was one of the most outspoken of Southern Democrats in support of Herbert Hoover, consistently maintaining all

<sup>135</sup>Furniss, op. cit., pp. 80-83, gives a digest of the attack on the teaching of evolution in Kentucky schools. Cf. the reports in the Western Recorder, February 16, 1922, p. 1; ibid., February 23, 1922, pp. 8-9.

<sup>136</sup>Cf. the report of Mullins' views by E. I. Olive, "Seminary Notes," Baptist World, April 5, 1917, p. 13, with the statement of Mullins' position by George W. Truett, "A Quarter of a Century of World History," Review and Expositor, XXII (January, 1925), 54.

<sup>137</sup>Supra, p. 61.

<sup>138</sup>See, e.g., Edgar Young Mullins, "Prohibition Today," Western Recorder, June 3, 1926, pp. 6-7; Edgar Young Mullins, "The Anti-Saloon League and Its National Convention," ibid., January 5, 1928, pp. 5, 9. (Mullins had been a featured speaker at this convention.)

along that he did not oppose Al Smith because of his Roman Catholicism but rather because he was a "wet."<sup>139</sup> One of his last deliberate actions was to send a congratulatory telegram to the victorious Hoover.<sup>140</sup>

Doubtless, E. Y. Mullins' greatest civic contribution on the international level was the part he played in securing religious toleration for persecuted minority groups in Roumania.<sup>141</sup>

#### Servant of God

This final designation may serve as a summary of all the preceding ones because, in the mind of E. Y. Mullins, all his work was performed and all his contribution was made

<sup>139</sup>See Edgar Young Mullins, "President Mullins Predicts Shock for Politicians Behind Smith," Western Recorder, December 15, 1927, p. 5; Edgar Young Mullins, "President Mullins on the Sad Plight of the Democrats," ibid., July 12, 1928, p. 8; Edgar Young Mullins, "Why Not an Honest Campaign?" ibid., October 18, 1928, p. 10. Mullins went to considerable length to refute the charges of "religious prejudice" which were leveled against him and others who opposed Smith. See "Seminary Head Hits Campaign of Democrats," Courier-Journal, October 21, 1928, pp. 1, 7. He sums up his own position thus: "We oppose Al Smith because he is 'Wet,' because he is nullificationist, and because he is a Tamanyite." Edgar Young Mullins, "The Candidacy of Governor Al Smith" (MS in the files of Inman Johnson, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

<sup>140</sup>Telegram sent to President-elect Herbert Hoover by Edgar Young Mullins, November 12, 1928 (copy in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

<sup>141</sup>Supra, p. 120.

as a servant of God. On his desk was a simple framed card bearing just three words: "Thy Kingdom Come." In their published memorial to him, the members of his faculty affirmed that this was the supreme ambition of his life--"to have a worthy part in bringing in the Kingdom of God."<sup>142</sup>

Mullins recognized that the effective servant of God must be practical as well as idealistic. Harold W. Tribble borrowed one of Mullins' own phrases when he described him as a "practical idealist."<sup>143</sup> Mullins himself once said to a Baptist World Congress:

There are two things that are necessary to a great life in the individual or in the denomination, a vision and a task. A task without a vision makes a drudge; a vision without a task makes a visionary; a vision coupled with a task makes a hero and an apostle . . .<sup>144</sup>

Those who knew E. Y. Mullins best have declared him to be a man of vision who was dedicated to the tasks which were presented to him.

Probably no one fully realized the possibilities

<sup>142</sup> Faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Edgar Young Mullins: A Study in Christian Character (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.), p. 16.

<sup>143</sup> Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins" (1929), p. 413; cf. Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins--Practical Idealist," Baptist Training Union Magazine, IV (September, 1938), 266-67.

<sup>144</sup> [The Task of the Baptist Denomination], Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Second Congress (Philadelphia, 1911), p. 109.

inherent in the man during his earlier years. But many came to recognize his ability to meet any demands which were thrust upon him. A. T. Robertson testified that Mullins' greatest characteristic was a capacity to keep on growing to meet the challenges of ever-larger opportunities which opened before him.<sup>145</sup>

W. O. Carver believed that Mullins was not possessed by ambition but that he possessed an ambition to serve the cause of Christ. He said that although Mullins' main concern was to know and to do the will of God in Jesus Christ, he dared to believe that God's will included a worthy place for him in the work of Christ. Thus he was able to lead by following Christ.<sup>146</sup>

Harold W. Tribble tells of the way E. Y. Mullins answered his question concerning the secret of his success while they were together on the golf course one day: Mullins first got his direction very carefully, made a hard straight drive with his golf club and then replied:

If I have gained any success in my work it has been because of my determination to stand on the right side of every question regardless of the cost. And when I have asked God for something I have prayed that he would give it to me if it was right and withhold it from me if it was wrong. And do you

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<sup>145</sup>"Funeral Address for Dr. E. Y. Mullins . . . ," p. 4.

<sup>146</sup>Carver, "Edgar Young Mullins . . . ," pp. 139-41.

know . . . God has always given me what I asked for,  
or he has given me something better.<sup>147</sup>

Tribble goes on to apply the analogy of the golf  
drive to Mullins' performance in the "game of life":  
E. Y. Mullins first sought divine direction and then drove  
straight ahead.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup>Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins" (1929), pp. 416-17.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., p. 417.

CHAPTER IV

SOME FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED MULLINS' THEOLOGY

## CHAPTER IV

### SOME FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED MULLINS' THEOLOGY

After the preceding survey of the life, work, and contribution of E. Y. Mullins against the background of the world in which he lived, it is now appropriate to investigate more carefully the specific factors in Mullins' environment which influenced him most decisively.

Various persons and movements have been suggested as having greatly influenced the formation of Mullins' theology. W. O. Carver, Mullins' teaching colleague at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said that Mullins was "strongly influenced by Schleiermacher and in his own generation by Frank Hugh Foster."<sup>1</sup> A younger colleague, Gaines S. Dobbins, has declared that Mullins' approach to theology owed much to William James.<sup>2</sup> Mullins' student and teaching successor, Harold W. Tribble, contended that Mullins' theology, as exemplified by his great systematic textbook, The Christian

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<sup>1</sup>W. O. Carver, "Recollections and Information from Other Sources Concerning the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary" (typewritten copy of unpublished notes in the files of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>Gaines S. Dobbins, "Men Who Have Made Seminary History," Quarterly Review, XVIII (July, August, September, 1958), 31f.

Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression, conveyed the "flavor" of William James, of Schleiermacher's later, maturer thought, of Calvin, and of Augustine.<sup>3</sup> In a doctoral thesis recently written at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, R. H. Dilday listed Schleiermacher, William James, and Lewis French Stearns as the men whose influence looms largest in the apologetic system of E. Y. Mullins.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, there has been some variety of opinion on this matter. Moreover, such opinions have often been simply stated without further elaboration and without the support of specific evidence. It is also quite possible that such precise identifications represent an unwarranted oversimplification of the facts.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, will be to suggest several factors which, in the judgment of this author, seem to have exerted some influence on the formation of the theology of E. Y. Mullins. To be sure, no absolute accuracy or finality can be claimed at this point, mainly because Mullins rarely attributed his ideas directly to the

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<sup>3</sup>Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins," Review and Expositor, XLIX (April, 1952), 134.

<sup>4</sup>Russell Hooper Dilday, Jr., "The Apologetic Method of E. Y. Mullins" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1960), p. 48.



influence of others.<sup>5</sup> However, all of the following were almost certainly quite significant in their contribution to his theological development: his conservative evangelical-Baptist heritage, his studies in philosophy and psychology of religion, his interest in experiential theology, and his nineteenth-century American environment.

#### His Conservative Evangelical-Baptist Heritage

Edgar Young Mullins often expressed his recognition of the fact that the theological position of Baptists in general and that of himself in particular were within the broad stream of evangelical Christianity.<sup>6</sup> Although firmly committed to the Baptist distinctives, Mullins often spoke from the broader standpoint of a spokesman for general evangelical Christianity, as he did in some of his most notable books including Christianity at the Cross Roads.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Like most men of his time, Mullins was much less careful to document his writings than is customary today.

<sup>6</sup>See, e.g., "Baptist Theology in the New World Order," Review and Expositor, XVII (October, 1920), 402. In this reference Mullins said that "the great central truths and doctrines of the Christian religion" were common to all evangelical Christians. Although he never defined precisely what he meant by "evangelical Christianity," evidently E. Y. Mullins believed that it represented the central stream of Protestant orthodoxy. See Christianity at the Cross Roads (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), pp. 263-76. The term will be employed with such a connotation throughout this dissertation.

<sup>7</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. v, 48-49.

It was almost inevitable that E. Y. Mullins would be influenced toward a conservative type of evangelical Christian theology which emphasized also the distinctive Baptist principles. The entire cultural, intellectual, and religious milieu into which he was born, in which he was nurtured and educated and trained, and in which he lived and rendered his vocational service predisposed him in this direction. Special mention should be made at this point of several significant aspects of E. Y. Mullins' heritage.

#### His father

Reference has already been made to the importance of his father's influence upon the life and thought of E. Y. Mullins.<sup>8</sup> In her biography of her husband, Mrs. Isla May Mullins took note of the close relationship which existed between the two.<sup>9</sup> On the dedication page of his first significant book, E. Y. Mullins honored his father as the person who first stirred him to thought about great themes.<sup>10</sup>

It is thus certain that Reverend S. G. Mullins exercised considerable influence in molding the mind of his son. It is almost equally certain that this influence was

<sup>8</sup>Supra, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins: An Intimate Biography (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1929), pp. 10, 12, 41.

<sup>10</sup>Why Is Christianity True? (Chicago: Christian Culture Press, 1905), p. v.

toward a theological position which was essentially conservative and definitely Baptist. Mrs. Mullins spoke of the elder Mullins' dogmatic convictions.<sup>11</sup> While no comprehensive statement of his theological views is available, one brief article which he wrote on "The Call to the Ministry,"<sup>12</sup> combined with a description of his character written by his son shortly after the father's death,<sup>13</sup> conveys an impression of a man whose theology was quite acceptable to the conservative Baptist churches which he served in the South and Southwest during the last half of the nineteenth century. It is certain that S. G. Mullins was a staunch Baptist believer. At the same time, his intellectual sympathies were very broad and he encouraged learning in all fields. Much of his outlook is reflected in that of his son.

#### His conversion experience

Previous reference has also been made to E. Y. Mullins' conversion experience, which came about as he listened to the preaching of Major W. E. Penn in a revival meeting in the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, in 1880.<sup>14</sup> From

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<sup>11</sup>Isla May Mullins, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>12</sup>S. G. Mullins, "The Call to the Ministry," Review and Expositor, IV (October, 1907), 548-54.

<sup>13</sup>"Rev. S. G. Mullins: The Home-Going of a Christian Optimist," Baptist World, September 19, 1912, pp. 8-9.

<sup>14</sup>Supra, pp. 47f., n. 8. Penn was noted as one who preached "the distinctive Baptist doctrines, using reason and persuasion without denunciation." See A. B. Culbertson, "William Evander Penn," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, II (1958), 1084.

Mullins' own description of the experience and its meaning to him, it is evident that it was a conversion to a thoroughly evangelical understanding of Christ and the Christian faith.<sup>15</sup> The very fact that it happened, together with the context in which it happened, indicates that E. Y. Mullins began his Christian life in an atmosphere which naturally tended toward a conservative theological expression of spiritual reality. In later years, Mullins never repudiated his conversion experience; instead, he indicated often its decisive significance for his spiritual life and thought.

#### His theological education

The major part of Mullins' theological education was received at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, in the years 1881-1885. His teachers were James P. Boyce, John A. Broadus, Basil Manly, Jr., and William H. Whitsitt.

In his history of Southern Seminary, William A. Mueller gives a discerning interpretation of its theological posture which will serve to describe the environment in which E. Y. Mullins was trained.

While it espoused from its inception what may be called the position of "progressive conservatism," its teachers were working within the context of an abstract of principles to which they subscribed upon induction into

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<sup>15</sup>Mullins' fullest discussion of his conversion experience is found in "Why I Am a Baptist," Forum, LXXV (May, 1926), 725-26.

office. This was . . . a confessional statement of the basic convictions of the Southern Baptist denomination which they intended to serve. Southern, like Yale, was conservative before it was born. That fact, however, while suggestive of the determination to safeguard the rich tradition of the Christian faith, did not preclude the cultivation of an open mind toward all truth and its bearing on the faith.<sup>16</sup>

The accuracy of the designation, "progressive conservatism," when applied to Mullins' own teachers can be confirmed by an examination of some of their most significant writings.<sup>17</sup>

Although holding to a conservative tradition, these men were not mere traditionalists. Mueller describes them as "men of depth, breadth, and large horizons in thinking and living."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>William A. Mueller, A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), pp. 52f. A copy of the Abstract of Principles to which Mueller refers can be found on pp. 238-41 of his book. The document has its roots in the Philadelphia Confession of 1742 and, thus, in the Second London Confession of 1677. Its theological position can be described as a moderate Calvinism.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. James P. Boyce, Abstract of Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887); John A. Broadus, Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew ("An American Commentary on the New Testament Series," ed. Alvah Hovey [Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886]); John A. Broadus, Jesus of Nazareth (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1890); Basil Manly, Jr., The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1888); William H. Whitsitt, A Question in Baptist History (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1896). To be sure, the viewpoints of these several men were not necessarily identical. For example, Boyce's Abstract and Manly's The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration probably show less of the "progressive" aspect than do the other works.

<sup>18</sup>Mueller, op. cit., p. 111.

These men profoundly impressed E. Y. Mullins. To be sure, in his own theological works he rarely quoted his teachers directly or appealed to their position to support his own.<sup>19</sup> It is also true that Mullins' approach to systematic theology, as well as some of his doctrinal conclusions, differed significantly from the approach and the conclusions of James P. Boyce, who taught systematic theology to him during his seminary days.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Mullins revered his teachers and conceived of his work as a continuation of their own. They helped to make of him a "conservative progressive," one able to remain loyal to old truth and yet keep abreast of advancing scholarship at the same time.<sup>21</sup>

#### His sphere of service

E. Y. Mullins spent his life in the service of the world-wide Baptist fellowship. The men with whom he was most closely and continuously associated were Baptist preachers, teachers, and denominational leaders. He himself served as a pastor of Baptist churches, as president

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<sup>19</sup>Notable exceptions to this statement include Mullins' defense of his acceptance of the doctrine of the universal spiritual church and his explanation of his position on the question of "alien" immersion. See infra, pp. 347-48, n. 37; p. 356, n. 48.

<sup>20</sup>For an analysis of these differences, see infra, Chap. VI, passim.

<sup>21</sup>This description was applied to Mullins by C. W. Cline, "Some Baptist Systematic Theologians," Review and Expositor, XX (July, 1923), 315.

of a Baptist seminary, as president of Baptist conventions, and as author of a vast literature for a Baptist constituency. He became a leading spokesman for the Baptists of the world, and, to some extent, for other evangelicals as well.

If a leader is one who remains in contact with the people he leads, it is reasonable to assume that the theology of a religious leader must reflect much of the theological attitude of his following. Since the conservative theological character of Baptists has long been a generally accepted fact,<sup>22</sup> the very fact of Mullins' role as a Baptist leader and spokesman inclined him toward conservative theological expressions. At the same time, the traditional Baptist regard for freedom allowed for honesty in the pursuance of truth and for variety in the statement of it. It is quite probable, as the Christian Century suggested at the time of Mullins' death, that most of the Baptist constituency was more conservative than was Mullins himself;<sup>23</sup> however, his fellow Baptists had no difficulty in recognizing him as one

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<sup>22</sup>For an analysis of the state of theological thought among Baptists early in this century, see Albert H. Newman, "Recent Changes in the Theology of Baptists," American Journal of Theology, X (October, 1906), 587-609. A recent article which defines the conservative position and applies the criteria to Southern Baptists in particular is Herschel H. Hobbs, "What Is in a Name?" Western Recorder, August 16, 1962, pp. 3, 15.

<sup>23</sup>"The Passing of a Scholarly and Irenic Personality," Christian Century, December 6, 1928, p. 1480.

of them. In the course of his life and labor he influenced them, and they also influenced him.

### Conclusion

The combined weight of all the factors just indicated naturally inclined E. Y. Mullins toward a theological position which was basically conservative, evangelical and Baptist. However, he also acquired from his heritage an attitude of open-mindedness and he readily appropriated ideas and insights from many sources. The result has been well described by W. J. McGlothlin:

He was conservative as to position and progressive as to method. He was thoroughly evangelical, holding the generally recognized views of the great body of Protestant scholars, but reaching them in an independent way.<sup>24</sup>

The "independent way" of E. Y. Mullins will be indicated by a study of some of the intellectual movements of his time which left their mark on him.

### His Studies in Philosophy and Psychology of Religion

Those who knew E. Y. Mullins personally have testified to his proficiency in the area of philosophical studies.<sup>25</sup> In his writings, Mullins demonstrated his recognition of the fact that philosophic speculation is one of man's perennial

<sup>24</sup>W. J. McGlothlin, "Mullins, Edgar Young," Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Dumas Malone, XIII (1934), 322f.

<sup>25</sup>E.g., Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins," Review and Expositor, XXVI (October, 1929), 413.



pursuits and is necessarily a chief concern of anyone who would develop and articulate an acceptable theology. Mullins' own treatment of philosophical problems indicates that he was alert to all the leading trends among the philosophical community of his day. However, he found in two current philosophical movements, personalism and pragmatism, many insights into the nature of reality and of human knowledge which he could satisfactorily appropriate and which he could incorporate into his presentation and defense of the Christian religion.

The philosophy of personalism

Mullins' attraction to personalism.--It is quite obvious that Mullins was greatly attracted to the philosophy of personalism as expounded in the writings of Borden Parker Bowne. In 1908, he wrote an appreciative review of Bowne's book entitled Personalism which had just been published that year.<sup>26</sup> A few years later, in his book Freedom and Authority in Religion, Mullins identified personalism as one of the leading modern philosophies and outlined the personalistic viewpoint.<sup>27</sup> Mullins' Christianity at the Cross Roads included several references to Bowne and personalism.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>"Pragmatism, Humanism and Personalism--The New Philosophic Movement," Review and Expositor, V (October, 1908), 509-12.

<sup>27</sup>Freedom and Authority in Religion (Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland Press, 1913), pp. 143-45.

<sup>28</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 51, 119, 130, 137, 138, 157, 159, 168.

In The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression, Mullins revealed a decided preference for personalism over other possible world-views.<sup>29</sup> Through the years, Mullins' articles and monographs often presented personalism in a favorable light. What is probably Mullins' strongest endorsement of personalism appeared in an article published in the Biblical Review during the last year of his life.<sup>30</sup> There he praised personalism as holding the clue to the direction for worthy philosophical thinking to pursue. He said:

Lotze and his successors, including the late Professor Bowne and others, have formulated a philosophy of personality which offers itself as the true goal of thought because most adequately interpretative of the meaning of the universe.<sup>31</sup>

After pointing out the superiority of the principle of personalism, Mullins concluded:

The sanest and healthiest and most satisfying of all the world-views seems to be, that behind the things we see there is a Person, who cares for man, and who has a purpose for him, and a worthy destiny.<sup>32</sup>

The personalism of Borden Parker Bowne.--The personalistic approach to reality did not begin with the work of Borden P. Bowne. E. Y. Mullins was aware of this. Several

<sup>29</sup>The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917), pp. 108-24.

<sup>30</sup>"Humanizing Our Philosophy," Biblical Review, XIII (April, 1928), 216-31.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

times he referred to Hermann Lotze in connection with personalism, recognizing him as Bowne's philosophical mentor.<sup>33</sup>

It is also true that the philosophy of personalism has been developed beyond and away from the position of Bowne in the writings of his students, such as Ralph Tyler Flewelling,<sup>34</sup> Albert C. Knudson,<sup>35</sup> and Edgar Sheffield Brightman.<sup>36</sup> It is certain that E. Y. Mullins was acquainted with some of these books.<sup>37</sup> However, since Bowne's work,

<sup>33</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 119. Among Herman Lotze's writings are included his Metaphysics, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (2 vols., 2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887); and his Logic, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (2 vols., 2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888).

<sup>34</sup>Ralph Tyler Flewelling, Personalism and the Problems of Philosophy (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1915); Creative Personality (New York: Macmillan Company, 1926); The Survival of Western Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943).

<sup>35</sup>Albert C. Knudson, The Philosophy of Personalism (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1927).

<sup>36</sup>Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Religious Values (New York: Abingdon Press, 1925); The Problem of God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1930); The Finding of God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1931); Nature and Values (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945).

<sup>37</sup>See, e.g., his review of Ralph T. Flewelling's Creative Personality, in Review and Expositor, XXIV (January, 1927), 66-69; also his review of Albert C. Knudson's The Philosophy of Personalism, in Review and Expositor, XXV (January, 1928), 81-83. In the former of these, Mullins said that the greatest conception which modern philosophic thought had discovered was that of personality. He was convinced that this conception would slowly but surely win its way as the only adequate key to the meaning of the universe, (p. 66). In the latter review, Mullins described personalism as "a system of philosophy which accords with Christianity

according to Knudson, presents personalism in "its clearest, most systematic, and most thoroughgoing expression,"<sup>38</sup> and since Mullins most often speaks of personalism in connection with Bowne, it seems most likely that the influence of personalism on Mullins was the result of his study of Bowne's writings. For this reason, the thought of Borden Parker Bowne is worthy of careful consideration at this point.<sup>39</sup>

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and rests at the same time upon impregnable scientific and empirical foundations," (p. 81). He concluded enthusiastically:

"The conditions of religious thought in our time have long made exigent the need for a restatement of Christian theism. Personalism as expounded by the late Professor Bowne and as interpreted in this volume by Professor Knudson renders a genuine service in this direction," (p. 83).

<sup>38</sup>Knudson, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>39</sup>Borden Parker Bowne lived from 1847 to 1910. He was professor of philosophy in Boston University from 1876 until the year of his death. In the course of his preparation for teaching, Bowne spent some time studying in Europe. In Germany he worked with Hermann Ulrich and Hermann Lotze. His dependence on the latter was considerable and he readily acknowledged it, although he believed that his own philosophy went considerably beyond that of his teacher.

Francis J. McConnell, in his invaluable biographical study of Bowne's thought (Borden Parker Bowne: His Life and His Philosophy [New York: Abingdon Press, 1929], p. 115), noting that Bowne never specified the precise directions in which he had gone beyond Lotze, offered a suggestion as to what Bowne may have had in mind. He says that while Lotze became preoccupied with system as such, much like Kant with his categories, Bowne kept his thought focused on the self and its free activities.

Albert C. Knudson stated firmly that Bowne transcended Lotze in two respects:

"First, he took the idea that personality is the key to reality and made it the central and organizing principle of his entire philosophy. . . . In the next

Since his book entitled Personalism represents the culmination of Bowne's philosophical formulations, and since it is the work which is most often cited by E. Y. Mullins, a survey of its contents will serve to set forth the leading ideas of Bowne which were most influential in the formation of Mullins' thought.<sup>40</sup>

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place, he supplemented Lotze's conception of reality as self-existence by introducing into it as an essential and controlling factor the thought of free self-activity." Knudson, op. cit., p. 433.

Among Bowne's more mature works were: The Theory of Thought and Knowledge (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1897); Metaphysics (rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1898), which was a revision and expansion of an earlier book on this subject; Theism (New York: American Book Company, 1902), also a revision of an earlier work; and Personalism (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908), a publication of the lectures delivered by Bowne at Northwestern University in 1907.

In Bowne's books can be traced his progress from "objective idealism" to "transcendental empiricism" to full-blown "personalism." Bowne believed that this latter term better characterized his system than did any other. See the letter dated May 31, 1909, which was printed in the Personalist, II (January, 1921), 10, and quoted in McConnell, op. cit., p. 280.

McConnell's work affords the best comprehensive study of Bowne's thought. For further insight into the man and his philosophy, see the Bowne Memorial Issue of the Methodist Review, Fifth Series, XXVIII (May-June, 1922). For a brief analysis of Bowne's significance for the personalistic tradition, see Edgar Sheffield Brightman, "Personalism and the Influence of Bowne," Personalist, VIII (January, 1927), 24-32. In his study of the historical development of personalism, Albert C. Knudson devotes special attention to Bowne. See Knudson, op. cit., *passim*. Encyclopedia articles on the whole subject of personalism include: Peter A. Bertocci, "Personalism," The Encyclopedia Americana, XXI (1958), 631-32; R. T. Flewelling, "Personalism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, IX (1951), 771-73.

<sup>40</sup>The following survey owes much to the excellent summary of Bowne's position which is found in W. H. Werkmeister, A History of Philosophical Ideas in America (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1949), pp. 118-21.

With a reference to Auguste Comte's analysis of the three stages of human thought, Bowne announces that his aim is to present again a form of personal metaphysics, the likes of which Comte had rejected.<sup>41</sup> He commences by declaring that all philosophy must properly begin with the real world which common sense has always affirmed. Three truths can be postulated regarding this world: It is a world in which persons coexist; in this world there is a law of reason which is valid for all and binding upon all; and in this world common experience is possible and actual. These truths are basal facts for philosophy.

This world is no illusion. It is "real in the sense of being trustworthy, or something which can be practically depended upon." The reality of the world of common personal experience is not modified by what we call it or how we interpret it; it is what it is.<sup>42</sup>

However, our experience in this world is such that when we reflect upon it we find ourselves unable to rest in it. We are compelled by the necessities of thought to go beyond experience, not for its reality or trustworthiness, nor for its truth, but for its explanation and understanding. Experience is trustworthy, but it is not self-sufficient. Only a system of thought which transcends experience can provide an adequate interpretation of experience and integrate

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<sup>41</sup>Bowne, Personalism, p. vii.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-31.

all of experience into one comprehensive whole. The goal of philosophy is to provide such a system.<sup>43</sup>

The examination of experience reveals certain uniformities of coexistence and sequence:

Things hang together in certain ways, and events come along together according to certain rules.<sup>44</sup>

It is extremely important for the practical guidance of our lives that we acquire knowledge concerning these uniformities, and it is the duty and the inalienable right of science to carry on this vital work with ever-greater precision and ever-wider range. The spatial and temporal world of phenomena is the proper field of science, and in this field no philosopher or theologian has a right to molest it.<sup>45</sup>

However, the field of science is limited. If the facts of spatial and temporal uniformities were all known, the question of their meaning and causal interpretation would still remain.

After we have found that things exist and hang together in certain ways in time and space, we next need to know what they mean, and what the cause is that underlies the cosmic processes.<sup>46</sup>

This task of interpretation is beyond science; it is the task of philosophy. Science studies the laws of coexistence and sequence among the facts of experience, but it must leave their interpretation to philosophy. Science and

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-35.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 36-40.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

philosophy, then,

are not mutually contradictory or indifferent realms, but rather mutually supplementary aspects of the mind's effort in the attempt to understand itself and its experience.<sup>47</sup>

Thus there is no rightful conflict between them; rather there should be cooperation.<sup>48</sup>

But how is knowledge possible? Or, to ask the truly antecedent question, how is experience possible? Bowne answers that when we reflect philosophically upon our world of experience and our knowledge of it, we are made aware that

the flitting and discontinuous impression [of immediate experience] is interpreted into a continuous and abiding world only by a permanent self with its outfit of rational principles; and if this were taken away there would be only an inarticulate flux of impressions without rational contents.<sup>49</sup>

This means, then, that the self is a necessary presupposition of all knowledge and of all meaningful experience. It is the self which freely and actively orders experience according to laws or categories immanent in itself.<sup>50</sup>

Thus far, Bowne has readily acknowledged his obvious debt to Kantian epistemology, but at this point he rejects and seeks to refute the agnosticism which has stemmed from Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. Bowne's answer is based on the theistic suggestion which

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 44

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 40-53.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 69

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 54-82.



denies that there is any truly extra-mental existence. He says:

If we assume that the world of things originated in thought and expressed thought they would be homogeneous with thought, and there would be no apriori reason why we should not know them.<sup>51</sup>

Things may indeed be independent of our thinking, but they are not independent of all thinking. They lie within the sphere of thought, for according to theism, this sphere is all-embracing. There are things which we do not know now, but it is possible for us to come to know them through an enlargement of our experience.

Bowne rejects completely the idea of noumenal, unknowable things-in-themselves. Personal phenomenal knowledge is always knowledge of actual reality.

At the same time, he insists that phenomena are "those things which exist only in and for intelligence."<sup>52</sup>

He says that

. . . all thought about reality must be rooted in experience and that apart from experience we never can be sure whether our conceptions represent any actual fact or not.<sup>53</sup>

Bowne calls this view "transcendental empiricism" in distinction from the traditional "sense empiricism." His choice of the adjective is designed to emphasize the fact that by "experience" he means

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 92f.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

. . . the whole of experience, not merely the sense experience of the outer world, but also the inner experience of the conscious self.<sup>54</sup>

Upon the basis of this epistemology Bowne proceeds to construct his metaphysics. The very existence of a world of experiencing persons, which Bowne has already postulated as indisputable, is itself a step toward the support of his personalistic thesis.<sup>55</sup> Then, a second step toward personalism is made by the recognition of the fact that

the world of experience exists for us only through a rational spiritual principle by which we reproduce it for our thought, and it has its existence apart from us only through a rational spiritual principle on which it depends, and the rational nature of which it expresses.<sup>56</sup>

Bowne supports this second point by a consideration of the phenomenality of the physical world. His concern is to demonstrate that "this world which is known only through intelligence also exists only through and for intelligence."<sup>57</sup>

In order to support his view of the phenomenality of the physical world, Bowne deals with the common contention that the world is one and self-identical. He concludes that no real identity and no meaningful change are inherent in the impersonal "thing world." He is convinced that the only concrete identity to be found anywhere turns out to be the

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 104, 100. For this entire section of Bowne's argument, see ibid., pp. 82-110.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

unity of the conscious subject. Furthermore, it is this identity of the personal subject which makes the notion of change possible and meaningful.

On the impersonal plane this problem of change and identity admits of no solution. We cannot find the abstract identity, and we cannot find the abstract changes when we look for them. We have simply a world of experience in which the same ideas and forms remain valid, and through which the conscious subject remains as the only fixed point to which everything, both permanence and change, has to be referred.<sup>58</sup>

Thus Bowne demonstrates that intelligence plays a necessary part in the existence of those things which are uncritically regarded as existing independently in space and time. However, he seeks to strengthen his position by challenging the common sense view of space and time themselves.

He begins by contending that only two conceptions of reality are possible for us: reality is either a "space and time existence" or it is "self-conscious existence." Bowne then proceeds to argue a la Kant that space and time themselves are not real and that, therefore, "space and time existence is phenomenal only, existing only for and through intelligence."<sup>59</sup> This implies, of course, the phenomenality of the whole system of objective experience which occurs in space and time. It also implies that experiencing personality

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 123f. For this whole discussion, see pp. 111-24.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 158. For this whole discussion, see pp. 125-58.

is the only reality to which phenomenality cannot be applied.

Bowne also believes that a consideration of the world from the standpoint of causality leads inevitably to a personalistic thesis. He is certain that the idea and fact of causation cannot be dispensed with in any philosophical system. However, he sees the necessity to distinguish between causality in the inductive sense, which deals with relationships between phenomena, and causality as dynamic or productive efficiency, which is the source and origin of phenomena. He calls the first of these "causality in the scientific sense"; the second he calls "causality in the metaphysical sense."<sup>60</sup> He also distinguishes the two as mechanical causality and volitional causality. Bowne declares that a choice must be made between these two notions if a concept of ultimate causality is to be achieved.

For him, the choice is not difficult because the facts are clear. He is convinced that experience certifies only volitional causality as real. Every doctrine of mechanical causality tends inevitably toward the idea of an infinite regress; there is no logical possibility of a real beginning in mechanical causation. Neither is there any provision for real dynamic change or progress. There is nothing really new in a mechanical system. There is only an unfolding of alleged eternal potentialities.

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

However, the case for volitional causality is dramatically different.

Here we have the causality of conscious intelligence which possesses and directs itself. Here we have a cause that can make new departures without losing itself in the infinite regress . . . a cause that does not lie temporally behind the process, but is immanent in the process as the abiding power on which it forever depends. Here is a unity which in the oneness of consciousness can posit plurality and remain unity still. Here is an abiding power which can form plans, foresee ends, and direct itself for their realization.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, this is the only conception which provides for the possibility of freedom, and "freedom is the only solution which does not wreck reason itself."<sup>62</sup> Thus, for Bowne, the consideration of the problem of causality provides additional proof for his philosophy of personalism.<sup>63</sup>

Bowne denounces every form of impersonalism as a failure and declares that it is only the concept of the personal self which can provide the key to our understanding of the universe. Man is aware of himself as a person--one possessing knowledge, self-consciousness, and self-control. However, he is also aware that he is not self-sufficient and independent in an absolute sense. Bowne affirms man's conviction that "complete and perfect personality can be found only in the Infinite and Absolute Being."<sup>64</sup> Thus he concludes

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 196f.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>63</sup>For this whole discussion, see ibid., pp. 159-216.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 266. For this entire discussion, see pp. 217-326.

that personalism leads inevitably to theism.

W. H. Werkmeister summarized the significance of personalism in the following words:

Bowne's philosophy thus laid anew the foundation for a theistic theology at a time when materialistic evolutionism, higher criticism, and comparative religion threatened the very existence of Christian theology itself.<sup>65</sup>

Borden P. Bowne influenced E. Y. Mullins most in the area of metaphysics. The nature and extent of this influence will be evident when Mullins' world-view is examined in the next chapter of this dissertation.

The philosophy of pragmatism<sup>66</sup>

Pragmatism and E. Y. Mullins.--Pragmatism, which is commonly regarded as the most uniquely American contribution to Western philosophy, may be said to have originated with the publication of an article by Charles Sanders Peirce in the January, 1878, issue of Popular Science Monthly. Although the article attracted little attention at the time, the revival of its key ideas by William James in a lecture before

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<sup>65</sup>Werkmeister, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>66</sup>For a modern study of the three classic exponents of this philosophy, see Edward C. Moore, American Pragmatism: Peirce, James, and Dewey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961). All histories of American philosophy include discussions of pragmatism. See, e.g., Werkmeister, op. cit., pp. 171-237, 521-61. For an excellent older study of pragmatism, see Ralph Barton Perry, Present Philosophical Tendencies (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1929), pp. 195-268.

the Philosophical Union of the University of California on August 26, 1898, was widely heralded, and it initiated the pragmatic movement in American philosophy.<sup>67</sup> During the first quarter of the twentieth century, mainly as a result of the work of William James and John Dewey, pragmatism established itself as a major factor on the American philosophical scene.

Thus, the development of the philosophy of pragmatism coincided with the development of the theology of E. Y. Mullins. In his writings, Mullins often took note of this new philosophy. An examination of Mullins' own comments concerning his impressions of pragmatism will indicate the nature of its major influence upon his thought.

The pragmatic theory of knowledge.--Reference has already been made to the article in which Mullins identified pragmatism, along with humanism and personalism, as a significant part of "the new philosophic movement."<sup>68</sup> In this

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<sup>67</sup>Peirce's article was entitled "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." James' lecture dealt with "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results." Moore, op. cit., p. 1. Cf. James' survey of these developments in Pragmatism (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), pp. 46-47.

<sup>68</sup>"Pragmatism, Humanism and Personalism--The New Philosophic Movement," Review and Expositor, V (October, 1908), 501-15. Here Mullins dealt with William James' book Pragmatism, which had recently been published. He also dealt with two books by F. C. S. Schiller of Oxford (Humanism [London: Macmillan and Co., 1903] and Studies in Humanism [London: Macmillan and Co., 1907]) and accepted him as a spokesman for pragmatism.

article, Mullins analyzed pragmatism primarily as a theory of knowledge.<sup>69</sup> He said that "the pragmatic method is the application of the practical test for the verification or determination of truth."<sup>70</sup> He described the method further with these statements:

The pragmatic philosophy does not renounce interest in ultimate truth. Its votaries seem profoundly interested in all the ultimate problems. It rather seeks to enjoin philosophy from illegitimate and fictitious methods of arriving at truth.<sup>71</sup>

Pragmatism . . . renounces the idea that truths are ready made and given to us independent of and apart from our experience. We test and try and verify until truths become valid. . .<sup>72</sup>

Truths do not descend into the scientific or philosophic mind ready made from a supercelestial region like birds from the upper air. Truths are established by processes of testing and verification in actual human experience. . .<sup>73</sup>

Mullins then quoted a series of brief definitions of pragmatism, which had been formulated by F. C. S. Schiller, as a summary of the pragmatic theory of knowledge.

The first definition of Pragmatism is that (1) "truths are logical values," and Pragmatism "systematically tests claims to truth in accordance with this principle." (2) "The truth of an assertion depends on its application." Abstract truths are not fully truths at all. The third definition is (3) "the meaning of a

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<sup>69</sup>Mullins went so far as to say that pragmatism was but one aspect of the broader philosophy of humanism. He said it was the application of humanism to the theory of knowledge. *Ibid.*, p. 506.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 502.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 502f.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 503.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 504.



rule lies in its application." A fourth form of statement is (4) "All meaning depends on purpose." The fifth definition explains the fourth, (5) "All mental life is purposive." Thought without purpose is impossible. Abstract systems of philosophy ignore this fact. Pragmatism therefore is (6) "a systematic protest against all ignoring of the purposiveness of actual knowing." Thus conceived Pragmatism may be described as (7) "a conscious application to epistemology (or logic) of a teleological psychology, which implies, ultimately, a voluntaristic metaphysic."<sup>74</sup>

Mullins listed several advantages of the pragmatic approach to reality. He was pleased, first of all, by the emphasis upon the purposiveness of human thought. Mullins agreed with the pragmatists that every quest for truth must be practical, i.e., it must meet some need or supposed need of men.<sup>75</sup>

Mullins declared, in the second place, that pragmatism exposes the fatal weakness of the abstract, speculative theories of the absolute systems of philosophy such as idealism and monism. It reveals them to be artificial constructions which attempt to offer a rational explanation of the world in terms of a mere fragment of experience or of reality. Pragmatism insists that the whole of human experience must be allowed to furnish the data for human knowledge.<sup>76</sup>

In the third place, pragmatism recognizes the

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 505. These definitions were presented and discussed in Schiller, Studies in Humanism, pp. 7-12.

<sup>75</sup>"Pragmatism, Humanism and Personalism . . . ," pp. 502-3, 505-6.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 507-9.

necessity for science and philosophy, as well as religion, to build on a faith-principle. The pragmatic view that knowledge results from the practical verification of hitherto unproven assumptions implies that faith is necessary to knowledge rather than opposed to it.<sup>77</sup>

In the fourth place, Mullins was pleased to observe that pragmatism, contrary to Ritschlianism, is not ultimately agnostic.

The "judgment of value" is common to Ritschlianism and Pragmatism, but Ritschlianism excludes entirely the judgment of reality, while Pragmatism assumes it everywhere and works gradually towards ultimate reality.<sup>78</sup>

Mullins' chief criticism of the pragmatists was that they failed to apply their theory of knowledge consistently to the facts of the Christian revelation.<sup>79</sup>

The pragmatic will to believe.--In some of his books, E. Y. Mullins expressed appreciation for what he believed to be the central insight of pragmatism, viz., the role of "the will as a factor in all knowledge."<sup>80</sup> He maintained that the will was most essential in the attainment of religious knowledge.

Mullins was greatly impressed by William James'

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 513.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 514.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 515.

<sup>80</sup>Freedom and Authority in Religion, pp. 151-55; 161-62; 165; Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 158; 268.

memorable essay "The Will to Believe."<sup>81</sup> He quoted it on occasion,<sup>82</sup> and often reasoned on the assumption of the major conclusions of the essay. Because of this, James' argument is worthy of examination.

James acknowledges that his essay is meant to be a justification of faith, i.e., a defence of one's right to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters in spite of the fact that one's merely logical intellect may not have been coerced.<sup>83</sup> He begins his discussion with an analysis of the various possible ways one may react toward hypotheses which are offered for his belief. All such hypotheses may be classified as either live or dead depending upon one's willingness to act upon them. As James said:

The maximum of liveness in an hypothesis means willingness to act irrevocably.<sup>84</sup>

James calls the decision between two hypotheses an option. These options may be of several kinds: living or dead; forced or avoidable; momentous or trivial. A living option is one in which both hypotheses are live ones. A forced option occurs in any situation in which a choice between live hypotheses is inescapable. An option is momentous

<sup>81</sup>William James, The Will to Believe (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1897), pp. 1-31.

<sup>82</sup>See, e.g., Freedom and Authority . . ., p. 283.

<sup>83</sup>James, The Will to Believe, pp. 1-2.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

whenever the possibilities afforded by it are unique or rare.<sup>85</sup>

After weighing the roles of man's passional (volitional) and intellectual natures in the attainment of convictions, James phrases his major thesis:

Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say, under such circumstances, "Do not decide, but leave the question open," is itself a passional decision,--just like deciding yes or no,--and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth.<sup>86</sup>

James then proposes that the religious issue affords the preeminent example of an hypothesis which demands a living, momentous, forced option on the part of the individual. Assuming general agreement concerning these first two points, he seeks to demonstrate that an option with regard to the religious hypothesis is actually forced upon every man. On the basis of the argument that the two goals of man's pursuit of knowledge are to know truth and to avoid error, James contends that one

cannot escape the [religious] issue by remaining sceptical and waiting for more light, because, although we do avoid error in that way if religion be untrue, we lose the good, if it be true, just as certainly as if we positively chose to disbelieve.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 26. James firmly committed himself to the view that it is even more imperative for one to know the truth than to avoid error. Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Thus, James rejects agnosticism. He admits that the religious question cannot be settled on purely rational grounds. There are no compellingly convincing arguments either for or against the religious hypothesis. However, he argues, in such a case one has the right to believe as he desires and act accordingly, provided only that he recognize the nature of his decision. James also suggested that by such a will to believe one may well become acquainted with religious reality which could not be known any other way.<sup>88</sup>

E. Y. Mullins went much further than William James was willing to go by his assumption that the believing soul was actually appropriating a positive revelation of God. But Mullins' appreciation for James' philosophical statement of the will (or right) to believe will be evident when his theory of knowledge is examined in the next chapter of this dissertation.

#### The psychology of religion

Mullins' recognition of this discipline.--From the beginning of his literary career, E. Y. Mullins was aware of the fledging science of psychology of religion and he applauded its development. In his first major book, Mullins expressed his conviction that religious experience is a distinct order of facts and declared that it should be studied in an

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-31.

objective, truly scientific way. Since the task of science is simply to observe phenomena, collect data concerning the phenomena, and make generalizations describing the uniformities it has found, Mullins believed that even those who had not participated in religious experience could still render a useful scientific service in this area.<sup>89</sup> By 1917, he was able to declare:

The psychology of religion has . . . become a distinct branch of inquiry. It has already yielded large results, and will in the future no doubt become more productive.<sup>90</sup>

In his book Why Is Christianity True?, Mullins quoted some of the most significant of the early writers in this field, such as George Albert Coe and E. D. Starbuck, and he listed their books in his bibliography.<sup>91</sup> However, it was the research and the conclusions of William James which impressed E. Y. Mullins most forcefully. He referred to him often and he sometimes discussed James' views in considerable detail.<sup>92</sup> Since James' most notable contributions

<sup>89</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, pp. 241, 264-66.

<sup>90</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 39.

<sup>91</sup>George Albert Coe, The Spiritual Life (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900); E. D. Starbuck, The Psychology of Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900). These, together with several other significant works on the subject, are listed in Why Is Christianity True?, pp. 435-36.

<sup>92</sup>See, e.g., Why Is Christianity True?, pp. 280, 306-308; Freedom and Authority in Religion, p. 260; The Christian Religion . . ., p. 89; Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 242, 269; "Is Jesus Christ the Author of Religious Experience?" Review and Expositor, I (April, 1904), 55-70.

to the psychology of religion were his Gifford Lectures of 1901-1902 which were published as The Varieties of Religious Experience,<sup>93</sup> it will be well to examine the conclusions of that book and consider Mullins' reaction to them in order to understand the nature of James' influence on Mullins.

Mullins' debt to William James.<sup>94</sup> --After his remarkable

<sup>93</sup>William James, The Varieties of Religious Experiences (New York: Modern Library, 1902).

<sup>94</sup>Since William James has been suggested as one who influenced E. Y. Mullins both in the area of philosophy and in the area of psychology of religion, further identification of him is now in order.

William James was the son of Henry James, Sr., and a brother to Henry James, the novelist. He was born in New York City on January 11, 1842. He attended several schools, both in America and abroad. Having received an M.D. from Harvard in 1869, he became an instructor in anatomy and physiology at Harvard College in 1873. In 1875, he began teaching the first courses in psychology ever offered in the United States. In 1880 he became an assistant professor of philosophy, but in 1890 he published his two-volume Principles of Psychology (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1890) which long remained the standard work on that subject in this country. Thus, for a time he was active in two academic fields but gradually he shifted his interests almost entirely to philosophy. After 1900 all of his writings, with the exception of the Gifford Lectures were in the field of philosophy. James died in 1910. In addition to Pragmatism, The Will to Believe, and the two works just mentioned, James' other important writings include: The Meaning of Truth (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), A Pluralistic Universe (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), and Essays in Radical Empiricism, ed. Ralph Barton Perry (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912).

The vital facts of James' life and career, as well as an exposition of his thought can be found in most books which deal with modern philosophy in general or with pragmatism in particular. The classic work on the man and his contribution is the monumental study of Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James (2 vols.; Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1935).

documentary study of the varieties of religious experience, William James summarized the following beliefs as being characteristic of religion in general:

1. That the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance;
2. That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end;
3. That prayer or inner communion with the spirit thereof--be that spirit "God" or "law"--is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.<sup>95</sup>

James also noted that religion generally includes the following psychological characteristics:

4. A new zest which adds itself like a gift to life, and takes the form either of lyrical enchantment or of appeal to earnestness and heroism.
5. An assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affections.<sup>96</sup>

On the strength of his studies, James was willing to concede that religion has been and will continue to be an indispensable element of human nature and an inevitable factor in human history.<sup>97</sup> He believed that religious feelings and the conduct produced by them were far more constant than the thoughts about religion. However, he believed that it was possible to analyze the intellectual aspect of religion as well.

Seeking to state the lowest common denominator of the

<sup>95</sup>James, The Varieties . . . , p. 475.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 475-76.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 493.



intellectual content of all religion,<sup>98</sup> James proposed that it consisted of two parts: first, an uneasiness, and then, its solution:

1. The uneasiness, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense that there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand.
2. The solution is a sense that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers.<sup>99</sup>

Expressing his own personal judgment as to the objective truth of the commonly-affirmed religious realities, James acknowledged his conviction that there is a supernatural "more" which powerfully invades human experience from without and changes its direction.<sup>100</sup> He further proposed, as an hypothesis merely:

that whatever it may be on its farther side, the "more" with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its hither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life.<sup>101</sup>

However, James refused to define the positive nature of the supernatural "more." He said such a description could only be an "over-belief" and he professed agnosticism at this point although he revealed a considerable affinity for a pluralistic hypothesis.<sup>102</sup>

After a careful examination of this book, E. Y. Mullins was quick to point out the areas of agreement between the views

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., pp. 494-97.      <sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 498.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., pp. 500-508.      <sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 502.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., pp. 504, 509-16.

of James and those of many evangelical theologians including himself.

There is no dispute as to the reality of the religious experience; none as to the real moral transformation wrought by such experience; and none as to the question whether or not that transforming power is exterior to and above man. All agree on these points. All admit the supernatural.<sup>103</sup>

On the other hand, Mullins noted that the real point at issue between James and evangelical Christians was related to the nature of this supernatural power. To put it very specifically, the question was whether or not Jesus Christ is the author of Christian experience. Christian believers unequivocally affirm that he is. William James refused to make such an affirmation.<sup>104</sup>

However, E. Y. Mullins was convinced that the position of James represented an advance toward Christianity, and he was prepared to appropriate as much of it as possible. He knew that "the psychology of religion is insufficient for the purposes of Christian theology unless it rises to the distinctively Christian point of view,"<sup>105</sup> but he sought to accomplish this by presenting Jesus Christ as the true author of the experience which William James had described.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>"Is Jesus Christ the Author . . . ?," p. 59.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., pp. 59-60.

<sup>105</sup>The Christian Religion . . . , p. 39.

<sup>106</sup>"Is Jesus Christ the Author . . . ?," pp. 60-70; cf. Why is Christianity True?, pp. 280-85.

His Interest in Experiential Theology

Experiential theology before Mullins

Attempts to construct systems of Christian theology from the standpoint of Christian experience, or at least to demonstrate the confirmatory relation of Christian experience to Christian theology, were often made in E. Y. Mullins' day. During the early years of his career, Mullins complained that this field of endeavor had received almost no attention from English writers;<sup>107</sup> however, he was soon able to comment on the growing list of philosophical and theological works which dealt with the subject of Christian experience.<sup>108</sup>

Most observers trace the modern emphasis upon the theological implications of Christian experience to Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834).<sup>109</sup> E. Y. Mullins acknowledged the decisive role of Schleiermacher. He said:

The power of Schleiermacher, as a theologian, was that he called men back from philosophic and speculative theorizings in theology to the inner life and experience of the individual. Since his day there has been an

<sup>107</sup>"Christian Life and Theology: A Book Review," Baptist Argus, April 25, 1901, p. 1. Mullins was aware, however, of the work which had been done in this area by German theologians.

<sup>108</sup>See, e.g., his review of Henry W. Clark's The Philosophy of Christian Experience, in Review and Expositor, IV (October, 1907), 631-34.

<sup>109</sup>Hugh Ross Mackintosh, e.g., calls Schleiermacher "the theologian par excellence of Christian experience." See Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, [1937]), p. 31.

increasing tendency to rest theology upon this foundation.<sup>110</sup>

However, Mullins also contended that the experiential way of dealing with Christian doctrine had been implicitly employed since New Testament times. He saw this principle at work in the production of the Bible itself. He said it was the source of power in the writings of Augustine and Clement of Alexandria<sup>111</sup> and in the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield.<sup>112</sup>

It is certain that experiential theology underwent considerable development between the time of Schleiermacher and that of E. Y. Mullins. Gottfried Thomasius of Erlangen, his successor, F. H. R. Frank, Albrecht Ritschl of Goettingen, and I. A. Dorner and Julius Kaftan, both of Berlin, may be cited as examples of those who contributed to this development.<sup>113</sup> It is equally certain that E. Y. Mullins was acquainted with the works of these men.<sup>114</sup> Despite these

<sup>110</sup>"Christian Life and Theology . . . ," p. 1.

<sup>111</sup>The Christian Religion . . . , pp. 2-3.

<sup>112</sup>"Christian Life and Theology . . . ," p. 1.

<sup>113</sup>Cf. the surveys of the development of experiential theology and apologetics in Frank Hugh Foster, Christian Life and Theology (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900), pp. 4-15, and Lewis French Stearns, The Evidence of Christian Experience (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), pp. 29-31.

<sup>114</sup>See, e.g., Mullins' quotation of Frank in Why Is Christianity True?, pp. 289-90; of Dorner in The Christian Religion . . . , pp. 96, 189, 395; of Kaftan in "The Atonement--No. 3: Need of Atonement Shown by Experience," Baptist Argus, February 27, 1902, p. 1. His references to Ritschl are numerous.

facts, because of the prominence of Schleiermacher it is appropriate to consider to what extent Mullins was influenced by his theology.

It is worthy of notice that in most of the instances in which Mullins referred to Schleiermacher it was for the purpose of criticizing him. In his book Freedom and Authority in Religion, Mullins pronounced the inadequacy of the subjective principle of religious authority and sought to refute it. He said that Schleiermacher and his followers had erred greatly by setting up the Christian consciousness as the seat of authority in religion. Mullins contended that this principle logically leads to the undermining of every possibility of valid authority or ultimate truth.<sup>115</sup>

Mullins often criticized Schleiermacher's pantheistic tendencies.<sup>116</sup> He said that this error was actually more basic than the preceding one and that, in fact, it had contributed largely to it. As Mullins explained it:

If the universe . . . is not personal, if pantheism is true, then . . . authoritative statements are impossible. Each individual consciousness is equally an expression of the true meaning of the world. If there is no personality above our finite personalities, then each one of us is a law unto himself. . . . Error cannot exist since there is no higher standard than the individual consciousness.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Freedom and Authority . . . , pp. 6-7; 11-63.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., pp. 53, 199, 330. See also "Great Theologians of the Century," Baptist Argus, January 3, 1901, p. 1.

<sup>117</sup>Freedom and Authority . . . , pp. 53-54.

Mullins said, furthermore, that Schleiermacher's inclination toward pantheism caused him to have difficulty with the orthodox Christian ideas of the personality of God, the possibility of the miraculous, and the reality of personal immortality.<sup>118</sup> It also prevented him from seeing a causal nexus between religion and ethics.<sup>119</sup>

Mullins was critical of Schleiermacher's definition of religion as the feeling of absolute dependence. Mullins admitted that Schleiermacher had sounded therein a true note, but it was an inadequate one. According to Mullins:

the absence of the cognitive element is one defect of Schleiermacher's definition. Another is that it omits any adequate account of the religious object, as well as of the essential contents of the religious life itself.<sup>120</sup>

Mullins condemned Schleiermacher's view of the person of Jesus Christ. He understood Schleiermacher's teaching that Jesus was only a man who was perfectly filled with the divine presence to mean an absolute denial of His pre-existence, and, therefore, he rejected it.<sup>121</sup> All in all,

<sup>118</sup>"Outline of Lectures to Graduate Theology Class" (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.), p. 42. (Typewritten.)

<sup>119</sup>Freedom and Authority . . . , pp. 231-32.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p. 195. Cf. The Christian Religion . . . , p. 61; Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 108.

<sup>121</sup>The Christian Religion . . . , pp. 195-96. Cf. "Outline of Lectures . . . ," p. 43.

E. Y. Mullins judged Schleiermacher to be "certainly not a safe guide in theology."<sup>122</sup>

Of course, it cannot be denied that Mullins appreciated and utilized Schleiermacher's fundamental insistence that an experiential theology is superior to one which is merely theoretical and propositional. Mullins warmly applauded Schleiermacher's contribution at this point but, at the same time, he warned that Schleiermacher had gone too far in depreciating the Scriptures.<sup>123</sup> Mullins believed that Schleiermacher's insight had brought about the needed recovery of a vital principle, but he said that

the correlation of Schleiermacher's view with a true theism is the direction we must now take.<sup>124</sup>

When Mullins' principle of authority is examined in the next chapter of this dissertation, it will be seen that he sought to correlate the subjective Christian experience with the objective Christian Scriptures as the sufficient source for theological construction.

#### Experiential theology in Mullins' day

In an attempt to estimate the influence of experiential theology on E. Y. Mullins, it is possible to locate writers of greater proximity to him than Friedrich

<sup>122</sup>"Great Theologians of the Century," p. 1.

<sup>123</sup>"Outline of Lectures . . . ," p. 46.

<sup>124</sup>Freedom and Authority . . . , p. 282.

Schleiermacher who may well have helped to encourage him in this direction. In a significant article which appeared in the first issue of Southern Seminary's Review and Expositor, Mullins discussed the books of two theologians whose work evidently impressed him greatly.<sup>125</sup> One of the men was Lewis French Stearns, Professor of Christian Theology in the Bangor Theological Seminary, Bangor, Maine. His book, entitled The Evidence of Christian Experience, consisted of the Ely Lectures which he had delivered at Union Theological Seminary in 1890.<sup>126</sup> The other man was Frank Hugh Foster, Professor of Theology in the Pacific Theological Seminary, Berkeley, California. Foster's book, Christian Life and Theology, was a publication of the Stone Lectures, which he delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1900. Its subject was "the contribution of Christian experience to the system of

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<sup>125</sup>See "Is Jesus Christ the Author of Religious Experience?" Review and Expositor, I (April, 1904), 55-70.

<sup>126</sup>Lewis French Stearns, The Evidence of Christian Experience (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893). Apart from this article, Mullins' writings apparently contain no other reference to Stearns' book although it is listed in the bibliography of Mullins' Why Is Christianity True?, p. 436; and on the last page of his "Outline of Lectures . . . ," p. 56. Nevertheless, on the basis of a comparative study, R. H. Dilday, Jr., has identified Stearns' book as a major influence on the apologetic method of E. Y. Mullins. See Russell Hooper Dilday, Jr., "The Apologetic Method of E. Y. Mullins" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1960), pp. 48-49.



evangelical doctrine."<sup>127</sup>

Prior to this time, Mullins had already reviewed the latter book in the Baptist Argus<sup>128</sup> and referred to it in one of his major addresses at Southern Seminary.<sup>129</sup> He later quoted from it in one of his books,<sup>130</sup> and twice he listed it as one of the leading works in the field of experiential theology.<sup>131</sup>

Stearns' book is concerned primarily with the demands of Christian apologetics. Stearns' intention is to demonstrate the value of the evidence of Christian experience in an apologetic system. After setting forth his theistic and anthropological philosophical presuppositions, he traces the process by which the distinctive evidence is first established through the initial experience of the Christian life and then enlarged and strengthened as the Christian experience progresses.

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<sup>127</sup>Frank Hugh Foster, Christian Life and Theology (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900). Interestingly enough, Foster acknowledged his "conscious and no doubt unconscious indebtedness" to Stearns and his book. See ibid., pp. 14-15. He also credited F. H. R. Frank's System of Christian Certainty (trans. Maurice J. Evans [2nd ed. rev.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886]) with having provoked his original interest in his subject. See Foster, op. cit., p. iii.

<sup>128</sup>"Christian Life and Theology: A Book Review," Baptist Argus, April 25, 1901, p. 1.

<sup>129</sup>The Task of the Theologian of To-day (2nd ed.; [Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1901]), p. 15.

<sup>130</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, pp. 267, 283-84.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., p. 435; "Outline of Lectures . . . ," p. 56.

Stearns emphasizes all along the certainty of the knowledge which results from Christian experience. It is no mere probable knowledge; on the contrary, it is a real knowledge of a realm of actual spiritual facts which is scientifically verifiable through the experiment of experience.<sup>132</sup>

The main purposes of Foster's book are to demonstrate that "Christian experience is capable of logical analysis and of rigorously scientific treatment" and to further demonstrate that such an analysis furnishes support for the general system of evangelical doctrine. He is convinced that Christian experience is a reality known by the immediate consciousness which may be universally verified by appropriate processes and that, therefore, a theology based on it is no mere theology of the subjective "feelings" but rather "a theology of realities and of reason."<sup>133</sup>

E. Y. Mullins provided a good brief digest of the course of Foster's argument:

As employed by the author . . . [the term "the Christian life"] refers to the inner spiritual life of the believer, or what is commonly known as Christian experience. The method of the book is to investigate

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<sup>132</sup>Stearns, op. cit., pp. 1-230. The remainder of the book is devoted to answering the possible philosophical and theological objections to Stearns' line of argument and showing how the evidence of Christian experience is related to other Christian evidences. Ibid., pp. 231-377.

<sup>133</sup>Foster, op. cit., pp. 274-75.

questions of doctrine from the starting point of this inner experience. . . .

The writer finds the ultimate element of Christian experience, in the permanent choice of duty as such, involving the idea of responsibility and sin. The next step is found in the new birth, which becomes the spiritual foundation for the entire structure of doctrine so far as developed in the book. Out of the experience of the new birth emerges the doctrine of God, because it necessitates belief in an objective power personal, holy, benevolent, infinite. The Bible is proved to possess authority for us as the primitive record of Christianity which sets forth experiences which correspond exactly with our own. By the same general method the writer develops the doctrine of the person of Christ out of experience; first through the motives which lead to conversion as coming from Christ, then through gifts bestowed by him, and through divine attributes manifested by Christ, all the lines of evidence converging upon the point of Christ's essential divinity. The chapter which develops the doctrine of the atonement from the inner experience has peculiar interest just now. . . . So also the doctrine of the church receives treatment from the same general point of view.<sup>134</sup>

Mullins went on to point out Foster's distinction between doctrines which are deducible from Christian experience and those which are not and his concern not to claim more from his line of argument than is warranted by it. Mullins judged that Foster's conclusions were generally in accord with accepted evangelical doctrine and that, thus, the total impact of the book served to confirm the faith of evangelical believers.<sup>135</sup> His main criticism had to do with the inadequacy of Foster's identification of the choice of

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<sup>134</sup>"Christian Life and Theology . . . ," p. 1.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

duty as the ultimate element of Christian experience.<sup>136</sup>

No attempt will be made by the author of this dissertation to demonstrate in detail the parallels between the theology of E. Y. Mullins and that of experiential apologists and theologians like Lewis French Stearns and Frank Hugh Foster. Nor will an effort be made to prove specifically the amount of influence which their works may have exercised on him. It is sufficient simply to point out the existence of these evangelical authors, who were contemporary with Mullins, whose writings were known by him, and whose method of apologetic and theological construction bears some similarity to his own. To say that E. Y. Mullins was influenced by experiential theology is not necessarily equivalent to saying that he was a disciple of Friedrich Schleiermacher.

#### His Nineteenth-Century American Environment

As all men are, Edgar Young Mullins was to a great extent a child of his time and of his place. Much of what he presumed and believed and advocated was due to the fact that he lived in the United States of America from 1860 to 1928.

Most of Mullins' life was lived before World War I. Certainly his basic ideas were largely formed before 1914.

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<sup>136</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, p. 267.

Since this date is often accepted as marking the real end of the nineteenth century, an analysis of the nineteenth-century American outlook can actually comprehend the whole period up to the time when the outbreak of war necessitated the recasting of all Western thought.

According to many competent observers, all of the following were major elements in the nineteenth-century American mind: individualism, freedom, democracy, optimism, and practicalism.

#### Individualism

The environment of the New World, combined with the dominant currents of eighteenth-century philosophy, produced at an early date an individualistic emphasis in America which is evident in the very formation of the American system of government. Ralph Henry Gabriel describes the mood of the framers of the American Constitution thus:

True to the Enlightenment, their social philosophy emphasized atomism. They were interested in the individual man.<sup>137</sup>

The developments of the nineteenth century did not shake this basic principle of American mentality. As Henry Steele Commager has said:

Born of geography, nourished by history, confirmed by philosophy, self-reliance was elevated to a philosophical

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<sup>137</sup>Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1940), p. 12.

creed, and in time individualism became synonymous with Americanism.<sup>138</sup>

It was not until the complexities of twentieth-century life and the attendant problems necessitated socialization in many areas that individualism began to decline as a dominant ideal in America.

### Freedom

Closely allied to the idea of individualism was the ideal of freedom. Reason and emotion both agreed that the individual was meant to be free, and the whole political, social, and economic environment of nineteenth-century America seemed to vindicate this ideal. R. H. Gabriel has shown how philosophy and history both promoted freedom in America.

The American philosophy of liberty had its seventeenth and eighteenth century origins in protests against established orders. It was primarily a means to an end. In the middle of the nineteenth century, when it reached its maturity with the belief that liberty is an end in itself, it rested squarely upon a universal sense of security.<sup>139</sup>

By constitutional guarantee, freedom in America meant freedom to think and learn and believe as well as to act. This had implications for every field of human interest.

### Democracy

The political corollary to individualism and freedom

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<sup>138</sup>Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 29.

<sup>139</sup>Gabriel, op. cit., p. 22.

is democracy and nineteenth-century America was the most democratic society on earth. This latter statement finds ample support in the penetrating interpretations of the American scene offered by the Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, in the 1830's and by the Englishman, Lord James Bryce, in the 1880's.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, the major thesis of Tocqueville's brilliant study is that the most striking characteristic of the social condition of the Anglo-Americans is its essential democracy.<sup>141</sup> His whole work represents an endeavor to demonstrate the political and civic implications of America's democratic revolution.

R. H. Gabriel has developed the thesis that romantic democracy during this period was actually a cluster of ideas which made up a national faith which was the nearest thing to a state religion in America.<sup>142</sup> At any rate, it is indisputable that the nineteenth century American had a boundless belief in democracy.

### Optimism

Another ingredient which was characteristic of the

<sup>140</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. Henry Reeve (2 vols.; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899); James Bryce, The American Commonwealth (2 vols.; 2nd ed. rev.; London: Macmillan and Co., 1891). E. Y. Mullins was well acquainted with this latter work and quoted from it repeatedly. See, e.g., The Axioms of Religion (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1908), pp. 185-86.

<sup>141</sup> Tocqueville, op. cit., I, xlv-xlv.

<sup>142</sup> Gabriel, op. cit., p. 13.

American mind was optimism. As Henry Commager put it:

Nothing in all history had ever succeeded like America, and every American knew it.<sup>143</sup>

Before the end of the century this native optimism which was rooted in history received the additional support of the scientific theory of evolution. Undergirded by Herbert Spencer's social interpretation of Darwin's conclusions, men could now believe as never before in the myth of inevitable progress. For Americans, belief in progress included the assurance that the democracy which had so recently flowered in America must shortly be embraced by the whole world.<sup>144</sup>

#### Practicalism

Henry Steele Commager has described the intense practicality which the nineteenth-century American extended to most matters.<sup>145</sup> He summarized the situation by saying that

the [nineteenth-century] American was practical about politics, religion, culture, and science.<sup>146</sup>

The American cared little for theories and speculations, but he was always interested in ideas which brought results

<sup>143</sup>Commager, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>144</sup>According to R. H. Gabriel, one element in America's democratic faith was the doctrine that America's mission was to cherish and then to hold forth to the whole world the democratic ideal. Gabriel, op. cit., pp. 22-25.

<sup>145</sup>Commager, op. cit., pp. 7-13.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., p. 7.



or provided a basis for action and conduct.

The philosophical manifestation of this attitude can be seen in the readiness with which Americans accepted the philosophy of pragmatism as it was developed late in the century. As Commager analyzed it:

Practical, democratic, individualistic, opportunistic, spontaneous, hopeful, pragmatism was wonderfully adapted to the temperament of the average American. . . . No wonder that, despite the broadsides of more formidable philosophers, pragmatism caught on until it came to be almost the official philosophy of America. To Americans it seemed the common sense of the matter . . .<sup>147</sup>

### Conclusion

When the theology of Edgar Young Mullins is examined in the context of his nineteenth-century American environment, it becomes quite apparent that many of his assumptions, attitudes, interests, and emphases were shared by a great number of his contemporaries. Indeed, both the general national environment and Mullins' personal evangelical-Baptist environment, along with the personalism, pragmatism, Jamesian psychology, and experiential theology which were so prominent in his day, should be kept in mind as factors which influenced the thought of E. Y. Mullins as the content of his theology is studied in the next part of this dissertation.

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

PART II

THE CONTENT OF MULLINS' THEOLOGY

CHAPTER V

SOME PRESUPPOSITIONS AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS  
OF MULLINS' THEOLOGY

## CHAPTER V

### SOME PRESUPPOSITIONS AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MULLINS' THEOLOGY

Most of the major theological writings of Edgar Young Mullins can be classified as systematic, apologetic, or polemic theology on the basis of the nature and content of the work and the evident motivation which impelled its production. Mullins' treatment of each of these three types of theology will be analyzed in turn in the following chapters. Prior to this analysis, however, it seems practical to give attention to some aspects of Mullins' theology which cannot be so easily localized because they cut across the grain of the whole body of his thought. These presuppositions and general characteristics of Mullins' theology will now be considered.

#### Mullins' Presuppositions

The most fundamental problems of philosophy are those which seek to determine the nature of truth and the nature of Being.<sup>1</sup>

With that announcement, E. Y. Mullins revealed his acute awareness of the crucial significance of the vital philosophical issues of epistemology and ontology. Mullins

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<sup>1</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), p. 157.

was not primarily a speculative philosopher. He was a Christian theologian committed to a religion which he believed had been divinely revealed.<sup>2</sup> However, he recognized that every person has an implicit philosophy and, thus, every theological system has philosophical presuppositions.<sup>3</sup>

It was inevitable that Mullins should indicate something of his own convictions concerning the principles of human knowledge and the nature of ultimate reality at various points in his theological treatises. It is important to an understanding of Mullins' theology that his thought on these matters be considered in some detail.

Ordinarily epistemology precedes metaphysics. However, by dealing first with Mullins' world-view, it will be possible to move directly from the presentation of his theory of knowledge to a discussion of his principle of authority which is another noteworthy presupposition.

#### His World-view

Theology inevitably and invariably runs back to metaphysics. But there are problems in metaphysics whose solution is not essential to religion or theology.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Mullins distinguished between the outlook and aim of the theologian and that of the philosopher in "Pragmatism, Humanism and Personalism--The New Philosophic Movement," Review and Expositor, V (October, 1908), 501f.

<sup>3</sup>"Humanizing Our Philosophy," Biblical Review, XIII (April, 1928), 216-17.

<sup>4</sup>The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917), pp. 123f.

This statement helps explain both why Mullins often dealt with the various philosophical world-views in his writings and why he still never found it necessary to explicate his own view of the nature of reality in systematic detail.

Mullins appreciated the efforts of the great philosophers to think clearly and comprehensively about the world as a whole. He admired their various attempts "to find a cord long enough to tie up in one bundle all the facts and forms of reality."<sup>5</sup>

Mullins maintained that each of the various world-views was constructed from the standpoint of a particular "type-phenomenon," a basic fact or principle which had been made the yardstick for measuring all things.<sup>6</sup> He pointed out the far-reaching consequences of this initial choice.

It is evident that the type-phenomenon will determine the nature of the world-view. If matter is selected as the type, materialism will follow. If thought or the idea is selected as the type-phenomenon some form of idealism will result. If the will is chosen, some form of voluntarism ensues. If continuity is made the type-phenomenon, some form of monism will arise. If the philosopher is impressed with the many-ness rather than with the one-ness of things, some form of pluralism will follow. If personal-ity is adopted, some form of personalism or theism is inevitable.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>"Humanizing Our Philosophy," p. 217.

<sup>6</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 159. For this insight, Mullins was indebted to Harold Höffding, The Problems of Philosophy, trans. Galen M. Fisher (New York: Macmillan Company, 1913), pp. 124-25. Höffding, in turn, had borrowed the term "type-phenomenon" from Göthe.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

The very existence of the many world-views indicates that the dominating type-phenomenon can be selected from any known level of reality from the atom up to the idea. Mullins, however, was profoundly convinced that the marvelous fact of personality constituted the highest and richest principle known to man. He said:

Personality as we know it in ourselves is a fact, and therefore a type-phenomenon quite worthy of adoption by any thinker. It seems far preferable to any fact on a lower level. . . .

It would appear that if thought is ever to be established it will have to do justice to the highest fact known to us, human personality.<sup>8</sup>

It is no wonder that Mullins found the personalistic metaphysic as developed by Borden Parker Bowne very appealing. In The Christian Religion he gave an excellent summary of its methods and conclusions:

Personalism emphasizes the synthetic unity of consciousness. It recognizes all the factors of consciousness, including the will and feelings as well as the intellect. It emphasizes man's growth in knowledge and experience. It takes man in the totality of his relations, to nature, to other persons in human society, and to God. It recognizes the common experiences of men and the law of reason by which they understand each other and their own experiences.

From these fundamental facts, recognized and admitted by all thinkers of all schools, personalism builds up its general world-view. Its conclusions are that the ultimate reality is a Person; that we as the creation of his hands are true persons; that we are endowed with freedom; that the divine Person is working out a purpose in human society; and that the goal of history is a perfect society of men and women in fellowship with God.

In reference to physical nature, personalism agrees

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<sup>8</sup>"Humanizing Our Philosophy," pp. 227-28.

with idealism in the view that nature in all its parts is constituted in and for thought; that time and space are forms of thought under which we apprehend the world rather than independent realities. It holds further that the infinite Person, God, contains all finite existence in himself. The finite is related to the infinite and is in actual communication with it and not separated from it by an impossible gulf. Personalism maintains that the key to the meaning of physical nature is the divine purpose which runs through it; that the crown and goal of nature is its highest outcome, man himself; that we must understand the beginning in the light of the outcome and not attempt to cancel the higher elements in the outcome. This is done when we assume some single primary element of being like matter, force, or motion, or even abstract thought, and then resolve all the higher elements back into this.<sup>9</sup>

Mullins produced an impressive list of considerations which tend to support the personalistic philosophy.

First, he said that personalism is a philosophy erected on a broad foundation of fact and experience. It recognizes all that the conception of personality implies and employs it as the key "type-phenomenon" by which it explains the world.

Secondly, he noted that personalism, in contrast to many philosophic systems, has a strong and satisfactory doctrine of causation. On the analogy of the human will, which is recognized as a first cause (in a relative sense, at least), it conceives of the will of God as the moving and efficient cause of all things which are being directed toward a divine end.

In the third place, he declared that personalism is strong in its account of human knowledge. Personalism assumes

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<sup>9</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 112-13.



that the world is not chaos but a cosmos and, therefore, communication is possible between men and between God and man. The world itself can be a medium of communication between minds.

In the fourth place, personalism has a decided appreciation for freedom. From the recognition of man's freedom, the freedom of God is inferred. Thus pantheism is refuted as the free personality of God and man is affirmed.

In the fifth place, personalism has a strong interpretation of the meaning of physical nature. Personalism's view of nature includes the recognition that the deepest meaning of nature is its relation to personal beings and, above all, to the infinite Person.

In the sixth place, personalism gives a worthy account of God's relations to the universe. It insists upon the unity of nature, man, and God. It affirms both the immanence and the transcendence of God, and it insists upon God's presence and purpose in human history. It declares that the development and perfection of a society of persons is the chief end of history, the divinely-chosen goal toward which all things are moving.

Commenting further on this last point, Mullins said that the chief departments of human history all converge upon the one central truth of personality as the key to the meaning of the world. Physical science, morality, man's esthetic

and artistic activities, philosophy, psychology and the psychology of religion, comparative religion--man's earnest participation in all of these endeavors supplies dramatic evidence of his awareness that the meaning of life is dependent upon a supreme Person who is the creator and the goal of all things.<sup>10</sup>

By way of contrast, Mullins pointed out the fallacies of any impersonal conception of the universe.

In the first place, the whole fabric of human thought collapses. This is because the distinction between truth and error ceases to have any meaning if there is no infinite Person who establishes standards and criteria of truth.

In the second place, morality is completely undermined. Ultimately right means conformity to the moral constitution of the universe and wrong means departure from it. But if the world-ground is impersonal, there is no ultimate and absolute basis for morality.

In the third place, man's religious life is exposed as empty, deceptive, and meaningless. The reality of the religious object is essential to any worthy idea of religion.<sup>11</sup>

E. Y. Mullins was careful not to identify Bowne's personalistic philosophy or any other philosophy with

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<sup>10</sup>For this whole discussion of the strength of personalism, see ibid., pp. 113-19.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 119-20.

Christianity. He said:

Christianity is primarily not a philosophy of the universe. It is a religion. It is not founded upon metaphysics.<sup>12</sup>

However, as a theistic religion, Christianity implies a theistic world-view. Mullins believed that personalism, which led directly to theism, conserved more fully than any other philosophy the biblical representation of God and his relation with the world.

Christian theism . . . as taught in the New Testament, is in the chief essentials the same as [Bowne's] personalism. . . . The Christian theistic view is that God is the infinite Spirit, personal, holy, loving, purposive, immanent in the world, and transcendent. Personalism is in exact agreement with the New Testament in these respects.<sup>13</sup>

Mullins did note the danger of the monistic tendency of personalism. He also recognized certain logical difficulties in the personalistic argument. However, he managed to absolve personalism from most of the weaknesses that generally accompany monistic systems of thought, and he certainly offered no metaphysical alternative.<sup>14</sup>

In a review of The Christian Religion, W. T. Conner once said:

The philosophical standpoint of the author, so far as it

<sup>12</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 163.

<sup>13</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 122.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-23; Freedom and Authority in Religion (Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland Press, 1913), p. 145; "Humanizing our Philosophy," pp. 230-31.

is stated, is that of personalism.<sup>15</sup>

With regard to the total theological production of E. Y. Mullins, it can be said that his metaphysical presuppositions, so far as they are stated, are those of personalism.

Special mention should be made, however, of one point at which the emphasis of Mullins was somewhat different from that of Bowne. Both men conceived of reality as existing in two different spheres. Bowne called these two levels of reality the phenomenal and the ontological.<sup>16</sup> He held that the latter alone is substantial; the former exists only in and for intelligence. His primary concern was to emphasize the unity of personal experience and to demonstrate that every level of reality can be truly known by the experiencing personality.<sup>17</sup>

Mullins said that "broadly speaking, there are two spheres of reality as known to us."<sup>18</sup> He was willing to call these by the Kantian terms "phenomenal" and "noumenal," although he preferred to speak of "the physical sphere" and

<sup>15</sup>W. T. Conner, review of Edgar Young Mullins' The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression, in Review and Expositor, XIV (October, 1917), 496.

<sup>16</sup>He deliberately rejected the term "noumenal" because of its usual Kantian connotation of an unknowable Ding an sich.

<sup>17</sup>Borden Parker Bowne, Personalism (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908), pp. 109-12.

<sup>18</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 106.

"the spiritual sphere" or "the world of matter" and "the world of spirit."<sup>19</sup> Like Bowne, Mullins emphatically rejected the Kantian agnosticism regarding the noumenal or spiritual world. Like Bowne, Mullins believed that real knowledge of both realms could be acquired through personal experience. However, Mullins' chief concern was to emphasize that it is only through a distinctively religious experience that one gets to know the reality behind the world of phenomena. He said:

Religious experience . . . supplies the missing link in the theoretical attempt of men to harmonize the noumenal and phenomenal worlds. The truth then is not as Kant tried to show that there is a phenomenal world which we may know and another world of "things in themselves" which we cannot know. The truth is rather that there is a world of phenomena which we know in one way, and a world of noumena which we know in another way.<sup>20</sup>

This last declaration leads quite naturally to an examination of Mullins' theory of knowledge.

#### His theory of knowledge

General knowledge.--The relation between Mullins' world-view and his theory of knowledge can be seen in the list of assumptions which he postulated as presuppositions to any conception of the possibility of human knowledge.

First, he assumed the objective reality of the external world. Second, he assumed that man lives in a universe.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.; Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 248, 281; Why Is Christianity True?, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., p. 281. Cf. ibid., pp. 248, 254, 284.

Third, he assumed the coherence of the various parts of this universe in both the physical and the spiritual realms.

Fourth, he assumed the reliability of the human faculties and powers for the discovery of truth. Fifth, he assumed that mankind discovers truth in the normal processes of life and that in this discovery man's whole nature is involved--his reason, his feelings, and his will. Sixth, he assumed the remarkable fact of acting, reacting, self-transcending human personality.

Mullins believed that such assumptions as these are essential to every meaningful theory of knowledge. He said that without them the very idea of truth itself would be impossible or meaningless.<sup>21</sup>

But what is knowledge? Mullins' definition of the essential elements of knowledge was borrowed from Borden Parker Bowne. Knowledge, he said, is:

- (1) That which is self-evident in the nature of reason.
- (2) That which is immediately given in experience.
- (3) That which is cogently inferred from the given.<sup>22</sup>

Mullins pointed out that this definition includes several factors. There is, first of all, an internal factor of knowledge, the reason itself. Second, there is an external

<sup>21</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 49-50.

<sup>22</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., p. 259; The Christian Religion . . ., p. 35; Cf. Borden Parker Bowne, The Theory of Thought and Knowledge (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1897), p. 368.

factor, something which may come from without, but which is immediately given in personal experience. In the third place, there is the process of inference which is based on both of the preceding factors.<sup>23</sup>

When the elements of this definition are combined with the fundamental assumptions listed above, the implication is that knowledge arises in the life-processes of persons as the data of experience is assimilated and verified by the active reason of man. Mullins used the analogy of the growth of the infant mind to describe how the knowledge-process progresses.

We slowly distinguish objects, analyze the phenomena; name or learn the names of the factors in the field of observation; relate objects and sensations to one another, learn to distinguish distance, color, size, and all the other aspects of the world about us; form conceptions of the objects learned; combine the concepts into judgments, combine the judgments into new concepts, and from these pass to new judgments. From the judgments we pass to hypotheses, and through the verification of the hypotheses we formulate laws, and by means of the laws we pass to new fields of research and extend the frontiers of knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

Mullins was certain that the person participating in the knowledge-process was no mere passive recipient of impressions from without. He believed that man's reason gives form to the contents of knowledge just as a dipper gives shape to the water it takes up from a stream.<sup>25</sup>

However, he was very careful to emphasize that this

<sup>23</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 35.

<sup>24</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., p. 169.

<sup>25</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 36.

active reason of man, which is indispensable in all knowing, in not the abstract reason alone. He stressed the unitary nature of the human response in the knowledge-yielding experience.

Our entire nature in fact passes through the experience when we know a thing most deeply and truly. This is the new principle which modern philosophy and science are recognizing.<sup>26</sup>

Mullins was especially impressed by what he considered the central truth of pragmatism, viz., the role of the will as a factor in the attainment of knowledge. Mullins agreed with the pragmatists that man knows in the richest and truest sense not by means of mere logical deduction but by actual living experience with the realities of the world in which he lives. He said that this was especially true if one sought knowledge of religious reality.<sup>27</sup> Science can observe physical phenomena and discover truth by the application of the principle of mechanical causality. Philosophy can offer logical explanations of the nature of the world-process by employing the principle of rationality. But religion is concerned with personality and the pursuit of religious truth must be undertaken by one's whole person.<sup>28</sup>

Religious knowledge.--Mullins held that by an act of

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<sup>26</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., p. 156.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 153-54, 161-63.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 160-66; Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 31-32.



the will one can commit himself to the ultimate, supernatural power behind all phenomenal reality. He agreed with William James that the soul of man has a perfect right to assume God's existence and to act upon this assumption. He was further convinced, as James had been, that by this voluntaristic means one entered a realm of new realities and that through vital experience with the object of worship one acquired knowledge which had hitherto been inaccessible to him.<sup>29</sup> Mullins said that

we have in religious experience actual knowledge of an order of reality, a form of existence which is totally diverse from physical nature, an order of reality objective to man yet capable of interacting with his spirit and of achieving in and through him definite moral and spiritual results. This establishes our claim that religion is knowledge and not merely belief.<sup>30</sup>

Of what does this new knowledge consist? As an absolute minimum, Mullins defined man's religious knowledge as the recognition of a power beyond himself, which is spiritual and which acts upon him redemptively.<sup>31</sup> He noted that William James had agreed with this description of the content of religious knowledge, although James had contended that any attempt to identify the object of the religious experience passed beyond the bounds of knowledge into the uncertain area of overbeliefs.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 161-65, 283.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 262.                      <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 272f.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 261f, 278f.

Mullins, of course, believed that much more could be affirmed concerning the knowledge produced by Christian experience. But, at this point, he was primarily seeking to show that religious knowledge is empirical in character and that it is based on a distinct order of objective facts rather than on abstract speculation. Thus, it is verifiable although not in the usual mathematical sense which is characteristic of physical science.<sup>33</sup>

Mullins concluded that by means of the religious experience, man passed over into the noumenal world and was enabled to know what Kant had said could not be known, viz., the reality behind the world of phenomena. Thus it became evident that the spiritual world is a knowable world like that of physical nature.<sup>34</sup>

Christian knowledge.--Mullins stoutly maintained that knowledge arises in the religious sphere on the basis of the same principles as it does in other spheres. Knowledge is the product of experience. Mullins held that, since the Christian's experience of God in Jesus Christ is the most perfect which can be imagined, the knowledge which results from it is the most complete which can be attained.

He said that the elementary Christian experience becomes definite knowledge by the same kind of processes which

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 260, 163-66.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 248, 254, 280-81, 284-85.

operate when other forms of experience are converted into formal knowledge.

By means of discrimination and association, by means of intuition, and memory, and inference, and all the resources of the soul for dealing with the spiritual realities of religion, the Christian builds up the knowledge of his spiritual universe. There is an analytic process by which the elements of experience are separated from each other, and a synthetic process by which they are recombined with each other and with new forms of knowledge as these arise in experience. In all these processes the Christian is guided by the Scriptures. The revelation of God in Christ is the foundation which supports him in all his mental and spiritual activities. But the processes of the mind continue just the same.<sup>35</sup>

Mullins went on to explicate the specific elements of knowledge which the Christian experience yields.

First, the Christian comes to recognize a power from without which has begun to act upon him and continues to do so.

Second, this power is recognized as spiritual. It is entirely different from the powers previously experienced in the physical realm.

Third, the power is recognized as redemptive. The Christian is aware that his own higher nature is being recreated by this divine power.

Fourth, the power is recognized as personal. The Christian is convinced that his fellowship with the spiritual, redemptive power is a fellowship between persons, which is carried on in the personal terms of love and freedom, trust

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<sup>35</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 67-68.

and obedience, initiative and response.

Fifth, the Christian comes to know the religious object in his experience as triune. Mullins described this development this way:

The gospel came to us, and we found God revealed in Christ. Thus God became an object for our contemplation. As objective to us we found what God is in his relations to man through the revelation in Christ. But we also needed to know what God is as subject. We needed an interior view of God, a union with him in personal fellowship. This blessing we obtained through the operation of the Holy Spirit within us. Thus we know God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>36</sup>

Mullins had no doubt that the knowledge produced by Christian experience was supported by an accompanying certainty. Admittedly, such knowledge was not capable of mathematical proof and it could not be substantiated by any all-compelling logic. However, Mullins believed it could be verified in accordance with principles of its own nature.

Mullins recognized that the crucial issue was the identification of the dynamic author-object of religious experience. Here Mullins' answer was made largely in terms of a causal argument. He was sure that the Christian could know "beyond a peradventure" that the change which had been effected in him was the result of the causal power of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Mullins described the Christian's basis of certainty in this way:

He called to Christ, and Christ answered, and the Holy

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 68-71.

Spirit renewed him in the image of Christ. His spiritual nature in all its parts now answers to the moral likeness of Christ, not perfectly of course, but in principle. If then the Christian knows that a new power from without has entered his spiritual life, creating him anew and readjusting his relations to God; and if that readjustment was consciously a readjustment through Jesus Christ and the inworking Spirit of God; and if the result is the restoration in him of the image of God and the fulfilment in the Christian of the inmost and deepest demands of his nature, there cannot be for him a question of the causal agency of Christ and the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, Mullins believed, the Christian could know himself to be in possession of distinctive knowledge which was the result of new moral and spiritual realities. He could make no claim to superior reason but he had been enlightened by a unique experience.<sup>38</sup>

#### His principle of authority

E. Y. Mullins believed that the problem of religious authority was one of the most vital and significant problems of his age and, indeed, of any age.<sup>39</sup> He explored the various aspects of the problem and set forth his own solution in his book Freedom and Authority in Religion, which was published in 1913.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-74. Cf. his argument in "Is Jesus Christ the Author of Religious Experience?" Review and Expositor, I (April, 1904), 60-70.

<sup>38</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 65.

<sup>39</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 3-7; The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 10-12. Many scholars agreed with Mullins at this point. C. S. Gardner said that Mullins' book on religious authority dealt "with what may fairly be called the central theological issue of this age." C. S. Gardner,

Mullins maintained that the principle of authority arises in all spheres as truth is discovered. An understanding of his view of authority in general will lead to an exposition of his principle of religious authority.

Authority in general.--Mullins began with the individual's interaction with the universe. He said that the environment imposes upon the person certain objective data. From the foundation provided by observation, the individual moves through an assimilative process in which his initial suspended judgments are replaced by static conceptions and these, in turn, become judgments and generalizations which, at last, are transformed into definite conclusions or laws. In so far as these laws are definite and fixed in form, they become tools for future thought and action.

Moreover, these individual discoveries of truth always become socialized. They pass over from the individual into common human use. Society adopts them, accepts them as true without repeated proof, and externalizes them in canons, standards, or institutions. These accepted truths then become the didactic elements in civilization. On the basis of them, further progress is made.

Thus authority arises in every area of human life. Under the limitations of man's present existence, no human

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review of Edgar Young Mullins' Freedom and Authority in Religion, in Review and Expositor, X (July, 1913), 465.

authority can be regarded as final or absolute, and the right of criticism remains as a necessary means of correcting the errors of the past. However, real and permanent progress is being made as valid knowledge is acquired and legitimate authority is established.<sup>40</sup>

Mullins contended that the rise of authority also meant the rise of the possibility of true freedom. He said that man becomes free only as he obeys the rules of life prescribed to him by the objective universe.

Our freedom consists in the fulness of life and joy which results from our conformity to the eternal laws of being as these become known to us in the externalized and authoritative forms of past experiences . . .<sup>41</sup>

Authority in religion.<sup>42</sup>--Mullins held that in the realm of religion, as in other realms, authority arises out of experience as the result of the interaction of the individual person and his environment. Of course, it should be remembered that in this realm, in contrast to the physical realm, the environment itself is also personal since God, the ultimate reality of the environment is a Person.

<sup>40</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 167-92, passim.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>42</sup>The following discussion represents an attempt to present the full-orbed view of Mullins on the matter of religious authority as it is set forth in his book Freedom and Authority in Religion. In some of his other writings Mullins sounds more like a traditional biblicist when he discusses the authority of the Bible. See, e.g., Baptists and the Bible (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, n.d.)

Thus God, the personal center of the spiritual environment, is the supreme authority in religion. But because God pre-eminently respects the free personality of man, his authority can only be exercised as men come to appropriate the truth of God for themselves. This they are forever unable to do unaided. Science does not deal with ultimate reality. Philosophy does, but its merely rational principle of operation never enables it to attain absolute certainty and assurance. Revelation is necessary. God must come to men in a personal way, revealing himself, and thus his truth, to them. This he has done in Jesus Christ, according to E. Y. Mullins. Mullins expressed it this way:

Jesus Christ . . . is the "seat" of authority in religion. In him God sits, or rather in and through him God acts for our redemption. This is the New Testament teaching throughout. Now there are no terms in which the highest ideal of religious authority may be set forth, no ideal conditions for the free unfolding of human personality which are not personally embodied in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Redeemer of men.<sup>43</sup>

By opening up a new sphere of reality for man through the creation of a new world of experience, Christ has done authoritatively that which both science and philosophy were unable to do, viz., he has revealed the whole truth to man. He has literally added a hemisphere to the sum total of truth which is attainable by man. Because of this men recognize his absolute and final authority.

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<sup>43</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 315-16.



Christ's method of exercising his authority involves a threefold paradox. First, his revelations of truth to man are so given as to become discoveries of truth by man. Second, he exerts his authority by making men free. Third, he exerts his authority over men by transferring his authority to them.

Christ thus meets all the requirements for an objective authority which fully allows for human freedom. By yielding to his authority, men are saved from the dangers of subjectivism and mysticism. They are also freed from all illegitimate impersonal forms of authority in religion. Religion is personal and the true religious authority is the personal authority of Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup>

What then is the place of the Bible in the Christian religion? Briefly stated, the view of E. Y. Mullins is that the authoritativeness of the Bible

is due to the fact that it preserves and brings to us in literary form the truths acquired by mankind in the free interaction of its individual units with God.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, the Bible is the record of God's gradual, progressive revelation which leads up to and includes the final revelation in Christ. As revelation is a matter of experience, so the Bible arose out of the life-experiences of the people to whom God revealed himself first in the history of Israel and finally in the person of Christ. The

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 286-340.    <sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 342-43.

Bible is the literature produced by these life-experiences.

Mullins emphasized that the life preceded the literature historically, but he also held that the literature is indispensable to the life. Having been produced by the life, the literature makes possible the continuation of the life. The Bible was written by men who had met God in a living experience. Now through the Bible, men today are able to repeat these experiences, as it were, and thus meet God for themselves. The Bible is the authoritative means for making this possible.<sup>46</sup>

Mullins held the inductive theory of the nature of biblical inspiration as it had been set forth by James Orr, William Sanday and Marcus Dods.<sup>47</sup> This theory maintains that the biblical writers employed the general ideas, the language, and the forms of speech in common use in their own age to convey their religious message from God. It stresses the fact that the primary purpose of the Bible is a religious purpose and, therefore, the concept of the infallibility of the Bible should be applied primarily to its religious teaching.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 342-54.

<sup>47</sup>James Orr, Revelation and Inspiration (London: Duckworth and Company, 1919); William Sanday, Inspiration (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1893); Marcus Dods, The Bible: Its Origin and Nature (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905).

<sup>48</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 379-83.

As to the process of the formation of the biblical canon, Mullins was certain that the role of the councils was simply to register the common convictions of the Christian community. The criteria for judging the various books were basically two: apostolicity and spiritual congruity or agreement with the genuine Christian experience. Actually, these two were the inner and the outer aspect of the same principle.<sup>49</sup>

Mullins accepted the validity of biblical criticism. While aware of some follies of criticism, he said that on the whole its service had been helpful and its results substantial. However, he contended that the validation of the Bible by means of the life-experiences of Christian believers has been more profound and more impressive than all the results of criticism.<sup>50</sup>

Mullins held that the authority of the Bible, like that of the Christ himself, since it is religious, spiritual, and moral rather than legal, does not hinder the freedom of man; on the contrary, it enhances it.<sup>51</sup>

It is evident from the preceding discussion that E. Y. Mullins located religious authority in two objects: Christ and the Scriptures. But for him, there was no question as to which was primary. He explained the relation of

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 354-58.      <sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 358-64.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 394-98.

the two in this way:

. . . Christ as the Revealer of God and Redeemer of men is the seat of authority in religion and above and underneath and before the Bible. But the Bible is the authoritative literature which leads us to Christ. As such the Bible is not something interposed between God and the soul. It is rather the thoughts and truths and description of the life-adjustments required to give us the vision of God in the face of Jesus Christ.<sup>52</sup>

The truth provided by both authorities, Christ and the Scriptures, is appropriated by the Christian in the process of his distinctive experience of God's redeeming grace.<sup>53</sup>

#### Mullins' General Characteristics

In the compilation of any list such as the following, subjective judgments are both necessary and inevitable. However, all of these characteristics seem to this author to be quite prominent in the theology of E. Y. Mullins: his loyalty to fact, his appeal to experience, his confidence in the Bible, his concern for the individual, his love of freedom and democracy, his attitude of optimism, his desire to be practical and relevant, and his willingness to restate.

#### His loyalty to fact

Mullins believed that genuine Christianity and genuine science are at one in their intention to face facts squarely. He said that this was the common standing ground

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 394.

<sup>53</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 11-12, 47-48.

for Christianity and modern science: loyalty to fact. He compared T. H. Huxley's description of the scientific attitude to Jesus' description of the Christian attitude.

You must become as a little child in the presence of the facts of nature, said Huxley. "Except ye be converted and become as a little child, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," said Jesus.<sup>54</sup>

Of course, Mullins did not believe that science and religion dealt with the same order of facts. Science was limited to facts of the physical world while religion was most especially concerned with the facts of the spiritual world. However, he believed that both sets of facts were equally real.<sup>55</sup> He also believed that a primary concern of the Christian thinker must be to demonstrate to the scientifically-minded modern man that the spiritual world belongs to the realm of fact as truly as does the physical.<sup>56</sup>

The motivation which provoked Mullins' emphasis on fact, then, was twofold: first, he wanted to show that genuine religious knowledge was based on a distinct and definite order of facts and not on abstract reasoning;<sup>57</sup> second, he wanted to prove that the Christian thinker was not afraid of the

<sup>54</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 28; cf. "The Modern Minister and His Task," Record of Christian Work, XLVI (October, 1927), 712-13.

<sup>55</sup>Why is Christianity True?, pp. 10-16.

<sup>56</sup>"The Call to Southern Baptists to Reinforce Theological Education," Baptist Argus, July 17, 1902, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 234-58.

facts of any sphere of existence.<sup>58</sup>

His appeal to experience

Mullins held that knowledge of the facts of the spiritual world, like that of the facts of the physical world, is acquired through experience.<sup>59</sup> Religious experience yields authoritative knowledge of religious facts, and on the basis of this knowledge theological statements can be made.<sup>60</sup> This was the significance of Christian experience for E. Y. Mullins: it affords a factual basis for Christian certainty.<sup>61</sup>

In one of the most provocative addresses of his career, speaking to the first Baptist World Congress in 1905, Mullins proposed that the development of a theology constructed from the standpoint of the total Christian experience would be one of the most beneficial theological projects of the future.<sup>62</sup> That Mullins made Christian experience a formative principle

<sup>58</sup>"The Issue of Issues," Western Recorder, September 28, 1922, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 161-62; The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 82-83.

<sup>60</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 1-2.

<sup>61</sup>Why is Christianity True?, pp. 284-85, 303; The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 72-81.

<sup>62</sup>"The Theological Trend," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, First Congress (London, 1905), pp. 145-52, esp. pp. 150-52. Even prior to this date, Mullins had already begun to express an interest in such an undertaking and to declare the merits of it. See, e.g., "Christian Life and Theology: A Book Review," Baptist Argus, April 25, 1901, p. 1; "The Importance of Doctrinal Preaching," Seminary Magazine, XVI (February, 1903), 164.

in the exposition of his own theology will be evident as his systematic, apologetic, and polemic writings are studied in the following chapters.

His confidence in the Bible

In the Baptist World Alliance address to which reference has just been made, E. Y. Mullins also said that the best theology of the future would continue to accept the authority of the Scriptures.<sup>63</sup> Mullins' emphasis upon the theological value of Christian experience did not mean that he de-emphasized the Christian Scriptures. He declared:

Scripture as a record of original experience cannot be transcended, nor can it lose its authority; for the sufficient reason that to discard Scripture is to discard the only means of understanding the historic Christ . . . .<sup>64</sup>

In an age when the confidence of many in the authority of the Scriptures was being weakened by the "results" of biblical criticism, Mullins was certain that the inherent worth of the Bible could not be impaired. Indeed, he welcomed all fair and legitimate criticism of the biblical writings.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup>"The Theological Trend," p. 150. Actually Mullins brought the roles of Scripture and experience together by the following statement:

"Positively stated, the best theology of the future will continue to accept the authority of the Scriptures, but it will take as its starting-point, for the interpretation and illumination of Scripture, the facts of Christian experience, not in a single aspect, but in their totality."

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>65</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 185-89; Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 358-64.

Viewing the Bible as "the record of God's revelation of himself to his people,"<sup>66</sup> a literature which arose out of the life of a people who were related to God,<sup>67</sup> Mullins was convinced that its testimony to religious reality was true. On this basis he could describe the biblical revelation as "sufficient, certain, and authoritative for all religious ends."<sup>68</sup>

His concern for the individual

To Edgar Young Mullins, the essence of religion must be understood in terms of relations between the individual person and his God. He said:

Primarily the religious relation is a relation between God and the individual man. Religious privilege and religious duty subsist between men and God in the first instance in their capacity as individuals and only secondarily in their social relations.<sup>69</sup>

Whether he was speaking of revelation, authority, evangelism, salvation, Christian service, Christian ethics or Christian destiny, Mullins focused his attention first on the individual. Speaking as a Baptist, he defined the distinctive principle of the Baptists as the competency of

<sup>66</sup>The Christian Religion . . . ., p. 142; see further pp. 142-53.

<sup>67</sup>Freedom and Authority . . . ., pp. 342-54.

<sup>68</sup>The Christian Religion . . . ., p. 151. Cf. the pamphlet Baptists and the Bible (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, n.d.)

<sup>69</sup>The Axioms of Religion (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1908), p. 93.



the individual soul under God in religion.<sup>70</sup> Speaking as an evangelical Christian, he said that the main thrust of the gospel is the message of salvation for the individual.<sup>71</sup>

To be sure, Mullins recognized that the gospel has communal and social implications. He believed that a voluntary unity should prevail among Christians,<sup>72</sup> and he held that the gospel was destined to leaven all forms of human life and activity.<sup>73</sup> However, his major concern was definitely the redemption of the individual, which he believed was the dynamic source of every possibility of social improvement.<sup>74</sup>

#### His love of freedom and democracy

This characteristic is a corollary to the preceding one. A high regard for the individual naturally produces a desire that the individual be free to determine his own destiny. Both of these characteristics may be regarded as elements in the personalistic emphasis of E. Y. Mullins.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., pp. 56-58.

<sup>71</sup>"Jesus in the Modern World," Princeton Seminary Bulletin, XIX (November, 1925), p. 3.

<sup>72</sup>"Luther and the Reformation," (MS in the files of Inman Johnson, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), pp. 8-9. Cf. The Axioms . . ., pp. 293-94.

<sup>73</sup>"The Message of Baptists to the Modern World," Baptist World, June 17, 1915, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid. Cf. "Luther and the Reformation," p. 10.

<sup>75</sup>The Axioms . . ., p. 279.

Mullins rejoiced to observe that individualism and freedom were dominant ideals of the modern age.<sup>76</sup> He did not agree with all the bases on which freedom was advocated in the modern world, but he believed that the attainment of freedom in every realm of human life was part of the divine intention. He was convinced that all freedoms ultimately rest on religious freedom.<sup>77</sup>

Mullins held that creation in the image of God had made it possible for man to be free, i.e., capable of self-determination.<sup>78</sup> Believing that freedom is thus man's birthright, Mullins deplored every doctrine, force, or circumstance which mitigated against human freedom.<sup>79</sup>

A democratic form of government is an expression of the proper exercise of freedom. Mullins stood resolutely for democracy in both Church and State, convinced that the problems attendant to democracy by no means invalidated it.<sup>80</sup>

#### His attitude of optimism

Like many men of his day, E. Y. Mullins was by nature

<sup>76</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 11-13.

<sup>77</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 282-83.

<sup>78</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 258-59.

<sup>79</sup>This emphasis appears most prominently in Mullins' polemic theology because he regarded the Baptists as preeminently the advocates of freedom.

<sup>80</sup>"The Union Movement: The Use of Terms," Baptist World, August 22, 1918, p. 4. Cf. the pamphlet Soul Freedom Applied to Church Life and Organization (Nashville: Baptist 75 Million Campaign, n.d.)

an optimist. He believed that mankind under God was making progress in many directions. He held that man's freedom was increasing simultaneously with his apprehension of valid authority and conformity to it.<sup>81</sup> He did not regard theology as a static discipline, and he was encouraged by some of the developments which were taking place.<sup>82</sup> At least in the early part of his ministry, Mullins was hopeful that the progress of physical science would lead to a widespread recognition of the underlying spiritual reality on the part of scientifically-minded men.<sup>83</sup> During the first decade of the twentieth century, like many of his contemporaries, Mullins dared to believe that, through the Christian missionary enterprise, the Spirit of the Lord was "moving on toward the conquest of the world."<sup>84</sup>

In brief, E. Y. Mullins' great hope was that the progress of Western civilization, which he believed was so apparent in his day, would prove to be a preview of and a prerequisite to the coming of the kingdom of God among men.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Freedom and Authority . . ., pp. 188-89.

<sup>82</sup>"Doctrinal Developments of One Hundred Years," Baptist World, September 6, 1917, pp. 3-4. Mullins regarded most of these developments as "changes of emphases."

<sup>83</sup>"President Mullins' Inaugural Address," Seminary Magazine, XIII (November 1899), 74.

<sup>84</sup>"The Call to Foreign Missions," Baptist World, April 14, 1910, p. 21.

<sup>85</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 274-308. The last chapter of the book is entitled "Baptists and World Progress."

Not even the catastrophe of the World War could destroy Mullins' optimistic outlook. Along with many other Wilsonian idealists, Mullins found it possible to interpret the war as one being fought "for freedom and democracy."<sup>86</sup>

Mullins maintained that the most characteristic and, also, the most hopeful tendency of his time was the world-wide rise of democracy. He was persuaded that democracy was destined to prevail throughout the earth, and he hailed this prospect as one which promised Baptists an incomparable opportunity since they, of all people, were most admirably adapted to the coming democratic age.<sup>87</sup> Mullins joyfully announced:

We are approaching the Baptist age of the world because we are approaching the age of the triumph of democracy.<sup>88</sup>

The post-war mood of disillusion, which affected many during the 1920's, may have tempered Mullins' spirit of optimism although it did not quench it. For example, in the last year of his life, in an address prepared for the Baptist World Alliance, Mullins acknowledged the mounting criticism

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<sup>86</sup>"The Union Movement . . . ," p. 4. Cf. "The Vision of the Preacher Against the Background of the World War," Baptist World, June 13, 1918, pp. 3-5.

<sup>87</sup>Cf. "Baptists in the Modern World," Review and Expositor, VIII (July, 1911), 348; "The Message of Baptists to the Modern World," Baptist World, June 17, 1915, pp. 5, 9; "The Challenge of the Present Hour to Baptists," Western Recorder, April 12, 1923, p. 7.

<sup>88</sup>"Baptist Rock-Bed Ideals," Baptist World, May 9, 1912, p. 9.

of democracy. In his reply, he declared his confidence that democracy could answer all its critics, but he conceded that democratic processes in both Church and State, being essentially spiritual, necessarily move slowly.<sup>89</sup>

His desire to be practical and relevant

To E. Y. Mullins, theology was a practical science. As the systematic explanation of the facts of religion, it was a necessity if religion was to be understood, defined, defended and propagated.<sup>90</sup>

Mullins deplored everything abstract, speculative, and merely theoretical. It was his opinion that all theology, like all theological training, should be vitally related to life.<sup>91</sup>

Theology, then, should be relevant, i.e., related to the world to which it is addressed. Theological expressions should take into account recent developments and current conditions in all areas of human life and interest.<sup>92</sup> An examination of E. Y. Mullins' explanations of the circumstances

<sup>89</sup>"Baptist Life in the World's Life," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Fourth Congress, (Toronto, 1928), p. 58.

<sup>90</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 16-17.

<sup>91</sup>"What Should the Churches Demand of the Theological Schools?" Baptist Congress, Proceedings, 1904, p. 25; "The Actual Relation of the Pastor to the Sunday-School," Homiletic Review, LI (February, 1906), 122.

<sup>92</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. vii-viii.

which motivated the production of his several books indicates that the major portion of his theological writing was done in a deliberate attempt to supply relevant answers to the practical religious questions, problems, and needs of his day.<sup>93</sup>

His willingness to restate

In the interest of practicality and relevance, there is a necessity for periodic restatement of theological expressions of religious truth. Mullins said that theology faces perpetually the problem of adaptation, i.e., restatement.

One reason for restatement is to deal specifically with current issues. Mullins noted that

theologies written seventy-five or a hundred years ago fail to touch many vital issues which present themselves in modern times, not because the theologies were necessarily false, but because the controversies have shifted to new ground.<sup>94</sup>

Another reason is the fact that, while truth does not change, men apprehend truth with increasing clearness.<sup>95</sup> Mullins definitely believed that this was the case with regard to

<sup>93</sup>Cf. e.g., the following introductory statements: Why Is Christianity True?, p. vii; The Axioms . . ., pp. 7, 25-26; Freedom and Authority . . ., p. 3; Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. v-vi; Spiritualism--A Delusion (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1920), p. 6.

<sup>94</sup>"Baptists in the Modern World," p. 346.

<sup>95</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. vii.

biblical truth because of the very fact that the Bible is no ordinary book. In his inaugural address as president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1899, he said:

To declare that our fathers have settled nothing in their study of the Bible is to blight the hope of ever attaining certainty, and to eliminate God and the Holy Spirit from Christian history. But to maintain that the fathers discovered all the truth there is in the Scriptures is to lower the Bible to the level of a human production  
 . . . <sup>96</sup>

Throughout his career, E. Y. Mullins continually called for relevant restatements of evangelical and Baptist theology. In 1921, he boldly affirmed that the most significant theological thought of that era was being done by those who were interested in the restatement of beliefs. He described three groups of persons.

There are two groups who are thinking hard. First, the radicals who are trying to overthrow the evangelical faith. They are framing a new scheme of doctrine. Another group who are thinking are defending the evangelical faith. There is a third group who are not thinking much. The neutrals who have no definite message and deprecate all efforts to restate the faith.<sup>97</sup>

There is no question as to the group with which Mullins identified himself. His program of restatement in the areas of systematic, apologetic, and polemic theology will be studied in the following three chapters. E. Y. Mullins' goal for all of his work may well be inferred from

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<sup>96</sup>"President Mullins' Inaugural Address," p. 74.

<sup>97</sup>"Baptists and Creeds," Western Recorder, October 13, 1921, p. 4.

the motto often attributed to him:

Everything that is true can be so stated that everybody will have to accept it.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Quoted in the editorial "Dr. Mullins' striking Sayings," Baptist World, April 4, 1912, p. 16.



CHAPTER VI

MULLINS' SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

## CHAPTER VI

### MULLINS' SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Quite naturally, most of the material of this chapter can be derived from Mullins' magnum opus in systematic theology which is entitled The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression.<sup>1</sup> However, some of his other writings in which he deals with particular theological topics will prove helpful at various points along the way.

#### Mullins' New Approach to Systematic Theology

Edgar Young Mullins taught systematic theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for eighteen years before he produced his major book on the subject. Reference has already been made to the way in which Mullins continued to use the textbook of his teaching predecessors, James P. Boyce and F. H. Kerfoot, and to require rather detailed mastery of the same even while he developed and delivered his own distinctive lectures on the various topics of systematic theology.<sup>2</sup> However, when Mullins' The Christian Religion finally replaced the Abstract of Boyce and Kerfoot as the main textbook in 1917, it meant that a new era of instruction

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<sup>1</sup>The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917).

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 86f.

in systematic theology had definitely been inaugurated at Southern Seminary. The nature and extent of Mullins' new approach can be indicated by a comparison of his book with that which had previously been used for thirty years.<sup>3</sup>

The philosophical approach of Boyce and Kerfoot

Boyce's theology.--John A. Broadus long ago pointed out that James P. Boyce's presentation of theology was greatly influenced by that of Charles Hodge, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary for fifty years, under whom Boyce studied from 1849 to 1851.<sup>4</sup> Hodge's theology, in turn, owed much to the system of Francis Turretin, the seventeenth-century

<sup>3</sup>See James Petigru Boyce, Abstract of Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887). Cf. the revision of the work by F. H. Kerfoot which was published by the same publisher in 1899. The Boyce-Kerfoot text had been used continuously at Southern Seminary from the time of its first publication in 1887. Even before that, an earlier form of Boyce's work, privately printed, had been used by his students since 1882. See Boyce's preface to his book, p. v.

<sup>4</sup>Broadus gives considerable information concerning the development of Boyce's Abstract. See John A. Broadus, Memoir of James Petigru Boyce, (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), pp. 304-311. The most important work of Charles Hodge is his Systematic Theology (3 vols.; New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1873). For a brief period after its first appearance, Boyce used this work, despite its great length, as the textbook for his course in systematic theology. Then in 1880-1882, he used the single-volume work by Charles Hodge's son, Archibald Alexander Hodge, which relied heavily on the elder Hodge's materials and conclusions. See Archibald Alexander Hodge, Outlines of Theology (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1868), pp. iv-v. An examination of Boyce's Abstract reveals that he had absorbed much from both of these teachers. He quoted now one and then the other of them.

Genevan Calvinist.<sup>5</sup>

A comparison of Boyce's Abstract with the larger Systematic Theology of Charles Hodge reveals many similarities of approach and development. Both men define theology as a science which is concerned with the investigation of facts. They conceive of systematic theology as that discipline which proceeds to determine the relation of the facts to one another and to demonstrate their harmony and consistency. Both men agree that these facts which furnish the materials for theology are obtained partly by reason and partly by revelation.<sup>6</sup> However, Boyce actually manifests a more positive appreciation for the role of reason in dealing with the implications of nature than does his teacher since, despite his verbal recognition of natural theology, Hodge's real emphasis is on the duty of the theologian to study the facts of revelation which are found in the Bible "inasmuch as all that nature teaches concerning God and our duties is more fully and more

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<sup>5</sup>Broadus, op. cit., p. 307. Cf. William A. Mueller, A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 56. For many years, students in the advanced theology class at Southern Seminary were required to read Francois Turretin's Institutio Theologiae Elencticae in the original Latin. See Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Catalogues, 1859-1903.

<sup>6</sup>Indeed, Hodge adds to his list of sources of religious facts, in addition to the Bible and the natural universe, "the constitution of human nature" and "the religious experience of believers." See Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, I, 11.

authoritatively revealed in his Word."<sup>7</sup> Both men are in complete agreement in their acceptance of the perfect inspiration and absolute authority of the entire canon of Holy Scripture.

In the exposition of their theological views, both men rely quite heavily on logically-developed, philosophical arguments, but Biblical texts, when cited at key points, are offered as authoritative pillars of support for the arguments. These texts are employed at random without regard to their historical context. This method, of course, is quite consistent with their view of verbal inspiration which regards the Biblical revelation as of one uniform piece throughout.

The two theologians offer similar analyses of the organizational structure which systematic theology should follow. Boyce divides the subject into theology proper, anthropology, soteriology, pneumatology, eschatology, and teleology. In the Abstract he treats specifically the first five of these. Hodge's plan of systematic divisions had omitted pneumatology and teleology but included ecclesiology. However, Hodge, like Boyce, failed to deal with the latter subject in his systematic work. Within the framework of the various divisions, the two men treat essentially the same topics. However, Hodge's treatment is naturally more complete

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

since his work is designed to be more lengthy and more nearly exhaustive. Hodge's sections on "The Law" and "The Means of Grace" are conspicuously absent from Boyce's discussion.

Both of these theologians were staunch Calvinists, emphasizing the doctrine of the divine decrees and holding firmly to the doctrines of predestination, election, limited atonement, effectual calling of the elect, regeneration, and final perseverance. Neither man believed in a supralapsarian double decree, but, surprisingly enough, the Baptist Boyce was more bold in his exposition of the doctrine of reprobation than was the Presbyterian Hodge.<sup>8</sup>

O. W. Heick identified the following as typical of the theological system of Charles Hodge: (1) the verbal inspiration of Scripture, (2) the "federal system" of covenant theology,<sup>9</sup> (3) the direct creation of souls, (4) the immediate imputation of Adam's sin to all men, (5) the distinction between the "covenant of grace" and the "covenant of redemption," and (6) infralapsarianism.<sup>10</sup> Boyce, with varying degrees

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<sup>8</sup>Boyce has a chapter on "Reprobation," corresponding to one on "Election," in which he seeks to explicate the various aspects which are involved in this doctrine, including the divine "hardening of the hearts" of the non-elect. Hodge, on the other hand, confines his emphasis to the Augustinian doctrine which declares that God simply "passed by" the non-elect, leaving them to suffer the just penalty for their sins. Cf. Boyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 356-67; Hodge, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-21; 333-48.

<sup>9</sup>Here he followed Coccejus.

<sup>10</sup>O. W. Heick, *History of Protestant Theology*, Vol. II of J. L. Neve and O. W. Heick, *A History of Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), p. 292.

of emphasis, followed Hodge at all of these points except, possibly, the last two of them.<sup>11</sup>

Kerfoot's revision.--In 1899, F. H. Kerfoot, who had succeeded Boyce as professor of theology at Southern Seminary, came out with a revised version of the textbook of his predecessor. As W. O. Carver declared in a review of Kerfoot's work, it was far more a revision of the systematic element than of the theological.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, the order of the various theological topics was greatly altered in accordance with the reviser's views of logical relation. The language of the book was changed somewhat in order to make it less abstractly philosophical and more clear and practical. But the general progression of thought remained the same, moving from the idea of God, the examination by the proofs of his existence, and the consideration of the means by which he may be known, through an inquiry into his essential nature, i.e., his mode of being and his attributes, on to a study of his activities, i.e., his decrees and his works of creation and providence. Under this latter heading is included a discussion of the fall, of soteriology including Christology and Pneumatology, and of the various topics of eschatology.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>See Boyce, op. cit., pp. vii; 247-58; 234-39; 207-212; 256-57; 235; 357-58.

<sup>12</sup>W. O. Carver, review of James P. Boyce's Abstract of Systematic Theology, rev. F. H. Kerfoot, in Baptist Argus, September 14, 1899, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup>Whereas Boyce had followed Turretin in treating God's extrinsic and transitive activity under the threefold

As in Boyce's original outline, there is no place for a consideration of the topic of ecclesiology. Both Boyce and Kerfoot place such a strong emphasis on the doctrine of God that all the topics of theology are encompassed by the topic of theology per se.

Kerfoot's method of presentation, like that of his mentor, is logical, propositional, and argumentative. The strength of the argument depends upon an appeal to both nature and supernature, reason and revelation, philosophy and Scripture. But, of course, the absolute authority of Scripture is assumed, and the intention of the textbook is to expound the system of theology which the Scriptures themselves contain.

With regard to differences in the specific doctrinal conclusions of the two men, W. O. Carver offered this helpful summary:

Aside from repudiations of the Federal Headship of Adam, guarded acceptance of the Traducian theory of soul origin, considerably modified views of the capacity of the Christ to suffer, and a toning down of Boyce's rather stiff Calvinism, the views of author and reviser will be found in pretty close agreement.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the teaching of systematic theology in the leading school for Southern Baptist ministers was dominated

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headings of creation, providence, and redemption, Kerfoot chose to classify all the forms of this activity under the first two headings. Cf. Boyce, op. cit., p. 156 with p. 137 of Kerfoot's revision.

<sup>14</sup>Carver, loc. cit.



by one main tradition of both form and content from the early years of its history until the introduction of E. Y. Mullins' new approach.

The experiential approach of E. Y. Mullins

The new approach anticipated.--Almost as soon as he assumed teaching responsibilities at Southern Seminary, E. Y. Mullins began to suggest the advisability of a new approach to systematic theology which would emphasize the Christian experience. He recognized that the field was wide open, and he believed that the time was right for such a new venture. In 1901, in the context of a book review, Mullins said:

The field [a theology of Christian experience] has had almost no attention by English writers, at least in the sense of attempting to develop the Christian doctrines systematically from the inner life of the regenerate man.<sup>15</sup>

Two years later, in an article prepared for the Seminary Magazine, published at the institution of which he was president, Mullins revealed the tenor of his own thinking in the following statements:

One of the most interesting directions which doctrinal discussion is taking in our day is the relation of doctrine to Christian experience. This branch of theology is destined to receive increasing attention in the near future. Christian experience is one of the strongholds of doctrine, for the significance of Christian experience is not only capable of being set forth as doctrine, but Christian experience itself inevitably and necessarily leads to doctrinal expression. The fact that the theology of

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<sup>15</sup>"Christian Life and Theology: A Book Review," Baptist Argus, April 25, 1901, p. 1.

experience belongs to the realm of the universal Christian heart and life, and not merely to that of the speculative intellect, makes it one of the most hopeful of all the fields of theology which are being cultivated at the present time.<sup>16</sup>

Then, in 1905, in his great address which provoked such enthusiastic response at the Baptist World Congress in London, Mullins surveyed the trend of theological thought at that time and made the following prediction:

Positively stated, the best theology of the future will continue to accept the authority of the Scriptures, but it will take as its starting-point, for the interpretation and illumination of Scripture, the facts of Christian experience, not in a single aspect, but in their totality.<sup>17</sup>

Mullins went on to show the advantages of such a development. That same year, in his first major book, Mullins sought to demonstrate the evidential value of Christian experience.<sup>18</sup>

Several years later, in his contribution to the collection of conservative essays called The Fundamentals, Mullins occupied himself with the same contentions.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, in his seminary lectures on historic types of theology and in

<sup>16</sup>"The Importance of Doctrinal Preaching," Seminary Magazine, XVI (February, 1903), 164.

<sup>17</sup>"The Theological Trend," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, First Congress (London, 1905), p. 150.

<sup>18</sup>See Why Is Christianity True? (Chicago: Christian Culture Press, 1905), Pt. III, pp. 239-321.

<sup>19</sup>"The Testimony of Christian Experience," The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1917), IV, 314-23.

various other instances, Mullins identified the "theology of the inner life" as one of four classic types of Christian doctrine which had its own distinctive value.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, it is not surprising that when Mullins' major book on systematic theology finally appeared in 1917, it employed an approach to Christian doctrine which gave prominence to the Christian experience. In the preface to the book, Mullins declared the necessity for a restatement of systematic theology.<sup>21</sup> Then, in the first chapters, he described his own method of approach.

The new approach described.--Mullins began by setting forth the relation between religion and theology. He defined religion as "man's relations to the divine Being."<sup>22</sup> It is man's recognition of a Power beyond himself and his effort to establish harmonious relations with that Power.

Religion involves self-revelation on the part of the powerful divine Being and trust, worship, and obedience on the part of man. The Christian religion emphasizes the unique and central role of Jesus Christ as the revealer of God and the mediator between God and man.<sup>23</sup>

Religion, then, is a form of experience and of life--

<sup>20</sup>"Outline of Lectures to Graduate Theology Class," (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.), pp. 2, 54-56. (Typewritten.)

<sup>21</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. vii-viii.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 1, 37-38.

it is an order of facts.<sup>24</sup> Actually, the Christian religion has to do with two great groups of facts: the facts of the historical revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the facts of Christian experience.<sup>25</sup> The former group of facts is set forth in the Scriptures. The latter group is regulated by the Scriptures since

. . . the objective facts of God's historic revelation in Christ, and the record of those facts in the New Testament under the guidance of God's Spirit, constitute the basis of all we know of God in experience.<sup>26</sup>

Theology is to be understood as "the systematic and scientific explanation of this order of facts."<sup>27</sup> Mullins believed that Christian experience, which he defined as

. . . the totality of the experience which becomes ours through our fellowship with God in Christ,<sup>28</sup>

inevitably yielded itself to doctrinal expression. He said:

In Christian experience we deal with a group of spiritual causes which produce their proper effects in human consciousness and in man's moral and spiritual activities. To interpret this system of spiritual causes and effects is to set forth the doctrines of the Christian religion.<sup>29</sup>

Mullins contended that the necessity for such explanations and interpretations arises from several considerations:

(1) Man is, after all, a rational creature, and his reason, as well as the other parts of his nature must be satisfied in religion. (2) The meaning of the religious experience

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

must be expressed. (3) The extent of the religious knowledge must be defined. (4) Religion must be defended against attack. (5) Religion must also be propagated.<sup>30</sup>

Since Christian experience is vital and indispensable in the Christian religion, E. Y. Mullins proposed to make the knowledge obtained through Christian experience explicit in his own exposition of the doctrines of Christianity.<sup>31</sup> However, he did not propose to make experience the sole criterion of truth. Indeed, he declared that four great factors must be taken into account in order that the Christian religion may be properly understood and its doctrinal implications adequately expressed. These four factors are the historical Christ, the Christian Scriptures, the Holy Spirit and Christian experience.

First of all, we must recognize Jesus Christ as the historical revelation of God to men. . . .

Secondly, we must assign to their proper place the indispensable source of our knowledge of the historical Jesus and his work for our salvation. . . .

In the third place, we must recognize the place and work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. . . . It is in and through him that the meaning of the Christian facts is brought home to us. . . .

Fourthly, we must seek to define and understand the spiritual experiences of Christians as subject to the operation of God's Spirit revealing Christ to them.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 2-3. Explanation has already been made of the way in which Mullins believed knowledge to arise out of religious and, especially, Christian experience. See supra, pp. 192-97.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

Thus, E. Y. Mullins' method of systematic theological construction required that all the preceding factors be combined to produce a scientific study of the facts of the Christian religion. He said:

The revelation of God in Christ is primary. We arrive at a knowledge of that revelation through the Scriptures. We pass to our study of the facts and their record through our living experience of God's redeeming grace in Christ [which is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit].<sup>33</sup>

On the basis of this study, doctrinal statements can then be framed.

Mullins listed several advantages possessed by such a theological method: (1) It avoids a false intellectualism in theology by basing theology on facts of experience rather than on logical philosophical arguments. (2) Thus, it meets the modern scientific demand for factual evidence in support of its position. (3) It affords the strongest apologetic foundation for theology because it emphasizes the facts of history and experience. (4) It makes possible the presentation of the reality, autonomy, and freedom of the Christian religion when compared with other forms of human culture or activity. (5) It helps define the true nature of biblical authority and, thus, makes possible the proper use of the Bible as an authoritative source of theological truth.<sup>34</sup>

Mullins concluded that the source of Christian theology is the Christian religion including all the factors

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-12.

which enter into that religion: Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures, and Christian experience.<sup>35</sup>

He said that the material principle of Christian theology, i.e., its vital and essential content, is man's fellowship with God as mediated through Jesus Christ. The formal principle, i.e., the form or medium through which the meaning is apprehended, is the Scriptures spiritually interpreted.<sup>36</sup> Mullins further expressed the relationship of the two principles in this way:

Experience would ever go astray without the ever-present corrective influence of the Scriptures, and the authority of the Scriptures would never become for us a vital and transforming reality apart from the working of God's redeeming grace in us.<sup>37</sup>

Commenting on the order and arrangement of doctrine suggested by his theological approach, Mullins made several announcements. First, he said that he would present no section on natural theology as preliminary to revealed theology. He preferred to defer consideration of the traditional proofs for God's existence until after he had set forth the proof from the inner life of the Christian.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, he preferred to deal with the doctrine of the Scripture in the

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 29. Mullins' treatment of the traditional proofs (Ibid., pp. 124-36) will be referred to when Mullins' apologetic theology is studied in the next chapter of this dissertation. See infra, pp. 323-24, 328-29.

context of his examination of Christian experience rather than prior to it.<sup>39</sup>

He announced that the doctrine of the Trinity would not be relegated to the end of his doctrinal system as had been the case in some recent works. Believing that the doctrine is vitally related to the regenerate life, Mullins preferred to recognize it early in his systematic order.<sup>40</sup> He also announced that his plan allowed for an extended section on the relations between Christian knowledge and other forms of knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

Mullins said that he would use the method of biblical theology as much as possible. In dealing with the biblical evidence for the more fundamental doctrines, he proposed to trace the biblical teaching on the subject in its historical unfolding rather than to rely on a random selection of proof-texts.<sup>42</sup>

He pledged himself to maintain one fundamental aim throughout his work, viz., "to present Christian doctrine as the necessary outcome of the Christian religion."<sup>43</sup> Since the reality of redemption through Christ is so central in the Christian experience, the following statement helps to indicate the way in which E. Y. Mullins proposed to formulate

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 32.



a Christian theology from the standpoint of the Christian's experience with his Lord.

He [Christ] works in us in our salvation that which we recognize as a divine work. Hence we seek to know his relations to God through definitions of his person. He emancipates from sin. Hence out of experience arises a consciousness of sin in relation to him. Thus we are led to formulate a doctrine of man and his sin. We see in him the central movement of God's purpose toward mankind. In this way we are led to the doctrine of the eternal purpose or decrees of God. Christ's relations to the ongoing of the world bring us to the doctrine of Providence. His atoning work, which, along with his incarnation, constitutes the basis of his redeeming activity, leads to the general doctrine of salvation in its personal significance, its present ethical and social expression, and its outcome in the future life.<sup>44</sup>

The uniqueness of E. Y. Mullins' approach to systematic theology as compared especially with that of his Baptist predecessors is seen in his emphasis on Christian experience and in his attempt to ground theology upon the various historical and experiential factors of the Christian religion. It is seen in his announcement of several procedural methods which accompany his theological approach. It is also seen in his treatment of the separate doctrines which will be examined at this point.

#### Mullins' Treatment of the Separate Doctrines<sup>45</sup>

##### The doctrine of revelation

Mullins asserted that the idea of revelation is an

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>45</sup>This discussion now moves directly to Mullins' doctrine of revelation since most of the matters dealt with

essential, inherent aspect of any adequate conception of religion. Since religion consists of communion between God and man, the implication is that God, too, must speak, as well as man, if religious experience is to be a reality.

Thus, Mullins rejected the views of the agnostic who denies that the infinite God can communicate with the finite man, the pantheist who denies that God is a personal being who is capable of communicating in particular ways, and the natural religionist who denies the necessity for any supernatural revelation in addition to the revelation which man may obtain by reason from the world around him and his conscience within him. Mullins noted that the general religious life of mankind has exhibited a belief in the necessity of revelation even though the fullness of revelation has not been made available to all men.

However, the uniquely Christian affirmation concerning revelation is that God, after revealing himself in a gradual and progressive way in the life and history of his people, Israel, has spoken supremely to men in and through his Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>46</sup> To these truths the Scriptures,

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in the first four chapters of The Christian Religion (religion and theology, the knowledge of God, a preliminary study of Christian experience, and Christian knowledge in relation to other forms of knowledge) are treated elsewhere in this dissertation.

<sup>46</sup>In an article in the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, Dale Moody attributes E. Y. Mullins with having introduced the idea of "progressive revelation" among Southern

which contain the record of God's revelation, bear witness.

Because of its character as "the inspired literary record of the self-revelation of God,"<sup>47</sup> the Bible remains a unique authority for Christians. Mullins described the nature of this authority:

It is a vital and living authority, and not a mechanical and ecclesiastical one. It is our authoritative source of information as to the historical revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It is regulative of Christian experience and Christian doctrine. It is the instrument of the Holy Spirit in his regenerative and sanctifying influences. As regulative and authoritative it saves us from subjectivism on the one hand and from a bare rationalism on the other. It holds us to the great saving deeds of God in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Lord. It is final

Baptists. See Dale Moody, "Progressive Revelation," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, II (1958), 1115. Mullins summarized his view as follows:

". . . at each stage there was a communication of life and truth needed for that stage; the revelation contained in itself the principle for development to the next higher stage; the advanced stage in turn conserved the principle of the preceding stage and contained the germ which should expand into the next higher; the lines of development all converged toward fulfilment in Jesus Christ, the crowning revelation." The Christian Religion . . ., p. 148.

Mullins believed that the principle of progressive revelation shed light on many problems (e.g., the ethics of certain practices allowed in the Old Testament and the question of the "delay" of the revelation of God in Christ) which seemed otherwise insoluble. Ibid., pp. 146-48.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 152. In this chapter, Mullins explored the problem of the inspiration of the Scriptures, but his conclusions as to the nature of inspiration are quite vague. See ibid., pp. 142-44. For references to a stronger statement of Mullins' position, see supra, p. 202. No such discussion of the nature of biblical inspiration is to be found in the textbook of Boyce and Kerfoot. For an explanation of this fact, see Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 35, 37.

for us in all the matters of our Christian faith and practice.<sup>48</sup>

But the divine revelation, of which the Bible is the record, became personal and historical in the historical personality of Jesus Christ. According to their New Testament testimony, the first generation of believers recognized in Jesus one who was perfectly human and yet, at the same time, uniquely related to God. In the light of his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, and the outpouring of his Holy Spirit, they understood him to be both Lord and Christ. Indeed, they were able to declare that in Jesus Christ, God himself had come near to men for their redemption.

On the basis of their own experience of the redeeming activity of Christ, the Christians of all the centuries have found the witness of the New Testament and, thus, of the whole Bible to be true. The experience of each convert to Christ becomes "an Amen" to the New Testament experience. Thus, the revelation which was epitomized in Christ and recorded in the Scriptures is appropriated by every receiving believer.

Theological statements can then be produced as the expression of the transforming religious experience which has been guided and regulated throughout by the Biblical norm. As Mullins put it:

Our construction of Christian doctrine rests on a fact basis entirely: first and primarily, the facts of the

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

New Testament records, and secondly, our direct and immediate experience of Christ as redeeming Lord.<sup>49</sup>

The doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ

It is certain that the New Testament presents Jesus Christ as one who, while perfectly human, was uniquely related to God. Orthodox Christian believers have always held this view of their Lord. However, E. Y. Mullins contended that for modern Christians the regenerating experience which they have had with God through Christ affords the most convincing evidence concerning his person. On the basis of his experience of the redeeming activity of Jesus Christ, the Christian, of necessity, declares him to be divine. Mullins said that there are several reasons why this is the case.

First, the Christian is aware that Christ has worked a divine work within him. This work of salvation has created a new world of spiritual realities for the redeemed man and has brought him into a direct relation with God the Father, whose fundamental character of righteous love has thereby been revealed.

Second, the believer's experience of God in Christ unifies and completes many lines of evidence and intuition

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 164. For this whole section see ibid., pp. 4, 18-24, 137-66. Cf. Mullins' article, "God's Method in Revelation," Baptist World, May 18, 1916, pp. 6-7, and his tract, Baptists and the Bible (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, n.d.). Mullins' approach to the doctrine of revelation stands in marked contrast to that of Boyce, op. cit., pp. 46-54, and Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 33-38.

which formerly seemed necessarily valid but strangely unfulfilled. Logic and philosophy, physical science, comparative religion, the psychology and philosophy of religion all become legitimate and meaningful when the key is supplied by the Christian experience of meeting God in Jesus Christ.

Third, the phenomenon of the whole historical Christian movement is only understood when it is recognized as being centralized around a divine Person who has worked in the experience of the individual believer and in that of the Church.

Fourth, only on this basis can the New Testament be accepted, for it is evident that the writers of the Scriptures regarded the risen Christ as divine Redeemer and Lord as well as the perfect man among men.

Thus, the witness of the New Testament combines with the experience of the individual Christian and that of historic Christianity to certify the deity of Jesus Christ.

Mullins recognized the problem of defining how one could be truly man and truly God at the same time. He called attention to the attempts which were made prior to the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) by the Ebionites, the Docetae, the Arians, the Apollinarians, the Nestorians, and the Eutychians. Mullins criticized all of these, and he also expressed some dissatisfaction with the Chalcedonian formula which held that in Christ's person there are two natures.

Mullins feared that the two-nature conception had been too dominant in most Christological definitions. He believed that the better approach was to begin with the one Person who unites in himself the divine and human elements and who is thus both God and man. He said that the object of Christological statements should be to express the unity of the impression made by Christ as he appears in the New Testament and in Christian experience generally. Thus he sought

. . . to recognize the facts of Christian experience and the relation of Jesus Christ to the experience, and on this basis to seek constructively to define his person in the light of New Testament teaching.<sup>50</sup>

Mullins was certain that the New Testament taught the preexistence of Christ. He believed that the New Testament writers were driven to this conclusion as they sought to explain his redeeming power which they had experienced. Beginning with the risen Christ who gave the Holy Spirit, the apostles read the meaning of his person backwards from the end to the beginning and concluded that the divine Christ, their Redeemer and Lord, must have been always the divine Son of God. In this way, they saw that the whole work of creation and redemption is one unified work of God in Christ.

But the divine One "emptied himself."<sup>51</sup> For the

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<sup>50</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 180.

<sup>51</sup>See Phil. 2:5-11. This is the locus classicus on the subject of the divine self-emptying, for Mullins, as for other Christian thinkers.

purpose of redemption, divine love revealed its infinite mobility when the eternal Son became incarnate in the human personality of Jesus Christ.

How did the incarnation take place? This is indeed a difficult problem for the human intellect. Critically examining the various efforts to deal with the problem, Mullins found fault with the type of kenotic theories which attempted to distinguish two classes of divine attributes, one of which was laid aside when the Deity became incarnate. Instead, he articulated a view which maintained that all the divine qualities and powers were retained by the incarnate Christ but under the restraints and limitations of a human life. He said that in Jesus, all the divine resources were potentially present, but their full exercise had been voluntarily suspended for a time. Mullins attempted to illustrate this view with various analogies, all of which he admitted to be necessarily imperfect.<sup>52</sup>

In one brief passage, Mullins suggested a dimension of the incarnation akin to that which has since been made paramount by theologians who have been impressed by the Christology of Irenaeus of Lyons and the world-view of the

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<sup>52</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 182-87. Mullins' view of the nature of the kenosis, as well as his supporting analogies, is reminiscent of the teaching of P. T. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ (London: Independent Press, 1955), pp. 293-320. (Forsyth's book was originally published in 1909.)



modern philosophy of organism.<sup>53</sup> Mullins said:

Step by step the creation ascends toward God. . . .  
 In humanity the divine immanence rises to a new level.  
 There is but one step to its completion. The incarnation  
 is that step. Henceforth, through his redemptive work  
 which is a new creation, Christ will raise men to the  
 level of the divine in that they will become partakers  
 of the divine nature.<sup>54</sup>

Mullins then considered the stages in the reascent of Christ which are indicated in the New Testament. He saw Christ's conformity to the law of growth as a manifestation of the reality of the incarnation. He said furthermore that this process of growth was not an element of human imperfection but rather of human perfection, because a perfect life lived under the conditions of time and space must, of necessity, experience development. Mullins held that the growth of Christ meant not a gradualness of incarnation but rather the progressive unfolding of the consciousness of the incarnate.<sup>55</sup> This unfolding can be understood from three standpoints: there was an intellectual factor in Christ's growth,

<sup>53</sup>The Christian Religion . . . ., pp. 186-87. The most notable exponent of such a Christology has been L. S. Thornton. See his book The Incarnate Lord (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1928); also his three volumes on the theme "The Form of a Servant": Revelation and the Modern World (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1950); The Dominion of Christ (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1952); Christ and the Church (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1956).

<sup>54</sup>The Christian Religion . . . ., p. 186.

<sup>55</sup>The Christian Religion . . . ., pp. 189-90. Here he specifically rejected the view of I. A. Dorner who held that the incarnation was gradual and that it was complete only at the close of Christ's earthly career.

there was a moral factor, and there was a progression in his Messianic consciousness. The climax and completion of all of these is to be seen in the Cross of Christ.

Mullins sought to refute a number of rival theories which seemed to him to weaken the doctrine of the divine incarnation or even to reject it outright. These included the theory which conceived of Christ as merely a good man, the theory which conceived of him as unique in the sense that he was a supremely God-conscious man,<sup>56</sup> the theory which regarded Christ as preexistent only in an ideal sense, the theory of William Sanday which sought to explain the incarnation on the basis of an absolute divine possession of the subconscious nature of Jesus, and Ritschl's theory which affirmed that Jesus has the value of God for Christians but which refused to make any positive declarations concerning the ultimate reality of his nature.

Mullins also rejected the various philosophical objections to the idea of incarnation. His own concern was to demonstrate that a recognition of the deity of Jesus Christ was demanded both by an analysis of Christian experience and by an acceptance of the New Testament record concerning him.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 195-97. Mullins noted that this was the theory of Schleiermacher.

<sup>57</sup>On the doctrine of the person of Christ, see ibid., pp. 154-202.

The doctrines of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity

E. Y. Mullins offered the following summary of the Biblical teaching concerning the Holy Spirit:

(1) The teaching as to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is the culmination of the Old Testament teaching on the subject; (2) in the New Testament the Holy Spirit is revealed as personal in his action upon men; (3) the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are grouped together and regarded as belonging to the same class; . . . <sup>58</sup>

He concluded that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity arises on the basis of these facts. Although the word "Trinity" does not appear anywhere in the Bible, Mullins believed that the doctrine expressed by the word is clearly taught there.<sup>59</sup>

Mullins rejected the idea that the Christian conception of the Trinity contradicts or imperils the truth that God is one. He declared that the very personality of man illustrates the fact that "manifoldness of life is not a self-contradictory idea."<sup>60</sup> He also rebutted the objections to the doctrine which contend that the whole idea is unthinkable or that it is an idea shared with various ethnic religions. He said that the former of these objections is vague and unsubstantial, while the latter is based on a faulty logic which would declare a thing untrue because there are so many examples of it. To the objection that the Trinity is a metaphysical doctrine, he replied that the important thing is

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

not to avoid metaphysics in theology but rather to base metaphysics securely on facts.

Mullins believed that the doctrine of the Trinity was based on the facts of God's revelation in and through Jesus Christ and the Christian's experience of the reality of God in him. Mullins held that the purpose of the doctrine is to affirm the actuality of inner distinctions in the Godhead. The words "person" or "personality" when applied to the Trinity refer to these distinctions rather than to separate and distinct individuals in an anthropomorphic sense.

Mullins stood squarely for the position that these divine distinctions are immanent and not merely economic; otherwise God's revelations do not furnish real knowledge at all. He held that belief in an immanent Trinity is well-grounded in both Scripture and experience. All the evidence for the deity and preexistence of Christ confirms it. The evidence for the personal action of the Spirit confirms it. Furthermore, the doctrine aids in the understanding of the relations which God sustains to man and nature by pointing to the existence of distinctive relations within the divine nature itself. Mullins believed that "we must find in God himself the ground for all that we discover in his works."<sup>61</sup>

The practical religious values of the doctrine of the Trinity are many. By means of it God the Father becomes

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

forever a personal being in the mind of men. The doctrine declares that the Saviorhood of Jesus Christ is an indissoluble part of the divine nature and work. The Holy Spirit is shown to be both eternally divine and continually present in his operations among men. The Trinitarian doctrine saves believers from falsely extreme views of either divine transcendence or divine immanence by declaring that God is independent of the world and supreme over it but, at the same time, he is actively present in it.<sup>62</sup>

#### The doctrine of God

E. Y. Mullins believed that it is only after one has come to know God through the Christ of the Scriptures by means of an experience effectuated by the Holy Spirit that he is able to understand adequately God's character and his attributes. For this reason, Mullins, in contrast to most theologians before him, reserved his discussion of the doctrine of God the Father until after the Christian's experiential and biblical knowledge of revelation and Scripture, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity had been explored.

Mullins offered the following definition as containing

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<sup>62</sup>On this whole topic, see ibid., pp. 203-213. It will be observed that Mullins withheld his discussion of the Trinity until after he had set forth the doctrine of the person of Christ. Cf. the more logical and philosophical approach of Boyce-Kerfoot which carefully grounded the doctrine of the person of Christ on the doctrine of the Trinity. See Boyce, op. cit., pp. 272-91; Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 240-57.

the essential elements of the Christian conception of God:

God is the supreme personal Spirit; perfect in all his attributes; who is the source, support, and end of the universe; who guides it according to the wise, righteous and loving purpose revealed in Jesus Christ; who indwells in all things by his Holy Spirit, seeking ever to transform them according to his own will and bring them to the goal of his kingdom.<sup>63</sup>

Mullins pointed out that his whole system of theology was designed to develop more fully the contents of this definition of God. However, at this point in his treatise, he was chiefly concerned to present the Christian teaching concerning God's character and his attributes.

In his discussion of the character of God, Mullins said that human nature and experience, as well as clear biblical teachings, attest God's spirituality and personality. As the perfect spiritual person, God is a living God, and he is obviously the supreme One. Mullins was willing to apply the word infinite to God, but he insisted that it be understood to indicate not mere negation but rather "the largest possible amplitude of excellence in God's nature."<sup>64</sup> God is one. He is also absolute and unconditioned. However, Mullins believed that these two latter terms are often used as empty abstractions, and he said that they contributed little to the positive and practical understanding of God's character.

Mullins noted the various ways of classifying the

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<sup>63</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 214-15.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

attributes of God. He judged the distinction between God's natural and his moral attributes as being the simplest and best available.<sup>65</sup>

God's natural attributes are self-existence, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, eternity, and immensity. God's self-existence means that he derives his being from no outside source. His immutability means that he is unchangeable in his nature and purposes. It does not mean that God is not free. God is a free person who freely changes his methods as he works his will among mankind whom he has also endowed with freedom. The meaning of his immutability, however, is seen in his moral and personal self-consistency in all his dealings with his creatures.

The omnipresence of God means that he is not confined to any part or parts of the universe either in time or in space. The term "immensity" is used to convey the idea that God is not confined to or limited by space since he is not a spacially extended being. The term "eternity" indicates likewise the transcendence of God over time.

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 222-23. Mullins' list of the divine attributes, his classification of them, and his interpretation of their meaning all differ quite significantly from those of Boyce and Kerfoot. In general, it can be said that the approach of Boyce-Kerfoot is much more philosophical while that of Mullins depends much more on the knowledge of Christian experience and the method of biblical theology. Cf. The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 222-50, with Boyce, op. cit., pp. 65-114; Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 80-124.

The omniscience of God means that God's knowledge is without limit and that it relates to all objects of knowledge. Mullins firmly believed in the divine foreknowledge of all events including the future free choices of his creatures; however, he denied with equal firmness that divine foreknowledge meant divine predetermination of an event.

The omnipotence of God means his unlimited power to do any and all things which are consistent with his nature and purpose. The only limitations in his power are such as are self-imposed.<sup>66</sup>

At the beginning of his discussion of the moral attributes of God, E. Y. Mullins defined holiness as the supreme moral excellence of God and identified it as the source and ground of his other moral attributes, which are righteousness, love, and truth. The idea of the holiness of God originally referred to his divinity, but it came gradually to mean any manifestation of that divinity and, because of the nature of his dealings with his people, it came finally to express especially the moral perfection of God in all its manifestations.

God's holiness expresses itself in righteousness. Mullins defined God's righteousness as the self-affirmation of God in favor of the right as opposed to the wrong, the pure as opposed to the impure. It is mandatory in that it

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<sup>66</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 223-29.



is expressed in moral laws, punitive in that it requires justice, and redemptive in that it is vindicated by God in his active redemption of men. Mullins had no doubt that God's righteousness is grounded in his very nature rather than merely in his will. God wills righteousness because he is righteous.

God's holiness expresses itself also in love. As Mullins put it:

Love may be defined as the self-imparting quality in the divine nature which leads God to seek the highest good and the most complete possession of his creatures.<sup>67</sup>

The Scriptures teach that this love which is inherent in the very nature of God desires the supreme good of its object and desires to possess its object. God's love acts in behalf of its object, manifesting itself in various ways according to the character and condition of its object. God's love is inclusive of all mankind. There are many evidences of God's love but the perfection of it is seen in the redeeming activity of Jesus Christ.

God's holiness expresses itself in truth. He is the source and ground of all forms of knowing, and all objects of knowledge. Truth inheres in the nature of God, and, indeed, there is no standard of truth outside of God. God's veracity, faithfulness, and wisdom arise out of his nature as truth.

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

His veracity refers to the truth of what he says. His faithfulness means his fidelity to his promises and his consistency in his purposes. His wisdom designates his knowledge and choice of the best possible ends and of the best possible means for the realization of those ends. It is because of the attribute of truth in God that truth is a reality for men and error is a danger for them. Because of God's truth there is an element of genuine knowledge in faith and, thus, the facts of religion can be expressed doctrinally.<sup>68</sup>

In a final commentary on the subject of the attributes of God, E. Y. Mullins warned against making a series of abstractions out of the divine attributes. He also warned against the tendencies of some theologians to merge all the attributes in some one attribute, or to make one attribute superior to all others, or to conceive of the attributes as in conflict with each other. As a remedy against these defective ideas, Mullins stressed the importance of keeping in mind the truth that God is a unitary Person whose attributes are the qualities of his being as personal.<sup>69</sup>

The doctrines of creation and providence

Creation.--E. Y. Mullins said that the Christian doctrine of creation was actually the result of inferences

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., pp. 229-43.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 243-50. For this whole discussion of the doctrine of God the Father, see ibid., pp. 214-50.

from the Christian experience of redemption. Having become aware of personal dependence on the God who creates new life through Jesus Christ, the redeemed recognize the dependence of the whole universe on him. Perceiving that the entire existing order has its end in God, the Christian is able to perceive that the secret of its beginning is to be found in God also. Thus, the believer finds it easy to accept the teaching of the Bible that God created all things. The doctrine of creation finds confirmation in the scientific and philosophical processes; however, it is not dependent on them but, rather, on the evidence of Christian experience.

Mullins summed up the Christian doctrine of creation in the following statements:

First, the universe, while distinct from God, originated in his act and is dependent upon him. Secondly, in creating the universe God acted freely and not under necessity or compulsion. Thirdly, in creating the universe God had in view a moral and spiritual end. Fourthly, the end of God was the communication of his own life and blessedness to created beings. . . . His end was to produce a kingdom in which his own image should be reflected, in which his own glory should appear. Fifthly, the end thus defined was an end begun, carried forward, and to be completed in Jesus Christ.<sup>70</sup>

He denied the validity of the opposing views of materialism, dualism, emanationism, and eternal creationism.

With regard to the creation of man, Mullins maintained that science and Scripture both agree in placing man

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., pp. 252-53.

at the end of a series of gradations in nature.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, man is the connecting link between the physical and the spiritual universe, consisting himself of a physical and a spiritual part.<sup>72</sup>

Mullins said that man bears in his spiritual nature the divine image. He explained that this statement has reference to man's rational nature, his moral nature, his emotional nature, his volitional nature, and his native freedom. In all of these aspects man resembles his Creator. The divine image also appears in man's original freedom from sin and inclination to righteousness, his dominion over the lower orders of creation, and his immortality.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp. 255-57. In his discussion of this topic, Mullins took note of the view of some Christian evolutionists who interpreted Gen. 2:7 "as implying that the human body was derived from the lower animals while the soul was God's direct creation." (p. 256) Mullins admitted that the "mutation theory" of evolution seemed to furnish more evidence for this interpretation than had the older conception of evolutionary progress by infinitesimal stages of growth. But he refused to endorse any specific theory of evolution at this point, preferring to declare simply that when all the truth is fully known, natural science and Holy Scripture will be found to be in perfect harmony.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 257. Mullins, like Boyce and Kerfoot before him, definitely preferred the dichotomous to the tri-chotomous view of man. See Boyce, op. cit., pp. 198-200; Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 161-63. However, Mullins' use of the terms "soul" and "spirit" seems somewhat ambiguous.

<sup>73</sup>Although he admitted that immortality cannot be scientifically proved in this world, Mullins sought to demonstrate how the arguments of the natural reason, the teachings of Scripture, and the evidence of Christian experience all combine to produce the certainty of immortality for the Christian believer. See The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 260-62.

On the matter of the origin of individual souls, Mullins committed himself to traducianism, rejecting the theory of preexistence and that which says that each soul is an immediate creation of God. However, he admitted the lack of direct Biblical evidence on this matter and even questioned the significance of any answer to such a theoretical question.<sup>74</sup>

Providence.--Mullins defined the providence of God as "his control or direction of the universe toward the end which he has chosen." The Christian man, who has come to know the superintending care of his heavenly Father, finds it easy to understand and accept such a doctrine of providence. As Mullins described it:

He needs only to generalize his own personal experience along with that of other Christians to express the meaning of this great truth.<sup>75</sup>

The doctrine of providence necessarily includes that of preservation, which refers to God's action in sustaining the universe which he has made. Mullins rejected the doctrine of continuous creation as being virtual pantheism, but he

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 262-64. On this point, Mullins' view directly contradicted that of Boyce, who had held to creationism. Kerfoot also had disagreed with his teacher, but he had done so much more guardedly. See supra, p. 224; Boyce, op. cit., pp. 207-212; Kerfoot, op. cit., p. 169, n.1. On this whole topic of creation, see The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 251-64; cf. Mullins' article "God's Method in Creation," Baptist World, May 11, 1916, pp. 8-9.

<sup>75</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 266.

also rejected the deistic view of an absentee God. He held that God has created and preserved his world and is continually directing it.

The doctrine of providence implies divine sovereignty and divine purpose, but it is certain that God's providential control of the world is in accordance with the presence of law in both the physical and the moral realms. God's providential control respects human freedom also. God providentially makes use of the unity of the human race, but his providential care extends to individual lives as well.

God's providential action has sometimes employed miracles in order to achieve divine purposes. The Christian should have no difficulty accepting the reality of the miraculous. His own experience of grace has been a miracle. The Scriptures offer abundant testimony concerning miracles. The Christian doctrine of God declares that he is a free personal Spirit who is both immanent and transcendent and able to use natural agencies as he may choose. This use of natural forces for spiritual ends is not necessarily a violation of the laws of nature; indeed, miracles may be understood as natural events if one's view of nature is broad enough to include God's nature and man's nature as well as the nature of the physical creation. Miracles do not disturb but rather establish the higher continuity of the world, which continuity is to be found in the eternal, ongoing

purpose of God. Mullins held that the case for the miraculous must be based on facts such as these and not merely on the ground of abstract reasoning.

God's providential methods include the possibility of prayer and its answer. God is unchangeable in the sense that he is morally self-consistent; however, this certainly does not mean that he is not free. His answering of worthy and proper prayer does not detract from his consistency as a loving Father who is seeking "to bring many sons to glory." On the contrary, it supports it.

Even pain and suffering are included in God's providential care of his world because these, too, can be means of grace by which God's purpose will ultimately be achieved.<sup>76</sup>

In connection with the subject of providence, Mullins wrote briefly concerning angels. While he acknowledged that man's only source of knowledge about angelic beings is the Bible and that the information there is quite limited, nevertheless, he sought to expound it. He understood angels to be created beings whose function is to serve God and his saints on earth. He was intrigued by the Old Testament figure of the Angel of the Covenant. Lacking clear teaching as to the cause of the fall of certain angels, he accepted the usual view, based on I Tim. 3:6, which attributed their fall to pride. He outlined the Biblical references to Satan, the

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<sup>76</sup>On providence, see ibid., pp. 265-76.

chief of evil spirits, who is also called "the devil." He believed that the essential features of the New Testament picture of the character of Satan already begin to show themselves in germinal manifestation in the Old Testament.<sup>77</sup>

The doctrines of sin and atonement

Sin.--E. Y. Mullins was sure that the consciousness of sin was one of the most real and painful of all human experiences. He was equally sure that no theology could be considered adequate which did not face squarely the problem of human sin and point toward the possibility of its solution in human experience by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, his treatment of this theological topic consisted of an exposition of the biblical doctrine of sin as prerequisite to a consideration of the saving work of Christ.

Mullins confessed the difficulties which accompany every attempt to explain the origin of sin in a good creation ruled by an omnipotent God. However, on the basis of biblical evidence, he rejected the theories which view sin as due to the sensuous desire of man's material body or the limitations inherent in a finite creature. Mullins believed that the Genesis narrative of the fall of man unmistakably connects the origin of sin with the creation of free intelligent beings with the power of contrary choice. He recognized also the

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 276-80.



biblical allusions to evil spirits who had fallen prior to man and who were instrumental in promoting his fall, but he stressed that his chief concern was with man's sin and its results. Mullins declared that although the biblical doctrine did not clear up all the mystery concerning the origin of sin, it did throw light on several vital points. First, it shows that in a world where moral freedom was a reality, sin and the fall were not necessary but they were necessarily possible. Second, it reveals that the very tragedy of sin and the fall afforded the supreme opportunity for the manifestation of God's grace. Third, it reveals also that sin and the fall have left man with the glorious possibility of choosing freely the divine righteousness.

The nature of sin has been defined in terms of selfishness or as lack of conformity to God's moral law. But Mullins believed these definitions to be partial and inadequate. He sought to show that the real root of sin consists of a rupture of the personal relation between man and the personal God who stands behind the moral law. Surveying the biblical teaching concerning sin, Mullins concluded that although sin is described in many terms in the Scriptures, the main emphasis there is either explicitly or implicitly on this dimension of personal relationships.

Mullins acknowledged that the Pauline writings trace human sin back to Adam and teach that the tendency of men to

sin is derived from Adam because of the reality of hereditary influences. However, he denied that Paul had set forth any elaborate theory as to how Adam's sin is imputed to mankind. He denied in particular that the view that Adam was the official covenant head of the race or the Augustinian assertion that all men were seminally present in Adam had any definite foundation in the Scriptures.<sup>78</sup>

The Scriptures portray sin as a universal malady. Its consequences include total depravity,<sup>79</sup> guilt, and penalty. Because man is a social being, God's penal action on the individual necessarily affects society. But the chief penalty of sin, according to the Scriptures, is death: physical, spiritual, and eternal.

Mullins gave some attention to two objections to the doctrine of sin: first, the objection that God's moral system makes man, who is inherently a sinner, more of a victim than a transgressor; and, second, the question as to how the vast multitudes who die in infancy can be saved if the principle of hereditary sin is true. Mullins answered both of these by

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 293-94. Boyce had held to the doctrine of the federal headship of Adam but Kerfoot had repudiated it. See supra, p. 224. Cf. Boyce, op. cit., pp. 250-58; Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 226-27.

<sup>79</sup>Mullins held that this term was valid if understood as meaning that all parts of human nature have been affected by sin. He said that the term must not be understood to mean that all men are as bad as they can be. See The Christian Religion . . ., p. 294.

referring to Christ's dual relationship to the human race.

As natural head of the human race, Christ has always been the source of man's highest capacities and powers. However, the presence of sin ruined man's original relationship to God. But now, as spiritual head of the race, Christ, by his incarnation and atonement, has lifted the human race to a new level before God which includes the possibility of redemption. In this sense, the death of Christ was efficacious for all mankind. Because of the death of Christ, men will not be condemned for hereditary or original sin but only for their actual sin. This indicates how God, through Christ, has provided for the salvation of infants who die before attaining the power of choice. At the same time, it indicates the necessity for personal appropriation of the benefits of salvation on the part of those who are able to choose.<sup>80</sup>

Atonement.--Mullins accepted the traditional Calvinistic summary of the work of Christ under the threefold categories of prophet, priest, and king. He recognized that discussions of these offices emphasize various aspects of Christ's saving work, but he denied that they could be completely separated.

However, Mullins said that there are several reasons why the priestly atoning work of Christ, accomplished through

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<sup>80</sup>On this whole topic of sin, see ibid., pp. 281-302.

his sufferings and death, must be given special attention. It has always been central in the teachings of the New Testament, in theological discussion, and in Christian experience. The New Testament writers employed many figures of speech to express the intimate and vital relation between the death of Christ and the salvation of men. In the course of Christian history, many additional attempts have been made to explain this relation. None of them have been entirely successful, but still the attempt must be made because such a tremendous religious fact demands rational expression.

Mullins reviewed critically various theories of the atonement: the early patristic ransom theory, the satisfaction theory of Anselm, the governmental theory of Hugo Grotius, the Socinian example theory, the moral influence theory, the representative penitence theory of McLeod Campbell, the "sinless root" theory of F. D. Maurice, and the eternal atonement theory. Mullins' conclusion was that most of these theories emphasize an element of truth; nevertheless, they are defective in what they omit rather than in what they assert.

Believing that the best theory would simply be an interpretation of the actual statements of the New Testament regarding the atonement, Mullins offered several general remarks as preparatory to a study of the New Testament teaching. He warned against the kind of abstract thinking which tends to find logical conflicts within the Godhead or between

the various divine attributes. He said that the best guide to a clear understanding of the atonement is a direct and careful study of all the phases of the New Testament teaching and their reflection in modern Christian experience. Thus doctrine can be made to rest on a sure basis of fact. He also cautioned against any interpretation of the Pauline teaching concerning the law which fails to recognize Paul's key assertion of the fact that because of the atonement of Christ all outward and statutory law has become inward and spiritual.

In setting forth the Biblical doctrine of the atonement, Mullins first demonstrated that the motive of the atoning work of Christ is the righteous love of the holy God. As Mullins put it: "God does not love us because Christ died for us, but rather . . . Christ died for us because God loved us."<sup>81</sup>

The end of the atonement can be summed up in two words: man's salvation. This salvation includes two elements: the remission of sins and the production of righteousness. God's larger purpose is to create "a holy society in which Fatherhood and sonship shall be the supreme expression of the relationship between God and men."<sup>82</sup>

Thus, the atonement itself was the means adopted by God for securing man's salvation, i.e., his forgiveness, and his perfecting. As God's means to this end, the atonement

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

of Christ involved several elements.

(1) It involved identification with the race he came to redeem. This was the purpose of the incarnation.

(2) It involved a life of obedience. In every act of his life Christ conformed to the perfect moral law. Mullins said: "His life was the perfect answer of the Son to the supreme requirements of the holy Father."<sup>83</sup>

(3) It involved subjection to the operation of the law of sin and death. Mullins faced here the difficult question of why the death of Christ was necessary to the achievement of redemption. His answer was that Christ, by becoming organically one with the human race even to the point of dying for them, broke the power of the sin-death principle which had universally bound mankind and brought into actuality his own new obedience-life principle which can now become operative in the believer.

In Christ, God became immanent in the human race. When the old sin-death principle was overcome by the obedience-life principle as a result of the Cross of Christ, God's immanence became a new life-force acting graciously for human redemption. The gift of the Holy Spirit completed the process of the divine immanence through the atonement. A new creation first becomes evident and effective in the experience of redeemed individuals, and then, through these individuals,

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

God creates a new race.

Having dealt thus with the vital principle in the atonement, Mullins then turned to the legal elements. First, Mullins interpreted the statement that Christ's atoning death was the satisfaction of law. The aspects of law which he satisfied include the Mosaic law and the general moral law, the law of sin and death, and the law of filial loyalty and devotion. Second, Mullins declared that Christ's death was a payment of penalty, not in the sense that he had personal sins for which to pay, but in the sense that he bore the penal consequences of sin for the whole human race with which he had become completely identified.

In the third place, Mullins dealt with the matter of the wrath of God, defining it as "God's resistance against sin, his reaction against wrong-doing." Christ endured the wrath of God in the sense that he permitted the sin-death principle, which is the broadest expression of the wrath of God, to operate in him. In other words, Christ endured death, which is the expression of God's wrath, as the penalty for human sin.

Moving next to the matter of propitiation, Mullins said that it signified basically "a means of rendering favorable." Christ's death served to render God favorable to mankind in that God can now deal graciously with the human race for the sake of Christ who is identified with the race and

still be consistent with his own inherent antagonism to sin.

Mullins then declared that the New Testament teaches in unmistakable language that the death of Christ was substitutionary. He held that the conception of Christ as man's representative is not strong enough to match the New Testament teaching. Jesus Christ took sinful man's place, doing for man what man could never have done for himself. Entering the human situation, Christ assumed mankind's responsibility for sin and discharged it in a real and vital way. In this sense his work was substitutionary.

Mullins further explicated his interpretation of substitutionary atonement by stating the following principle:

The personal realm is so constituted that one personality can project itself for good or ill into the destinies of other personalities.<sup>84</sup>

This is what happened. The divine-human Christ projected his personality as a redeeming power into the life of a sinful race. His substitution means that a whole new dimension of relations is now possible in that personal realm in which God and man exist. Mullins believed that the Scriptures taught this truth and Christian experience confirmed it.

The necessity for the atonement was in both God and man. Since righteous love is God's very nature, the necessity for an atonement arose out of the divine nature when sin entered the world. Actually, the divine ground of the

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 328.



atonement has been eternally in the heart of God because of what God is in himself. At the same time, the atonement was God's free and gracious gift.

The necessity of the atonement for man may be summed up in the following statements: (1) The atonement produces in man an adequate repentance because by means of it, and it only, he is finally made to understand sin. (2) The atonement enables man to pass from a legal consciousness of God to a filial consciousness of him because it provides an adequate ground for man's justification. It replaces his feeling of condemnation with a feeling of acceptance. (3) The atonement produces various moral and spiritual results in human experience. It gives the saved man an assurance of his standing with God. Because it brings about a vital union of the redeemed with their Redeemer, it leads to a recreated moral and spiritual life on the part of the believer.

The work of atonement involved all the attributes of the unitary being of God. It was intended for all men. Mullins believed that all men share to some extent in the benefits of the atonement of Christ, although it is obvious that all do not share equally. He said:

Those who remain in unbelief are not saved. Yet even they share many of the common blessings of life through the work of Christ. God's anger against sin is restrained in order that men may repent. Every motive and appeal is provided in the gospel to induce them to do so.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 336.

The work of atonement is continued and made efficacious as Christ intercedes for men in the presence of God the Father and the Holy Spirit intercedes in the hearts of men.<sup>86</sup>

#### The doctrine of election

Mullins declared that the fundamental question in the matter of election is whether God or man takes the initiative in salvation. He then announced his conviction that the initiative was wholly with God, not with man.

The motive, the method, and the end of human salvation all arise out of the nature of the infinitely holy God.<sup>87</sup>

Mullins warned against certain errors which must be avoided if one would rightly conceive of the sovereignty of God. Above all, one must avoid abstraction. Mullins said that the error of the older scholastic Calvinism, for example, had been to exalt the mere will of God apart from his total character in the definition of his sovereignty. This

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<sup>86</sup>On this whole subject of atonement, see ibid., pp. 303-337. Cf. Mullins' series of articles on the atonement which appeared in the Baptist Argus in 1902: "The Atonement--No. 1: Various Attitudes Toward the Subject in Our Day," Baptist Argus, February 13, 1902, pp. 1, 4; "The Atonement--No. 2: The Attitude of the Suspended Judgment," ibid., February 20, 1902, pp. 1, 4; "The Atonement--No. 3: Need of Atonement Shown by Experience," ibid., February 27, 1902, pp. 1, 16; "The Atonement--No. 4: As Set Forth in the Scriptures," ibid., March 6, 1902, p. 4; "The Atonement--No. 5: Representation and Propitiation," ibid., March 20, 1902, pp. 1, 13; "The Atonement--No. 6: Atonement, Law and Personality," ibid., April 3, 1902, pp. 3, 13; "The Atonement--No. 7: The Atonement in History and in Relation to Fatherhood and Sonship," ibid., April 10, 1902, pp. 4, 13; "The Atonement--No. 8: Some Objections Answered," ibid., May 1, 1902, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 338.

had led to the doctrine of limited atonement along with the idea that some men were actually created by God for the purpose of exhibiting his justice by their eternal damnation. Against such views Mullins championed unequivocally the doctrine of universal atonement.

Mullins summarized the biblical teaching as to God's purpose toward mankind as follows: God's gracious purpose has been not national but racial from the very beginning. Behind the initial bestowal of special divine favor upon the nation Israel was God's ultimate purpose to convey a world-wide blessing through Israel. The incarnation and atonement of Christ imply and involve the same world-wide purpose as is confirmed by the history and teaching of the New Testament. Mullins believed that the details of God's sovereign plan for the salvation of individuals could be best understood in the light of this larger plan for the race.

Mullins developed his doctrine of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of individuals by answering a series of significant questions. He answered the question of whether or not the faith of the individual was the effective ground of his salvation in the negative with this declaration:

The gospel is efficacious with some and not efficacious with others because God's grace is operative in the one case beyond the degree of its action in the other.<sup>88</sup>

Does God's election coerce man's will, or does it

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 343.

leave it free? Mullins answered emphatically that the will of man is left free. God's grace is not "irresistible" as a physical force is irresistible. God uses only moral and spiritual and personal means in his work of saving men and, thus, when a man accepts Christ and salvation, it is his own free choice.

Mullins admitted that divine sovereignty and human freedom could not be reconciled. He maintained, nevertheless, that both are paradoxically true.

With regard to the question as to why God should adopt the method of election in saving men, Mullins replied that God must work within the self-imposed bounds of his moral kingdom. The reality of man's freedom and the tragedy of man's sin have constrained God to work gradually and through human agents. He does not compel, but the very fact that he interposes means that a principle of election is in operation.

Mullins believed that God was seeking to save as many as possible. He believed that the electing grace of God has always moved in an ever-widening circle. He said:

His purpose and plan have ripened as rapidly as the moral and spiritual and personal kingdom and its appropriate forces could bring it to pass. His love has ever sought to overleap the barriers which human sin and unbelief have interposed.<sup>89</sup>

Mullins endeavored to explicate the principle which has guided God's method of election by stating several

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 352.

certainties. First, he noted that men are definitely not elected because of any merit of any kind on their part. Second, he declared that men are chosen in order that they may serve in God's kingdom. Election to salvation implies election to service. In the third place, Mullins said that God's work of election has followed a course designed to yield the largest results in the shortest time. It has often been evident that God chooses strategic men through whom his widening purpose may more rapidly realize itself. Mullins believed that when the above truths are viewed together a great deal of light is shed on God's principle of election. Even so, much mystery remains.

Mullins found it necessary to deal further with certain specific objections to the doctrine of election. To the objection that election implies divine partiality, Mullins replied that God's ends in the world could not be achieved by a dead level of privilege. He said:

Life in all its forms, physical, moral, and spiritual, involves differences of various kinds, and these differences imply ultimately a principle of election.<sup>90</sup>

To the objection that the fact of election implies the insincerity of the offer of salvation to all, Mullins replied that God's election does not nullify man's freedom or his responsibility. The only barrier to any person's salvation is that person's own will.

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 354.

Some object that election means that God does not desire the salvation of all. Mullins denied this and then proceeded to state again that God is limited to the method of election by the realities of human freedom and human sin.

Mullins said it was false to argue that belief in election served to cut the nerve of Christian endeavor. He contended that the consciousness of a divine power working through human efforts actually strengthened the motivation of Christian workers.

Mullins acknowledged again that an element of mystery remains after every attempt to unite the two ideas of divine sovereignty and human freedom. However, he stressed the fact that, despite the mystery, the universality of the gospel is taught emphatically in the Bible and confirmed repeatedly in Christian experience.

On the question of whether or not God actually works actively in some cases to harden the human heart, Mullins took the position that any passages of Scripture which seem to indicate divine hardening refer to God's permissive decree or purpose or to God's agency as it is expressed through the moral and spiritual laws which are involved in the case. He said that the very idea that God would actively hinder men from accepting his grace contradicts all that Christ has made known of God and, thus, it must be rejected.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>For Mullins' whole discussion of the doctrine of election, see ibid., pp. 338-58. Cf. Baptist Beliefs

The doctrine of the Christian life

Its beginnings.--Prior to his discussion of the various aspects of Christian salvation, Mullins gave specific attention to the work of the Holy Spirit in this salvation. He recalled that the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son, bears a vital relation to both the Father and the Son. He also deals significantly with the human spirit in the work of salvation. Using the divinely-appointed means of grace such as preaching and witnessing for Christ, the Bible, the church and its ordinances, officers, worship, and activities, and God's providential dealings with men, the Spirit reveals Christ to men and forms Christ within the Christian. Thus, his work is a continuation and an extension of the work of Christ as he creates the Spiritual kingdom among men. Mullins summed up the Holy Spirit's ministry to men as follows:

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(Louisville: Baptist World Publishing Company, 1912), pp. 26-29. With regard to Mullins' position on both atonement and election, it should be pointed out that it represents a considerable departure from that of his teacher, James P. Boyce. While it is not practical at this point to present a detailed comparison of the doctrines of the two men, several areas can be indicated as worthy of careful study: the matter of the extent of the atonement, the question concerning the "divine hardening," and the meaning of election itself. It should be observed also that Mullins does not discuss the Calvinistic doctrine of reprobation. If, as W. O. Carver stated, F. H. Kerfoot "toned down Boyce's rather stiff Calvinism," Mullins carried the same process considerably farther by his new approach. Cf. Mullins' views as outlined supra, pp. 259-70 with the chapters in Boyce, op. cit., pp. 295-367, and with the notes in Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 260, 274, 275, 276, 278, 293, 296, 326.

(a) He makes real in us the life-principle which was perfectly embodied in Christ. (b) He makes the spiritual rights and privileges secured for us by Christ, our actual possessions. (c) He makes the ethical ideal which was embodied in Christ our own experience in a progressive life. (d) He makes the victory of Christ over sin and death our victory.<sup>92</sup>

Mullins said that divine calling and conviction for sin are actually prior to God's saving act in the soul. He defined calling as "the invitation of God to men to accept by faith the salvation in Christ." This call is sent forth through the Bible, through the preaching of the gospel, and in many other ways. Conviction for sin results when the action of the Holy Spirit awakens in men a sense of guilt and condemnation because of sin and particularly because of unbelief. Such conviction is more than an intellectual matter. It is a moral and spiritual demonstration which penetrates the conscience and disturbs the soul. It refers in all respects to Jesus Christ. Thus, it points beyond despair to ultimate hope because it calls attention to One who can cleanse from sin and break its power.<sup>93</sup>

Moving on to the doctrinal expression of the order of salvation, Mullins proposed that, while logic would reason from spiritual causes to spiritual effects, the actuality of Christian experience made it more preferable to begin with

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<sup>92</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 361. On the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, see ibid., pp. 359-65.

<sup>93</sup>On calling and conviction, see ibid., pp. 365-68.



the effects and trace them back to their causes. In order to make his doctrinal development conform to the order of experience, Mullins determined to deal first with repentance and faith and then move to regeneration and related topics.<sup>94</sup>

He said that repentance is the renunciation of sin which occurs at the beginning of the Christian life. Repentance is the result of God's gracious action in the soul. It may be produced by a great variety of means. When genuine, it affects the intellect, the feelings, and the will. Repentance is not merely a momentary experience. At its best, it becomes a permanent attitude of the soul toward sin. It is, indeed, "the identification of a sinful man with God's attitude toward sin."<sup>95</sup>

E. Y. Mullins attempted to define faith by analyzing its three constitutive elements. He said that faith contains an intellectual element, i.e., belief in the truth of the gospel. It contains an element of assent because the sinner must recognize the provisions of the gospel as the divine

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 368-69. The work of Boyce-Kerfoot, on the other hand, in true Calvinistic fashion dealt first with regeneration and then conversion which was defined as repentance and faith. See Boyce, op. cit., pp. 374-94; Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 330-48. Boyce actually discussed at some length the matter of which came first, regeneration or conversion. He concluded that regeneration always precedes conversion and declared that there may be an appreciable interval of time between the two. Kerfoot refused to follow him at this point. See Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 347-48.

<sup>95</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 371. On repentance, see ibid., pp. 369-71. Cf. Baptist Beliefs, p. 40.

answer to his needs. Faith contains also a volitional element because the sinner must be willing to trust Christ as his Savior.

After presenting this definition of faith, Mullins sought to express further the meaning of faith by pointing out certain characteristics of faith in the Christian life. He said that faith unites the soul to God as he is revealed in Jesus Christ. Genuine faith manifests itself by works. Indeed, willingness to act in conformity to the will of Christ is one of the best tests of the genuineness of faith. Saving faith is also a form of knowledge. Since faith deals with reality, genuine knowledge of that reality arises through faith.

Faith is the germinal grace of the Christian life out of which spring all the other graces. Faith is the universal condition of salvation according to the gospel of Christ. Faith is an active as well as a passive principle. Faith's initial act of surrender to Christ becomes the active permanent attitude of the saved man. Mullins said that this truth accented the necessity for faith to be personal and it exposed the falsity of the ideas of proxy faith and of implicit faith which are implied by the practice of infant baptism. Mullins contended that throughout the biblical revelation man's faith is the correlative of God's grace. Faith is the proper response of man to the grace of God. Only through

faith is salvation possible. Mullins declared that the principle of salvation by grace through faith had been as valid and as necessary in Old Testament times as in New Testament times and thereafter. He held that salvation has never been a matter of works and debt but always of faith and grace.<sup>96</sup>

After defining conversion as "the outward act of the changed man which is the manifestation of the inner change in his soul,"<sup>97</sup> E. Y. Mullins went on to define regeneration or the new birth. He said:

Regeneration may be defined as the change wrought by the Spirit of God, by the use of truth as a means, in which the moral disposition of the soul is renewed in the image of Christ.<sup>98</sup>

Mullins demonstrated the uniformity of the New Testament teaching about regeneration and then proceeded to spell out more clearly the meaning of his definition.

He said that regeneration is not a change in man's spiritual constitution but in his moral and spiritual disposition. His previous powers remain but, after regeneration, they are redirected. Regeneration is not a change on the natural level of man's life. It is not a mere educational

<sup>96</sup>On faith, see The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 371-77. Cf. Baptist Beliefs, pp. 41-45.

<sup>97</sup>Actually, Mullins' brief section on conversion is quite ambiguous. See The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 377-78.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 378.

process, nor is it the transition from childhood to manhood. It is not evolution on the natural plane because, in regeneration, entirely new elements of power enter the soul and the environment of man.

Mullins declared that regeneration is an instantaneous act rather than a gradual process although the preparation for it may be gradual. Regeneration occurs because the Holy Spirit employs the truth as it is in Christ as an effective means to bring it to pass. Mullins noted that this statement denied by implication that regeneration is the result of baptism. He said that baptism symbolizes regeneration but it does not produce it. He declared, furthermore, that the divine power in regeneration operates through man's moral and spiritual faculties. In response to the appeal of the gospel, man repents and believes and God regenerates him. Mullins held that these two activities, the human and the divine, constitute one completed act.

Mullins was eager to show that the doctrine of regeneration in its larger relations is vitally connected with many other great ideas. It is closely related to the idea of God because only after regeneration does one have positive acquaintance with God. In the same way the objective revelation of God in Christ only becomes subjective truth for the individual at the point of regeneration. The distinctiveness of Christ as the giver of life also is fully

appreciated only at this point. Obviously, the doctrine of regeneration is vitally related to the work of the Holy Spirit who produces regeneration. Mullins said that the dependence of the other doctrines of the Christian life upon regeneration would be evident when attention was directed to them. He expressed the conviction that regeneration throws light on the problem of final causes and on various other problems of speculative philosophy. Regeneration suggests that the ultimate aim of God is "to bring many sons to glory," and it reveals the way in which this great purpose is being achieved. Finally, Mullins said that regeneration is the key to the problem of knowledge in Christianity because the truth of Christianity can only be known from the inside.<sup>99</sup>

Mullins defined justification as "a judicial act of God in which he declares the sinner free from condemnation and restores him to divine favor." He said that "it takes place when the sinner trusts in Christ and his merits for salvation."<sup>100</sup>

Amplifying his definition, Mullins said that justification is a declarative act of God which is grounded in the work of Christ. The condition for justification is the personal faith of a man in the efficacy of the work of Christ

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<sup>99</sup>On regeneration, see ibid., pp. 378-89. Cf. Baptist Beliefs, p. 39.

<sup>100</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 389.

for him. The one who is justified by God is freed from condemnation and restored to divine favor. This freedom and restoration are permanent states, elements of a new relation to God which will never be broken. As Mullins summarized the whole matter:

In Christ God has provided a righteousness for us which becomes, through faith, the ground of our acceptance with God.<sup>101</sup>

Justification is by faith rather than by human works of merit. This emphasizes that justification is a gracious gift of God because faith itself is a gift of God even though it is also man's response to God. Justification is one of the great series of blessings which come to the Christian in and through Christ, and faith is the condition of them all.

The necessity and value of the evangelical doctrine of justification can be stated both negatively and positively. On the negative side, the absence of such a doctrine tends to lower the Christian conception of God the Holy Father to that of a weak and indulgent Father who simply overlooks sin; it tends likewise to weaken the conception of sin; it tends toward a relapse into the old Jewish error of salvation by works; and it tends toward the Roman Catholic doctrine which views justification as a gradual process going on throughout

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 390.

the Christian's life.<sup>102</sup> Positively, it can be stated that no other gift of God's grace can supply the need which is met by justification. Mullins concluded that

. . . we have in justification a great fundamental truth which cannot be dispensed with in our spiritual life. . . . Especially is the doctrine of justification needed to assure us of God's acceptance of us when crises arise and our souls are tried by fire. Then we are tempted to doubt and fall away. But it is then our established position, our unchanging status before God, makes us strong to dare, to suffer, and to achieve.<sup>103</sup>

To the objection that the doctrine of justification implies an artificial or fiat righteousness, Mullins replied that the objection was the result of an abstract method of dealing with the teachings of the gospel. He said that it must be remembered that justification is but one aspect of the salvation which comes to men through Christ. Justification is not a mere legal matter between God and man. If it were, it might seem like an illegality. But in Christian experience, justification is vitally related to repentance and faith, to regeneration which changes radically the moral disposition, to union with Christ, to gradual sanctification, and to final glorification. Actually, said Mullins, the New Testament doctrine of justification logically leads to the overthrow of legalism. The New Testament teaches that

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<sup>102</sup>Mullins noted that the "salvation by character" doctrine which was being proclaimed by some adherents of the "new theology" of his day was very closely kin to the Roman Catholic doctrine in its essential principle. See *ibid.*, p. 395.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 396.

. . . God meets a sinner in Christ, justifies him, bestows a new standing, accepts him as son, and forever closes the question of law and condemnation, of sin and guilt.<sup>104</sup>

Before dealing with the Christian doctrine of adoption, Mullins gave consideration to the question of whether or not all men are in some sense the sons of God. Calling attention to the fact that certain passages of Scripture can be cited in support of either side of the question, Mullins outlined the several answers which have been proposed with regard to this problem. The answer of universalism is that all men are sons of God in the same sense. On the other extreme are those who say that none are sons of God in any sense except those who are redeemed by Christ. Some would say that God is the Father of all men but all men are not sons of God since all are not properly related to God. A fourth possible answer is that all men are natural sons of God, but only the regenerated are the true spiritual sons.

Mullins proposed still another view as being more satisfactory than any of the preceding ones. He stated his view this way:

It is that all men are constituted for sonship to God, and that God desires all men to become sons, but that this ideal is only made real in the new birth.<sup>105</sup>

Mullins believed that this view best expresses the teachings

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 400. On the whole subject of justification, see ibid., pp. 389-401.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 404.



of the Scripture on this subject. It stresses the fact that true sonship involves both a moral constitution, which men possess from creation, and a moral relation, which men receive through regeneration.

Mullins said that faith is the condition of divine sonship and adoption is the method of God for introducing sons into his family. After regeneration God's adopted sons have the nature as well as the relation of true children of their Heavenly Father. Because they are God's sons, great and manifold blessings are theirs.<sup>106</sup>

According to E. Y. Mullins, the doctrine of union with Christ expresses the most central and vital truth of the Christian religion. This doctrine could actually serve as a summary of all the other doctrines of the Christian life. After setting forth the biblical teaching on this subject, Mullins analyzed the nature of the Christian's union with Christ. He said, first, that the union is a vital one, analogous to that of a living organism. Second, it is a moral union in which the indwelling Christ reproduces his own moral traits in the life of the believer. Fourth, it is a spiritual union produced by the Holy Spirit.<sup>107</sup> Fifth, it is a personal

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<sup>106</sup>On adoption and sonship, see *ibid.*, pp. 401-409. On justification and adoption, cf. Baptist Beliefs, pp. 45-49.

<sup>107</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 413. Mullins was seeking here to contrast the true spiritual union with the erroneous idea of a sacramental union.

union in which both personalities remain distinct although they are mutually harmonious.<sup>108</sup> Sixth, it is an inscrutable union, one beyond mere human understanding. Seventh, it is an abiding union, the continuance of which is based upon the grace and power of the divine partner.

The consequences of the union for the believer include an identification with Christ in his relations to God, to the human race, to sin and death. The union also means that Christ is identified with the believer in all his earthly experiences.<sup>109</sup>

It continuance.--Assuming that the aim of God in establishing his kingdom among men is to produce holy men and women, E. Y. Mullins noted that this necessitates two things: "first, the establishment of a new relation between God and men, and secondly, the production of a new character corresponding to this new relation." Mullins believed that the Christian doctrine of sanctification had to do with both the new relation and the new character. He said:

Sanctification means . . . the state of one who is set apart to the service of God, who belongs to God. It also means the inner transformation of one thus set apart, the actual realization of holy character.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 414. At this point, however, Mullins issued a warning against the kind of mysticism which would merge the two personalities, the human and the divine.

<sup>109</sup>On the subject of union with Christ, see ibid., pp. 409-416.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 417.

Mullins maintained that, although in the earlier stages of the Old Testament revelation the former meaning was more prominent, in the later stages the second meaning was emphasized. In the New Testament, the concept of sanctification includes both ideas. He said that sanctification is vitally related to the initial act of becoming a Christian but it is more extensive than a single act: it is also the gradual process by which the Christian attains moral character through struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The agent of sanctification is the Holy Spirit, and the instrument employed for its achievement is chiefly the truth of the gospel which is taught through all the means of grace.

The moral ideal of sanctification has both an individual and a social dimension. The ideal for the individual Christian is the attainment of a sonship to God modeled upon the sonship of Christ. The social ideal of sanctification is the purification of all social relations and the perfection of all the social institutions such as the family, the state, and the economic system.

Mullins warned against two extreme misconceptions of sanctification. One of these is the antinomian view which argues that since sin affords grace such a splendid opportunity, the continuation of sin is simply the occasion for a greater work of grace. Paul devastated this argument in his Epistle to the Romans. The other misconception is the view

which teaches that the Christian may attain sinless perfection in this earthly life. Mullins declared that both Scripture and Christian experience refute this view. However, he added that this fact should not lead Christians to adopt a low standard for Christian living. The doctrine of sanctification affirms the possibility of perpetual progress in the Christian life.<sup>111</sup>

Mullins held that the Christian doctrine of perseverance had sometimes been perverted by false emphases. One of these had been the tendency of extreme Calvinism to interpret the necessity of perseverance in such a logical fashion as to place all the emphasis upon the divine activity and none upon the human response. Mullins believed that this view actually made salvation a physical process rather than a moral and spiritual one. He said that by such an emphasis on the absoluteness of God it tended toward pantheism. The other tendency had been the same kind of emphasis upon human freedom on the part of the extreme Arminians. Mullins said that this view was equally defective and that it tended toward a merely moralistic view of salvation and a deistic view of God.

Mullins believed that the New Testament teaching on perseverance avoided both of these extremes. After an examination of the relevant passages, he announced the following

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<sup>111</sup>On sanctification, see *ibid.*, pp. 417-32.

conclusions:

First, the writers of the New Testament seem to imply by their exhortations and warnings that all believers if left to themselves are in real danger of falling away; and secondly, that God purposes and preserves men unto salvation, though this is not a process regardless of man's conduct, but a process involving man's active response to God's gracious working; and thirdly, that it is unscriptural and wrong to ignore either the divine purpose and grace and power on the one hand, or the human response and cooperation on the other. Ultimately of course the decisive factor is God's grace and power, not man's weakness. Through that grace and power man is enabled to overcome.<sup>112</sup>

Above all, Mullins sought to make clear that God's method in perseverance, as in all his dealings with his people, is not the use of physical force but the exercise of moral and spiritual persuasion. He does not coerce the human will, but by his gracious means he constrains it. The certainty of the doctrine of perseverance is "the certainty of moral suasion and spiritual influence exerted in a personal way."<sup>113</sup>

#### The doctrine of last things

E. Y. Mullins said that it was the fact of purposiveness in history and in Christian experience which raised the question about last things. He said:

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., pp. 436-37.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 437. On perseverance, see ibid., pp. 432-38. Cf. Baptist Beliefs, pp. 53-55; "The Final Perseverance of the Saints," Ten Fundamental Doctrines, ed. B. J. W. Graham (Atlanta: Index Printing Company, 1918), pp. 121-26.

The moment we connect the past with the present, as we must do, we are confronted with the problem of the future.<sup>114</sup>

He believed that the Scriptures provide the basic answers to the inevitable questions concerning the future. However, before setting forth his interpretation of the biblical evidence on the various topics of eschatology, Mullins felt constrained to deal with several preliminary matters.

Mullins first replied to various groups who asserted that there is no need for a doctrine of the future. To those who would base such an argument on the Old Testament, Mullins replied that, when the Old Testament teaching is taken as a whole, it actually supports the contention that belief in an immortality of influence only and belief that the only survival is that of the nation are both insufficient and must ultimately give way to belief in personal immortality. Mullins judged all idealistic and pantheistic denials of immortality to be as inadequate and inconsistent as are those systems of thought themselves. He said that only a Christian theism based on personalism was consistent and that such a view includes a belief in immortality. Mullins denied that the idea of future rewards and punishments was detrimental to ethics. He said instead that such an idea was inwrought in man's moral nature. To the scientific objection, Mullins answered that while scientific methods could neither prove

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<sup>114</sup>The Christian Religion . . ., p. 440.

nor disprove immortality, the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection life of the Christian believer were facts which could not be refuted by speculation.

Since the eschatological teachings of Jesus are so decisive for Christian theology, inquiries as to the source of those teachings are often made. Mullins said that while both the Old Testament and the Jewish eschatology of New Testament times furnished Jesus much of his material, he interpreted all such material in a unique and original way. Jesus' eschatological teachings did presuppose many of the beliefs of his day. At the same time,

he set aside many elements of existing belief. He purified and transformed them, even when he accepted in part what they contained. His treatment of all of them was free and authoritative.<sup>115</sup>

Mullins noted that some theologians have distinguished between the form and the substance of New Testament eschatology and have suggested that the latter can be held without the former. They have interpreted the New Testament's teaching concerning such things as the Second Coming of Christ, the Resurrection, and the Judgment as references to great spiritual principles rather than as descriptions of actual future occurrences. While acknowledging that much of the eschatological teaching of the New Testament is couched in highly figurative terms, Mullins committed himself to a belief

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 449.

in the historical realization of the various eschatological events. He took the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the key to faith in the Christian eschatology.

Mullins wrestled to reconcile the New Testament passages which seem to say that the kingdom of God is a future event with those which seem to say that it is a process already in existence. After giving special attention to the great eschatological discourse of Jesus,<sup>116</sup> Mullins offered the following conclusions as an answer to the problem with which he was dealing:

First, the doctrine of last things includes [both] events and processes in the moral and spiritual life. . . . Both appear in indissoluble union. Secondly, the kingdom of God is both near and far in the representations of the New Testament writers. But there is no evidence as to how near or how far the events may be in the future. Thirdly, the center of the Christian hope is the return of Jesus Christ. Fourthly, the return itself is the event in the light of which other events are viewed and by which they are to be understood.<sup>117</sup>

At this point, Mullins began his treatment of the various topics of Christian eschatology.

With regard to the death of the body, Mullins concluded four things: first, that physical death was a part of the penalty for man's sin; second, that the penalty still remains in effect for those who do not share in Christ's salvation; third, that for the Christian death is no longer

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<sup>116</sup>See Matt. 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., p. 458. For Mullins' discussion of all these preliminary questions, see ibid., pp. 440-58.



death in the penal sense even though his physical body is still subjected to the change called death; and fourth, that the Christian's victory over death has been secured through the resurrection of Christ and by means of his communication of life to his followers.<sup>118</sup>

E. Y. Mullins believed in the doctrine of an intermediate state as opposed to the doctrine of "soul-sleeping." He said that the New Testament evidence indicates that both the righteous and the unrighteous await the resurrection in this disembodied state but there is a vast difference in their circumstances.

At death, Christians go directly into the presence of Christ and of God. The state in which they exist there is a conscious state of happiness and rest.<sup>119</sup> However, since it is a disembodied state, it is not regarded as ideal or final.

The biblical information concerning the intermediate state of the unrighteous is sketchy, but it indicates that they begin even there to endure the penalties of their wickedness.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>On the death of the body, see ibid., pp. 458-59.

<sup>119</sup>At this point Mullins specifically rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory as completely unscriptural although based partly on perversions of a few New Testament passages such as I Cor. 3:13, 14.

<sup>120</sup>On the intermediate state, see ibid., pp. 459-62.

Several statements can be made on the basis of the New Testament teaching concerning the Second Coming of Christ. It will be an outward, visible, and personal return of Christ. However, the exact time of the return is unrevealed. It should be recalled that Jesus indicated that there would be subordinate comings in the events of history in addition to the final and fulfilling Second Coming. Pre-eminent among these other "comings" was the coming of the Holy Spirit with power upon the disciples. In the light of the uncertainty, the attitude of the apostles toward the Second Coming generally was one of constant expectancy. Belief in the Second Coming served to unify the faith of the early Christians and to provide them with their greatest moral and spiritual incentive. It can do the same for Christians today.<sup>121</sup>

Mullins dealt next with "the millennial question." He set forth in outline the views of both the premillennialists and the postmillennialists together with the supporting passages of Scripture, and he identified the various objections to each of the theories. Then, he listed his own conclusions on the matter. He said, first, that one passage of Scripture, Rev. 20:1-10, has been given too much prominence in the doctrine of last things by both pre- and postmillennialists. Too much has been built on this one, highly symbolic passage.

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<sup>121</sup>On the Second Coming of Christ, see *ibid.*, pp. 462-66. Cf. Baptist Beliefs, p. 58; Christ's Coming and His Kingdom (Baltimore: C. W. Schneidereith and Sons, 1894), esp. pp. 3-24.

Mullins declared, in the second place, that both Testaments teach emphatically the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom on earth. At the same time, he said that it is evidently impossible to outline a detailed order of millennial events on the basis of the biblical evidence. Thus, he said, in the third place, that all the pre- and postmillennial theories leave many insoluble problems. Fourth, Mullins recalled that the key event in the future for all the biblical writers is the Second Coming of Christ. Despite other uncertainties this fact remains certain. Fifth, Mullins appealed to Christians to cultivate an attitude of expectancy toward their Lord's return rather than becoming absorbed primarily in apocalyptic calculations and speculations.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>On the millennium, see The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 466-72. In other writings Mullins committed himself more clearly to a premillennial view. See, e.g., Christ's Coming and His Kingdom, pp. 10, 13, 25, 41-45. He was consistent throughout his career in his denial of the possibility of constructing an outline of the order of millennial events. In fact, he often minimized the importance of this matter and, to a great extent, he minimized the significance of the whole millennial question. His main concern was his belief that the postmillennialist doctrine tended to cut the nerve of Christian expectancy with regard to the Second Coming of Christ. Cf. "The Approaching Convention," Western Recorder, April 26, 1923, p. 8; "A Convention Retrospect," Western Recorder, May 31, 1923, pp. 5, 16; Mullins' review of David Heagle's That Blessed Hope: The Second Coming of Christ, in Review and Expositor, V (July, 1908), 470.

It should be noted that James P. Boyce gave little attention to the millennial question but committed himself by a vague statement to an amillennial interpretation of Rev. 20. See Boyce, op. cit., p. 461. F. H. Kerfoot found fault with both the premillennial and the postmillennial theories. However, he was inclined toward premillennialism.

Mullins was convinced that the New Testament taught the resurrection of the body as a vital element of the Christian hope. He specifically denied that the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection could be interpreted to mean simply the continued life of the soul. He held that in the mind of the early Christians the most impressive pointers toward the final resurrection were the facts of the resurrection of Christ and the present spiritual resurrection of believers in Christ. The incompleteness of the present creation and, indeed, the apparent maladjustment of nature and man in this present world also implied to them the necessity for a final fulfillment in a new creation in which resurrected men would dwell.

As to the nature of the resurrected body, Mullins believed that Paul's discussion in I Cor. 15 gives the best clues: (1) The new body will be a spiritual body perfectly adapted to the needs of the spiritual life. (2) This spiritual body will differ greatly from the present natural body. The mortality, corruption, and limitation of the natural body will give way to the immortality, glory and freedom of the spiritual body. (3) Nevertheless, the new body will bear the same relation to the old as does the stalk of wheat to the

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Like Mullins, he doubted the wisdom of drawing up a detailed program of millennial events. See Kerfoot, op. cit., p. 408f., n. 1.

seed from which it sprouted.<sup>123</sup>

Mullins declared that the principle of judgment runs through the Scriptures from beginning to end. He said that in God's kingdom the principle of judgment is in constant operation because there is a real sense in which the moral law inevitably works itself out. However, Christian eschatology includes the belief in a final judgment which will be the culmination of all temporal judgments.<sup>124</sup> This final judgment is necessarily implied by the fact that the conscience of man bears witness to an immanent moral law and to the violation of it and demands that what is implicit shall become explicit. It is implied by the corporate conscience of the race which demands that the whole process of history should have an appropriate moral climax. It is implied by the theistic view of God, for if God is a Person he will surely vindicate his dealings with men by a final judgment of affairs.

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<sup>123</sup>On the resurrection, see The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 472-78. In an earlier writing, in line with his premillennial position, Mullins had taught that there will be two resurrections, one of the righteous and one of the wicked, with the space of the millennial reign between them. See Christ's Coming and His Kingdom, pp. 25-34. Mullins made no mention of this point in his discussion of the resurrection in The Christian Religion. Boyce had discussed the possibility of two separate resurrections but had concluded that all references to a "first" resurrection referred to the spiritual resurrection of the soul from the death of sin. See Boyce, op. cit., pp. 458-61. Kerfoot had not challenged Boyce at this point.

<sup>124</sup>This double aspect of the idea of judgment is also recognized in the work of Boyce-Kerfoot. See Boyce, op. cit., p. 461; Kerfoot, op. cit., p. 409.

The New Testament teaches that the judge at the final judgment will be Jesus Christ and that the subjects will include all men and, possibly, the evil angels. The purpose of the final judgment will be not the discovery of character but its manifestation. God will make manifest the distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous and will separate them accordingly. Since deeds declare character, the deeds of men on earth will be taken as the criterion of judgment. The "great deed" will be demonstrated to be belief in Christ because from this root grow all deeds which are truly pleasing to God. Since this "deed" is actually a gift of God's grace, the judgment will make it clear that Christians are not saved by works but by grace through faith.<sup>125</sup>

Mullins noted that the New Testament revelation as to heaven and hell is notable for its reserve and restraint, its lack of answer to many speculative questions. He also observed that the biblical representations of the final states are highly symbolic and cannot be understood as mere literal descriptions. Nevertheless, he believed it was possible to make some positive statements about the two states.

With regard to heaven, Mullins said that it will be a place and not merely an inward state. He suggested that the new earth or, perhaps, the whole physical universe may

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<sup>125</sup>On the judgment, see The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 478-83. Cf. Baptist Beliefs, pp. 59-61.

be the final home of the redeemed. Wherever it is, it will be perfectly adapted to the perfected characters of God's redeemed children.

With regard to the character of heaven as opposed to its environment, Mullins analyzed it as a place of relief from the difficulties of earthly life; a place where rewards will be distributed to the saved according to their works on the basis of their faithfulness; a place for the perfect realization of all spiritual capacities and relationships; a place of appreciation of true spiritual values; a place of endless growth and attainment on the part of the saints of God. Thus, Mullins' interpretation of heaven implied no static condition but a place of eternal, glorious activity.

Mullins described hell, the final state of the wicked as "the negation or absence in the soul of all that is meant by heaven." Like heaven, hell is a place as well as a spiritual state. Mullins acknowledged that the language used in the biblical references to hell is largely figurative. He assumed, however, that no figure could fully convey the awful reality. On the analogy of the degrees of rewards in heaven, Mullins held that there will be degrees of punishment in hell based on such things as the opportunities which the unrighteous have enjoyed on earth and the nature of their response. Hell will be unending: the eternal life of the redeemed will

be paralleled by the eternal punishment of the damned.<sup>126</sup>

Mullins took notice of two theories which deny eternal punishment and sought to refute them. To the various forms of the theory of annihilationism, which is sometimes known as the theory of conditional immortality, Mullins' reply was mainly twofold: negatively, he denied that the Greek words used to describe the doom of the wicked which are interpreted by the advocates of this theory to mean "annihilation" actually mean that;<sup>127</sup> and, positively, he insisted again that the Scriptures teach that the soul is immortal. Mullins pointed out that the several forms of the theory of restorationism have been supported by two classes of arguments: one class has involved a favorable interpretation of certain passages of Scripture; the other class has drawn favorable inferences from the nature of God and man and the moral kingdom. Dealing with the first class of arguments, Mullins accused the restorationists of faulty interpretation of the texts in question--interpretation which, if accepted, directly conflicted with many other explicit teachings of the New Testament. With regard to the second class of arguments, Mullins said that the inferences were false because based upon inadequate understanding of the nature of God's love, the reality

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<sup>126</sup>On the final states, see The Christian Religion . . . , pp. 483-91. Cf. Baptist Beliefs, pp. 77-82.

<sup>127</sup>The words are φθείρω, ἀπόλλυμι, καταργέω, θάνατος, and their cognates.



of man's free will, and the heinousness of sin and evil.

Mullins sought to relieve the harshness of his doctrine of eternal punishment by calling attention to several heartening ideas. First, he noted that most Christian theologians of his day agreed that infants dying in infancy are saved by the gracious provision of God. Second, he repeated his doctrine of the different degrees of punishment. Third, he emphasized above all his confidence that God is absolutely just and loving. Christians can be comforted to know that the future is in his hands.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup>On annihilationism and restorationism, see The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 491-503. Cf. Baptist Beliefs, p. 81f. It is interesting to note that Boyce-Kerfoot had dealt with these same two theories which deny eternal punishment. See Boyce, op. cit., pp. 490-93; Kerfoot, op. cit., pp. 435-38.

CHAPTER VII

MULLINS' APOLOGETIC THEOLOGY

## CHAPTER VII

### MULLINS' APOLOGETIC THEOLOGY

T. W. Crafer has defined Christian apologetics as "the Christian defense against attack by non-Christians."<sup>1</sup> In this chapter of this dissertation, this definition is enlarged somewhat to include all theology which has the primary purpose of defending the commonly-received Christian faith against real or supposed attack from all forces, whether such forces claim to stand inside or outside the Christian community. Some of the modern forces which were resisted by E. Y. Mullins were led and supported by persons and groups who professed to be loyal Christians, but he saw them as threats to the evangelical faith and reacted accordingly.

After a general analysis of Mullins' apologetic method and a brief discussion of his identification of the fundamental issue in modern religious controversy, a survey of Mullins' critical work will be followed by an exposition of his constructive apologetics.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T. W. Crafer, "Apologetics," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, I (1951), 612.

<sup>2</sup>Mullins made such a distinction between the "critical task" and the "constructive task" in his book Freedom and Authority in Religion (Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland Press, 1913), p. 156.

Mullins' New Method of Christian Apologetics

From the early days of his literary career, E. Y. Mullins voiced his conviction that the time had arrived for the development of a new method of Christian apologetics. He announced to the Baptist Congress in 1904:

A new apologetics is a demand of the hour.<sup>3</sup>

His argument was that new forms of attack must be met by new methods of defense.<sup>4</sup>

Mullins did more than call for a new apologetic method--he endeavored to construct one. The novelty of Mullins' method can be better appreciated after a review of the method which had long been employed by Christian apologists before him.

The older method of Christian apologetics

Lewis French Stearns, whose book on Christian evidences was admired by E. Y. Mullins, analyzed the type of apologetic system which stemmed from the classic works of Joseph Butler and William Paley. This system had been designed to refute the deism which flourished during the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph Butler (1692-1752), Bishop of Durham, first

<sup>3</sup>"What Should the Churches Demand of the Theological Schools?" Baptist Congress, Proceedings, 1904, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Cf. Why Is Christianity True? (Chicago: Christian Culture Press, 1905), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Lewis French Stearns, The Evidence of Christian Experience (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), pp. 2-8.

published his Analogy in 1736.<sup>6</sup> Stearns described Butler's method as an argument ex concessio. Butler did not enter into the general questions of the probability and possibility of miracles and revelation. Nor did he attempt to prove the truth of the Christian doctrines by showing their conformity with the tests and standards of reason. Instead, he set himself to the more modest undertaking of showing that, if the existence of a personal God is granted, which the deist was quite willing to do, the presumption of nature can be interpreted as favorable to the truth of Christianity and to the validity of its evidences. To be sure, revealed religion presents difficulties, but such difficulties are simply analogous to those which are accepted in the constitution and course of nature. Therefore, Butler argued, the deist has no right to raise objections against revelation which bear equally against the constitution and course of nature. He should be willing to allow the same line of argumentation in support of revelation as that which he accepts with regard to all the common affairs of life. As Stearns summarized Butler's conclusion:

It is not claimed that the evidences of Christianity give absolute proof, but only that they afford such reasonable probability as lays every candid and

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<sup>6</sup>For an edition which is available now, see Joseph Butler, The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature, ed. Joseph Cummings (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1878).

right-minded man under obligation to act upon the assumption that the facts and doctrines with which they are concerned are true.<sup>7</sup>

If Bishop Butler's task was that of clearing away the objections to Christian belief, the task of Archdeacon William Paley (1743-1805) was to present positive evidence to substantiate belief. This Paley did in A View of the Evidences of Christianity, which was first published in 1794.<sup>8</sup> Paley's evidence was primarily that which confirmed the miraculous quality of the Christian facts and faith. He made some use of the arguments based on the fulfillment of prophecy, and he gave some attention to other developments, such as the spread of the faith, which substantiated the truth of Christianity. But his main concern was to prove that the Christian miracles actually occurred. For such proof Paley relied upon the testimony of the original witnesses which is contained in the Scriptures. In order to attest the credibility of these witnesses, Paley advanced the proposition that both sacred and secular evidence agreed

that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts;

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<sup>7</sup>Stearns, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>8</sup>For an edition which is available now, see William Paley, A View of the Evidences of Christianity, ed. T. B. Birks (London: Religious Tract Society, n.d.).

and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, Paley, convinced that he was offering historical evidence of such sufficient probability as should satisfy every reasonable mind, argued that if the Christian miracles actually occurred, then the Christian system must be a revelation from God and, thus, it should be accepted upon divine authority. To be sure, the contents of the revelation must necessarily be interpreted, but whenever a thing is clearly recognized as taught in the Scriptures, it should be implicitly received.<sup>10</sup>

L. F. Stearns praised the effectiveness of the apologetic approach inaugurated by the works of Butler and Paley. It had been developed to meet a particular need at a particular time and it had served its purpose well. Stearns recalled that these two books had been useful textbooks in England and in America for a long period of time and he declared that the apologetic tradition of Butler and Paley had maintained itself until well past the middle of the nineteenth century. However, he noted that by the latter part of the century the time had come for a new approach to Christian apologetics, mainly because a new scientific and philosophical outlook had raised new problems

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Stearns, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

and had made the old answers irrelevant. Deism had largely been replaced by pantheism, agnosticism, and naturalism. Evolutionary theories had been applied far beyond their original biological context. Stearns expressed the conviction that modern evangelical theology must be able to develop a comprehensive new apologetic which could meet the needs of the modern age.<sup>11</sup>

The apologetic method of E. Y. Mullins can now be examined as one of those which recognized the challenge of the new situation and sought to confront it in a comprehensive way.

The apologetic method of E. Y. Mullins

E. Y. Mullins believed that every really dangerous attack upon Christianity bases itself upon some one or more sound principles of thought or methods of investigation. Such attacks cannot be evaded; on the contrary, they must be met head-on, and the defense must be made in terms of the attack. Mullins held, therefore, that the best way for the Christian to defend his faith in such cases is to base his reply upon the sound and accepted principles which have been employed by the opposition and then go on to show the invalidity of the opponent's alleged conclusions.<sup>12</sup> Mullins

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-19.

<sup>12</sup>"The Modern Defense of Christianity, No. 2: What Makes the Modern Attack Dangerous?" Western Recorder, September 25, 1924, pp. 4-5.



defined the task of the defender of Christianity as being

. . . to establish the Christian positions by means of the principles of investigation employed by the opposition, so far as those principles are valid.<sup>13</sup>

But who were "the opponents" of Mullins' day and what were their principles and methods? In all of his apologetic writings, E. Y. Mullins identified himself as an evangelical Christian.<sup>14</sup> Thus, when referring to the opponents of the faith, he meant those who rejected the commonly-accepted fundamentals of evangelical Christianity.

In his first book on Christian evidences, which was published during the first decade of the twentieth century, Mullins described the foe as "a skepticism which wears the garb of science and philosophy."<sup>15</sup> He identified the principles employed by those holding such anti-Christian views as the principles of the current philosophical systems and those of the inductive scientific method.<sup>16</sup>

In later years, Mullins wrote against "rationalistic enemies of the Christian religion,"<sup>17</sup> "modern liberals and

<sup>13</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>See, e.g., "The Modern Defense of Christianity," Western Recorder, September 11, 1924, p. 3; Christianity at the Cross Roads (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), p. v.

<sup>15</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>17</sup>"The Issue of Issues," Western Recorder, September 28, 1922, p. 3.

radicals,"<sup>18</sup> and "the new radical orthodoxy."<sup>19</sup> Mullins deliberately minimized the use of the term "modernist" in his book Christianity at the Cross Roads, which was written while controversy raged in 1924.<sup>20</sup> However, in an important series of articles which he wrote that same year, Mullins specifically contrasted "modernism" and "the evangelical faith."<sup>21</sup>

When Mullins' apologetic work is viewed as a whole, it can be said that he set his defense primarily against the kind of theological approach which sought first of all to take its stand within the presuppositions of modern science and modern thought, and then, assuming that much of orthodox Christianity was incompatible with these, sought to reclaim only as much of the traditional faith as could be reclaimed from that position. The movement dominated by this approach, while not easily denominated in its earlier stages, culminated during the 1920's into the phenomenon known as "modernism."<sup>22</sup> Mullins interpreted the modernist movement

<sup>18</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 48.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 27. Cf. "The Present Situation in Theology," Review and Expositor, XX (April, 1923), 129-37.

<sup>20</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. vi.

<sup>21</sup>See, e.g., "The Modern Defense . . . ," pp. 3-4.

<sup>22</sup>John Dillenberger and Claude Welch have defined modernism in this way and contrasted it with liberalism which "though equally concerned to relate Christianity to science and the new intellectual movements, was committed first and ultimately to the Christian tradition, and from that vantage point attempted effective adjustment to science

as an attack against Christianity itself and, therefore, he sought to demolish and refute it.

Mullins' method of countering modernism was generally as follows: First, he sought to locate the fundamental issue which distinguished modernism from evangelical Christianity. Then, he leveled his criticisms against the various weapons employed by modernism. Finally, he set forth the various classes of facts which constitute the evidence for evangelical Christianity.<sup>23</sup> Throughout all of this procedure, he endeavored to keep in mind and to utilize the principles of scientific investigation: absolute loyalty to fact and the inductive method based on research, analysis, hypothesis, and verification.<sup>24</sup>

The three aspects of Mullins' apologetic method will now be examined one by one.

#### Mullins' Identification of the Fundamental Issue

More than once, E. Y. Mullins clearly defined the issue of issues between evangelical Christianity and its modernist foes as being supernaturalism versus naturalism. He said on one occasion:

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and the changing world scene." See Dillenberger and Welch, Protestant Christianity Interpreted Through Its Development (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 226.

<sup>23</sup>This outline of Mullins' method is the product of the analysis of the author of this dissertation. Mullins nowhere described his overall apologetic strategy, but this seems to be the plan which his system implies.

<sup>24</sup>Why Is Christianity True? pp. 4-6. Cf. Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 14.

The great line of cleavage today is supernaturalism versus naturalism. This is the line of division. The armies are drawn up on opposite sides of this line. They face each other. The issue is clear cut.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, Mullins believed that the issue involved not merely conflicting arguments or divergent conclusions but basic presuppositions which were diametrically opposed to each other. He knew that no difference could be more crucial than this because he always contended that a man's presuppositions were the most important aspect of his position.<sup>26</sup>

Mullins was certain that the main theological battle of his day was not being fought in the area of the doctrinal interpretation of the Scriptures, although it had been at an earlier period. On the contrary, he was convinced that the scientific disciplines of historical criticism and biblical

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<sup>25</sup>"The Modern Defense of Christianity, No. 3: The Right Attitude and Assumptions," Western Recorder, October 23, 1924, p. 3. Cf. "The Issue of Issues," p. 3. In 1925, the committee on "Baptist Faith and Message," of which E. Y. Mullins was chairman, declared in its report to the Southern Baptist Convention:

"The present occasion for a reaffirmation of Christian fundamentals is the prevalence of naturalism in the modern teaching and preaching of religion. Christianity is supernatural in its origin and history. We repudiate every theory of religion which denies the supernatural elements in our faith."

See Edgar Young Mullins et al., "Report of Committee on Baptist Faith and Message," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1925, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup>See "The Modern Defense . . .," p. 3. Cf. "Evolution and Belief in God," Western Recorder, March 22, 1923, pp. 3-4.

theology had demonstrated conclusively that the Bible teaches in the main what evangelicals had long affirmed that it did. It was for this reason that the modernists were seeking to challenge not the doctrinal teachings of the Bible but rather the reliability of the biblical witness to the facts of religious reality and, ultimately, the nature and significance of the facts themselves. This was why Mullins held that the issue of issues pertained to the fundamental presupposition of whether or not the reality of the supernatural was to be accepted. Whether one was a naturalist or a supernaturalist determined to a great extent the kind of interpretation one would give to the basic facts of religion.<sup>27</sup>

Mullins was willing to allow for minor differences of opinion within the camp of the supernaturalists. He said:

If a man honestly accepts the supernatural elements of the Scriptures he is fighting in the same great army with the rest of us although his views on details do not always coincide with our own.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, however, he saw the threat of naturalism as so deadly that he sought to combat it in whatever guise it might appear.<sup>29</sup> It was because he believed modernism to be dominated by naturalistic presuppositions

<sup>27</sup>"The Modern Defense . . . ," pp. 3-4; "The Issue of Issues," p. 3; Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 26-30.

<sup>28</sup>"The Modern Defense . . . No. 3: . . . ," p. 3.

<sup>29</sup>"The Modern Defense . . . No. 2: . . . ," pp. 4-5, 16.

that E. Y. Mullins opposed it so vehemently.

Mullins' Critical Apologetics

But how was the modernist attack carried out? In an article written in 1924, Mullins identified the chief weapons of modernism as being modern physical science, modern rational philosophy, historical criticism, and comparative religion.<sup>30</sup> He contended that all of these operated on the basis of naturalistic presuppositions. He said:

Physical science teaches that all events occur under the law of continuity, or physical causation; therefore the supernatural element in the Bible is excluded.

Rational philosophy demands an explanation of all things within the grasp of man's natural reason; therefore the Incarnation is absurd.

Historical criticism affirms ordinary causes for the religious movement known as Christianity; therefore all extraordinary causes must be rejected.

Comparative religion seeks explanations of the Christian movement in the influence of the ethnic religion surrounding Palestine; therefore any direct miraculous action of God is out of the question.<sup>31</sup>

More detailed attention can now be given to Mullins' criticism of each of these forces.

<sup>30</sup>"The Modern Defense . . . ," p. 3. To be sure, Mullins sometimes varied slightly his list of modernistic weapons, especially by adding modern psychology to the list upon occasion. Cf., e.g., Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 63, 114. However, the four listed above are the ones which he criticized in greatest detail, especially in Christianity at the Cross Roads, chaps. iv-x.

<sup>31</sup>"The Modern Defense . . . ," p. 4.

His criticism of physical science

E. Y. Mullins believed that physical science and religion dealt with two entirely different spheres of reality. He sought often to point out the differences between the two spheres. In his systematic text-book he said:

The realities known are not the same. In physical science it is the world of matter; in religion, the world of spirit. The modes of knowing are not the same. In physical science sensation supplies the data; in religion, inward experiences of fellowship with God. The relation of cause and effect is not the same in the two spheres. In physical science continuity, or the transformation of energy, is the form in which the causal relation is set forth. In Christian experience the causal relation is expressed in terms of the interaction of persons. Not physical, but free causation is the form of statement which must be employed in religion. The formulations of the results are not the same. In physical science mathematical laws express the meaning. In . . . religion, general principles, or teachings, or doctrines expressive of personal relations, are alone adequate.<sup>32</sup>

Of special significance for Mullins was the difference between offering explanations based solely on the principle of the continuity of physical causation and explaining things by reference to free, personal, supernatural causes. He said that the former was the method of science while the latter was the method of religion.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917), pp. 83-84.

<sup>33</sup>"The Modern Defense of Christianity, No. 4: Science and Religion," Western Recorder, December 11, 1924, pp. 8-9; Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 63-64, 231. In fact,

Mullins also pointed out the similarities between the two spheres. He said that in both spheres facts and only facts are taken into account; in both, the realities observed are only partially known; and in both, systematic explanation is sought.<sup>34</sup>

Mullins held that both science and religion have a perfect right to use their own methods in pursuit of their own aims within their own spheres.<sup>35</sup> He spoke out vigorously in defense of the rights of science.<sup>36</sup> He did not believe that there should be conflict between science and religion. In fact, he said that there could be cooperation and mutual gain as each discovered truth within its own sphere.<sup>37</sup>

But, on the other hand, Mullins' chief criticism of

Mullins sometimes defined physical science as the discipline which works with the principle of causality and religion as the human pursuit which works with the principle of personality. Ibid., pp. 31-32.

<sup>34</sup>The Christian Religion . . . , p. 83.

<sup>35</sup>"The Modern Defense . . . No. 4 . . . ," pp. 8-9. Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 30-34.

<sup>36</sup>This fact becomes most evident when Mullins' approach to the evolution controversy is examined. See infra, pp. 313-16.

<sup>37</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 32; "The Modern Defense . . . No. 3: . . . ," p. 4; "The Modern Defense . . . No. 4: . . . ," pp. 8-9; "The Modern Minister and His Task," Record of Christian Work, XLVI (October, 1927), 711-18; "President Mullins' Inaugural Address," Seminary Magazine, XIII (November, 1899), p. 74.



the science of his day was that it was being used illegitimately to deal with matters which were beyond its proper sphere and facts which could not be explained by its methods.<sup>38</sup> He said:

Some men are trying to remake religion in the image of science . . . [This is] . . . futile and hopeless . . . You cannot put the human will, the human consciences, the human personality in a chain of physical causes and effects. Nor can God's personality be merged in nature as if He were merely a physical force. And yet this is the process by which Naturalism, in the name of science, is trying to abolish the soul, immortality, freedom, and God . . .<sup>39</sup>

Mullins believed that it was possible to demonstrate conclusively that these four last-named conceptions were all beyond the bounds of scientific judgment. They were "the intractable residues of science," which resisted all the efforts of physical science to deal with them. Yet, precisely because these four conceptions constituted the foundation of religion, Mullins held it possible to state emphatically that physical science was incompetent to deal with religious reality.<sup>40</sup>

A major point of controversy between science and religion in Mullins' day was the evolution question. Mullins' position with regard to this controversy can be summed up in

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<sup>38</sup>Freedom and Authority . . . , pp. 213-17. Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 74-77.

<sup>39</sup>"The Modern Defense . . . No. 4: . . . ," p. 9.

<sup>40</sup>Freedom and Authority . . . , Chap. iii, esp. pp. 128-29.

a few statements. He regarded the evolutionary theory as an unproven hypothesis which had been developed to explain the origin of species.<sup>41</sup> Early in his career, he accepted the use of the term "evolution" as properly descriptive of the orderly progression in the history of nature but in later years, convinced that the term usually carried a naturalistic connotation, he rejected it altogether.<sup>42</sup> In 1925, when informed that Shailer Matthews, in an affidavit secured by the defense counsel for insertion into the record of the Scopes trial, had asserted that E. Y. Mullins, along with many other "conservative evangelical theologians" held to theistic evolution, Mullins replied:

Dr. Matthews was mistaken. I am not a theistic, nor any other kind of evolutionist.<sup>43</sup>

In 1905, in his first major book, Mullins had said that the Christian theistic view was "the most satisfactory of all the forms" of the evolutionary hypothesis.<sup>44</sup> But in articles written in 1923 and 1927, after rejecting naturalistic

<sup>41</sup>"Why Not Evolution?" Western Recorder, April 21, 1927, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Why Is Christianity True?, p. 65; "Evolution and Special Creation," Western Recorder, August 6, 1925, pp. 8, 28. "Why Not Evolution?" p. 7; "Why Not Theistic Evolution?" Western Recorder, May 5, 1927, pp. 3-4.

<sup>43</sup>"President Mullins Denies Truth of Dean Matthews' Affidavit," Western Recorder, August 6, 1925, pp. 12-13.

<sup>44</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, p. 71.

evolution and criticizing theistic evolution, Mullins denied that the kind of view which had been held by A. H. Strong, James Orr, Abraham Kuyper, James P. Boyce, and F. H. Kerfoot, which was usually called Christian theistic evolution, actually deserved the name "evolution" at all.<sup>45</sup> While he found their view unobjectionable in its main features, he said that these men had been mistaken to call themselves evolutionists.

They are not evolutionists. Their ideas would not pass muster among evolutionists of the modern type at all.<sup>46</sup>

He indicated a preference for some such word as "development" to describe his own idea of the creative process of God.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, despite his opposition to most forms of evolution and even to the use of the term itself, Mullins resisted the inclusion of judgments on scientific matters in religious confessions of faith,<sup>48</sup> and he opposed the passing

<sup>45</sup>"Evolution and Belief in God," Western Recorder, March 22, 1923, pp. 3-4; "Why Not Theistic Evolution," ibid., May 5, 1927, pp. 3-4. There is actually a change of attitude reflected in these two articles. In the first, Mullins' main emphasis is that if Christians insist on calling themselves evolutionists they should carefully define the term and make clear their Christian convictions. In the second article he says flatly that persons such as F. H. Kerfoot used the term "evolution" incorrectly. For the passages cited from Boyce-Kerfoot, see James P. Boyce, Abstract of Systematic Theology, rev. F. H. Kerfoot (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1899), pp. 146, 141-42.

<sup>46</sup>"Why Not Theistic Evolution?" p. 3.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>48</sup>"Science and the Truth," Western Recorder, September 17, 1925, pp. 10, 24-25; "The Evolution Issue:

of legislation against evolution or any other scientific theory.<sup>49</sup> He based his major arguments on his separation-of-the-two-spheres approach and on the hallowed Baptist principle of the right of private judgment. With regard to the latter point, he declared that, while it is right for Christians to uphold the absolute truth of the message of the book of Genesis, it is wrong for individuals to impose their particular interpretations of that message upon others.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, he stoutly contended that the evolutionists had no right to present the naturalistic philosophy of evolutionism as though it were established fact.<sup>51</sup>

#### His criticism of rational philosophy

E. Y. Mullins criticized modern philosophy as being in a state of unstable equilibrium. He said that the current demand for "a sound metaphysic" had a hollow ring to it because such simply cannot be provided by a purely rational process, and yet, philosophy, by its very nature is limited

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What Is It?" (unpublished notes in the files of R. Inman Johnson, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

<sup>49</sup>"Concerning Bill Against Attacks on Religious Belief," Western Recorder, February 23, 1922, pp. 8-9. "The Place of Christian Education in the World Outlook" (MS in the files of R. Inman Johnson, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 8.

<sup>50</sup>"The Evolution Issue: What Is It?"

<sup>51</sup>"The Case of Burbank," Western Recorder, May 20, 1926, pp. 6, 10.

to the rational process.<sup>52</sup> It is the discipline which works with the principle of rationality.<sup>53</sup>

Mullins pointed out that the basic facts or type-phenomena on which the various philosophies are constructed constitute both their strength and their weakness. Each of them represents one particular facet of reality which is interpreted as the key to the whole. He said that each of the major philosophies can be viewed as impregnable from the standpoint of its type-phenomenon.<sup>54</sup>

Grant the truth of the major premise of any one of the systems, and that particular view will easily put to rout all the others. . . . If the type-phenomenon selected is permissible then the world-view which is built around it may certainly claim a respected place in the intellectual kingdom.<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, he noted the ease with which the various philosophic systems destroy each other. He said that "to refute a particular philosophy one needs only to start with some other assumption."<sup>56</sup> He compared this process to the story of the two snakes which swallowed each

<sup>52</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, chap. viii, passim; Freedom and Authority . . ., chap. iv, passim.

<sup>53</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 31.

<sup>54</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 159-61, 169-70; Freedom and Authority, pp. 149-51.

<sup>55</sup>"Humanizing Our Philosophy," Biblical Review, XIII (April, 1928), 225.

<sup>56</sup>Freedom and Authority in Religion, p. 150.

other by the tail until each slowly disappeared down the throat of the other in a diminishing circle and both finally vanished from view.<sup>57</sup>

Of course, Mullins believed that the arguments of the several philosophies differed in strength and that all of them were subject to various degrees of criticism. In his own writings he criticized agnosticism, pantheism, materialism, idealism, critical monism, pluralism, and even personalism and pragmatism.<sup>58</sup> However, his general conclusion was that the rational process, when applied to the task of explaining the world, is inconclusive.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, while he readily admitted that philosophy has a perfect right to carry on its proper work of seeking a rational explanation for all things, he denied that any particular philosophy has the right to affirm that the explanation which it has accepted is the only possible explanation.<sup>60</sup> Mullins was especially disturbed because much of modern thought was advocating a philosophy which arbitrarily ruled out the

<sup>57</sup>"Humanizing Our Philosophy," p. 227.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. Why Is Christianity True?, chaps. ii-iv; Freedom and Authority . . ., chap. iv; The Christian Religion . . ., pp. 108-120. In Why Is Christianity True? he even classified evolution as a philosophy and criticized it. See chap. v of that work.

<sup>59</sup>Freedom and Authority, p. 150.

<sup>60</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 155.

meaningful existence of supernatural reality and was seeking to make this philosophy the presupposition of all research in physical science, historical criticism, comparative religion, psychology, sociology, and the like. He said:

The deadly foe to the Christian religion which has been working in the application of these methods has been the false philosophy which has been behind them.<sup>61</sup>

#### His criticism of historical criticism

E. Y. Mullins identified historical criticism as the modern discipline which attempts

. . . by careful and unbiased research to ascertain the historical facts of which the New Testament purports to be the record. These facts pertain to the authorship, date, original contents and historical authenticity and reliability of the various books.<sup>62</sup>

Mullins certainly had no objection to this method of research if it were employed in a truly scientific way. He held that any valid interpreter of the Scriptures must be prepared to accept all the facts pertaining to the biblical documents for which the evidence is sufficient.<sup>63</sup> But it was precisely at this point that Mullins made his chief criticism of the modernistic use of the critical approach

<sup>61</sup>"The Issue of Issues," p. 3.

<sup>62</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, p. 177.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 177, 185. Mullins made use of the critical approach in his own short commentary on Ephesians and Colossians. See Studies in Ephesians and Colossians The Convention Series, I. J. Van Ness, General Editor (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1913).

to the Bible. He said that modernism arbitrarily rejected every aspect of supernaturalism in the Scriptures, not because the evidence was insufficient, but simply because of a prior commitment to a naturalistic presupposition.

Taking the question of the person of Jesus Christ as the most typical and most significant case in point, Mullins demonstrated that the critical approach, dealing solely with the Gospel of Mark, the Source Q, and the Epistles of Paul to the Romans, to the Galatians, and to the Corinthians (I and II), all of which were admitted to be genuine and basic by most of the critical scholars, led inescapably to the conclusion that the testimony to Jesus Christ as supernatural Messiah and Savior, resurrected Lord, and unique Object of saving faith, was as prominent in these established documents as it was in the New Testament as a whole. Despite this, however, many modernistic scholars chose to reject the supernatural elements in the Scriptures. Mullins said that by doing so they renounced their role as scientific scholars and proved themselves to be dominated by a naturalistic world-view. They abandoned fact for an a priori theory. Mullins held that this was inexcusable and that it undermined the whole modernistic approach to the Scriptures.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>For the course of Mullins' argument along this line, cf. ibid., chap. ix; Freedom and Authority . . ., chap. ii;



His criticism of comparative religion

While granting freely the value of the method of the young science of comparative religion, Mullins believed that this discipline also, in the hands of the modernists at least, was guided by a naturalistic presupposition which led its adherents to overstate their case in locating the origins of the Christian religion solely in the environment in which the religion developed.

Mullins readily acknowledged the superficial parallels which existed between Christianity and the various Mystery Religions which were prevalent in the Hellenistic world during the early centuries of the Christian era. He noted, however, that such parallels did not necessarily imply the dependence of one religion on the other and they certainly did not prove it. He felt that to say that they did was to display a preference for imaginative fancies to the more obvious explanations suggested by historical facts. He said:

There were some similar general religious ideas and certain points of agreement. But fundamentally the contrasts rather than the likenesses are most manifest. On the well-established basis of Old Testament teachings and on the necessary assumption of the historicity of Jesus we can explain the New Testament and the Christian movement without recourse to the Mystery-cults.<sup>65</sup>

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"The Modern Issue as to the Person of Jesus Christ," Review and Expositor, VIII (January, 1911), 14-17. In the course of these discussions Mullins sought to refute the views of Adolph Harnack, Albert Schweitzer, and James Martineau, among others.

<sup>65</sup>Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 232-33.

Mullins held that the conclusions which modernists derived from this science of comparative religion were actually unscientific because they were based less on historical evidence than on a preconceived intention to support the theory of the naturalistic origin of Christianity.<sup>66</sup>

### Conclusion

E. Y. Mullins did not believe that there was a necessary antipathy between the modern scientific disciplines of learning on the one hand and evangelical Christianity on the other. He said:

These weapons can all be turned to account in favor of our faith.<sup>67</sup>

The fact that he sought to utilize these weapons will be apparent when his constructive apologetic is examined.

Thus, his criticism was actually not directed toward the disciplines themselves but toward the use to which modernism, with its naturalistic bias, had put them.

### Mullins' Constructive Apologetics

Although no exact parallel exists, Mullins' presentation of the Christian evidences, his constructive apologetics, is to a great extent the positive side of his negative and critical arguments which have just been outlined. Therefore,

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<sup>66</sup>See ibid., chap. x, for Mullins' most detailed discussion of this subject.

<sup>67</sup>"The Modern Defense . . . No. 2: . . . ," p. 16.

the following discussion of the evidence of theistic philosophy, the evidence of Jesus Christ, the evidence of Christian experience, and the evidence of Christian history can be brief because much of it has already been implied.

The evidence of a theistic philosophy

Having criticized the other leading philosophical possibilities of his day, Mullins attempted to show that theism is incomparably the strongest of all world-views. Since he believed that the crucial thing about any philosophy is the basic principle or type-phenomenon by which it interprets the rest of reality, Mullins declared that the great strength of theism is that its key type-phenomenon is the highest principle known to man in his actual experience, viz., the principle of personality.<sup>68</sup> To the idealist who would contend that his type-phenomenon is higher than personality, Mullins replied that such a principle can only be an uncertain, speculative abstraction while the principle of personality is a reality attested by man's own personal life.

Mullins was aware that the traditional theistic proofs for the existence of God are not "proofs" at all in the sense of being coercive to the reason. He maintained, however, that they do have a certain value in vindicating the theistic postulate because they help to show that the theistic

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<sup>68</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, pp. 86-87.

interpretation of the universe is a reasonable possibility.<sup>69</sup>

Mullins held, of course, that the Christian religion was more than a mere theism, but he knew that a theistic interpretation of the universe might well open the door for the Christian gospel. He said:

The moment we conclude that God is a personal being, the mind inevitably raises the further question: Is he interested in this world and its inhabitants? Can he communicate a knowledge of his will to men, as men communicate with each other? Has he done so? The mind refuses to rest in bare theism. Christianity answers these questions about the God of Theism.<sup>70</sup>

#### The evidence of Jesus Christ

E. Y. Mullins believed that "the religion of the New Testament hinges upon the significance of the Person of Jesus Christ for our faith."<sup>71</sup> If Jesus was merely "the prince of saints,"<sup>72</sup> Christianity must necessarily be reduced from its position of absoluteness and finality to a position of relative excellence in the estimation of men. On the other

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<sup>69</sup>"The Modern Issue . . . ," pp. 23-25. Mullins dealt in some detail with the theistic arguments in The Christian Religion . . . , pp. 124-36, and in Why Is Christianity True ? , pp. 79-90. He interpreted them all to be based on the principle of sufficient causation. Mullins' reinterpretation of the proofs in the light of Christian experience will be referred to a bit later. See infra, pp. 328-29.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>71</sup>"Christianity in the Modern World," Review and Expositor, "XX (October, 1925), 473.

<sup>72</sup>Mullins attributed this phrase to James Martineau. See "The Modern Issue . . . ," p. 14.

hand, if Jesus' position as unique Son of God and divinely-appointed Redeemer and Savior continues to be acknowledged by men, the evangelical Christian faith will continue to stand because its foundation will be secure.

Mullins was convinced that the most significant result of historical criticism had been to demonstrate the unity of the testimony of both the Gospels and the Epistles to Jesus Christ as the absolutely unique One whom evangelical Christianity had long declared him to be.<sup>73</sup> However, that still left unanswered such questions as the following: Was Jesus correct in his understanding of himself? Were the apostles correct in their evaluation of him? Does the biblical witness to Christ correspond to the actual person of Christ? How else is this witness to be explained? Mullins answered these questions unequivocally:

The only hypothesis which adequately accounts for the representations . . . [of Christ in the Scriptures] . . . is that Jesus was a supernatural Person, possessing attributes and powers above those of ordinary men, who entered the world for the redemption of man from sin.<sup>74</sup>

To support this hypothesis, Mullins set forth several strands of evidence from the New Testament. He said that the Gospels present a picture of Jesus Christ as one uniquely related to sin, to the law, to the Kingdom of God, to

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<sup>73</sup>Supra, p. 320.

<sup>74</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, p. 112. (Italics mine.)

Providence, to the forces of nature, to mankind, and to God.<sup>75</sup> Mullins contended that not only these facts themselves but also the unity, consistency, and interdependence of their presentation in the Gospels is best explained by the assumption that the person being portrayed was a supernatural person.<sup>76</sup> The same can be said for the originality and vitality of the picture thus presented.<sup>77</sup>

Mullins said that the moral grandeur of the Christ of the Gospels has been so profoundly impressive that it has rarely been questioned even by unbelievers. This gives a significant clue to his identity.<sup>78</sup> He added that the evidence afforded by the ethical teaching of Jesus is reinforced by the recognition that he was more than the teacher of the noblest ethic known to man: he was the inaugurator of history's most comprehensive ethical enterprise, the ultimate aim of which is the establishment of the Kingdom of God among men.<sup>79</sup> The evidence of the miraculous elements in the ministry of Jesus, including the supreme miracle of his resurrection from the dead, is also seen to be of one piece with the rest of the New Testament picture of him if the hypothesis of his supernatural person is accepted.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., chap. vii.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 113-20.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 120-35.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., chap. xi.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., chaps. xii, xiii.

Mullins specifically denied that the appearance of such a person as Jesus Christ in the world could be explained on the basis of natural evolution. He reaffirmed his own conviction that the only hypothesis which adequately accounts for the facts is the hypothesis that Jesus was the supernatural Christ.<sup>81</sup> Thus, Jesus' very person provides the central, indispensable evidence for Christian apologetics.

The evidence of Christian experience

E. Y. Mullins observed that the work of William James and others had added great strength to the contention that religious experience is a distinctive type of actual human experience which affords an order of facts which are just as capable of being observed and analyzed as are the facts of sensory experience. He acknowledged, however, that even though one accepted the conclusions of James' scientific studies and agreed that religious experience is a "solution" to a previous "uneasiness" which is brought about through an "adjustment" with the higher powers, the question as to the cause of the experience may still remain unanswered.

Mullins held that the Christian need have no real difficulty with this question. Convinced of the reality of his experience by its religious, moral, and intellectual results in his life, and aware that the change can be best

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., chap. xv.

explained in terms of a readjustment of personal relationships, the Christian can readily trace his experience back to its roots in his act of submission to Jesus Christ. His certainty is further confirmed by his discovery of the reality of prayer, his reception of the witness of the Holy Spirit, his knowledge of the experience of other Christians, and his comparison of his own experience with that described in the New Testament.

On the other hand, Mullins contended that those who have not shared in Christian experience should still find it possible to accept its reality and genuineness on the basis of the testimony of converted Christians, the records which remain of the Christian experience of the past centuries, the experiences recorded in the New Testament, and the success of Christian evangelism. They should recognize that only the Christian norm of religious experience accounts for all the available facts. Thus, Mullins believed that the evidence of Christian experience had value for both the believer and the unbeliever.<sup>82</sup>

Mullins further maintained that all of the older apologetic arguments are strengthened by the evidence of Christian experience. The older theistic proofs, based on

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<sup>82</sup>On this whole topic of the evidence of Christian experience, cf. Why Is Christianity True?, chaps. xvi-xx; Christianity at the Cross Roads, pp. 235-43; "Is Jesus Christ the Author of Religious Experience?" Review and Expositor, I (April, 1904), 55-70.



inferences from the physical world are reinforced by man's knowledge of the spiritual world, which is gained through religious experience. The evidence of the miraculous events recorded in the Scriptures receives additional confirmation as men experience the miraculous power of God today. And the biblical and historical arguments for the deity of Christ are more readily accepted by those who have experienced his divine presence and power in their own lives.<sup>83</sup>

The evidence of Christian history

Mullins believed that the history of Christianity afforded additional evidence that a supernatural Power was working through it.

In the first place, he held that Christianity passes the pragmatic test of success when that success is measured in terms of the opposition to be overcome, the program proposed by Christianity itself, the spiritual laws which control its action upon men and society, and the end which it seeks to accomplish. The success of Christianity is seen in the manner in which Christ has laid hold upon and molded the world through personalities, in the way in which Christianity has overcome all kinds of opposition, in the ability of Christianity to take hold upon and mold the life of diverse peoples, in the universality of the Christian ideals, in the

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<sup>83</sup>The Christian Religion . . . , pp. 7-8, 124-36.

symmetry of character produced by Christianity, and in the progressive attainment of Christianity through the centuries. Mullins declared that the only explanation for this remarkable success is the recognition that in Christianity, in contrast to all other religions, God is taking the initiative for man's salvation.<sup>84</sup>

Mullins believed that the historical achievements of Christianity in every aspect of human life and society all blend to reveal that Christ's great work is the regeneration which he brings to pass in the lives of individuals and in the life of the race. This great gestum Christi, as well as all of the gesta Christi, testifies to the supernatural action of Christ and of Christianity.<sup>85</sup>

Mullins was sure that the Christian missionary enterprise, which clearly exhibits the essence of Christianity, could not be accounted for on the plane of naturalism, but only as the result of a supernatural Power.<sup>86</sup> He also contended that when Christianity is compared with Mohammedanism and Buddhism, the unique superiority of Christ is readily seen.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, he summed up his argument by declaring that

<sup>84</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, chap. xxi.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., chap. xxii.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., chap. xxiii.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., chap. xxiv.

Christianity definitely demonstrates its supernatural character in that, through its doctrine of God, its view of man, and its sublime moral ideal, it provides history's most adequate answer to the total religious need of all men.<sup>88</sup>

### Conclusion

E. Y. Mullins was convinced that by setting forth the various lines of evidence for the evangelical Christian religion, each of which is reinforced by all the others, a strong, cumulative, apologetic argument could be established. He knew that no religious apologetic could compel assent in the way that a mathematical formula does because demonstration in the mathematical sense is not possible in the religious realm. He did believe, however, that evangelical Christian apologetics could perform the significant service of making the evangelical Christian view of God and the world as intellectually respectable as any other view. He said that

. . . intellectually it meets the requirements of the problem as well as any other view, and, for all except those who reject the supernatural, it meets them far better.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., chap. xxv.

<sup>89</sup>Why Is Christianity True?, p. 18. Cf. "The Modern Issue . . . ," pp. 23-25.

CHAPTER VIII

MULLINS' POLEMIC THEOLOGY

## CHAPTER VIII

### MULLINS' POLEMIC THEOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the way in which E. Y. Mullins sought to restate the Baptist theological position. The material to be surveyed in this chapter differs from that dealt with in the preceding one in that whereas the main concern there was the defense of the common Christian faith, the main object here is the support of the distinctive Baptist tenets.<sup>1</sup>

First, Mullins' call for a new interpretation of the Baptist faith must be considered. Then, his approach to Baptist polemics must be indicated. Finally, some significant

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<sup>1</sup>John R. Sampey makes this distinction in a review of one of Mullins' books. See John R. Sampey, review of Edgar Young Mullins' The Axioms of Religion, in Review and Expositor, V (April, 1908), 321. Cf. the definition of polemics by C. A. Beckwith, "Polemics," The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson, IX (1950), 109. Beckwith says that the aim of polemics is "defending the position of the communion to which the controversialist belongs."

The term "polemic theology" has been chosen as the best available to describe Mullins' discussion of Baptist distinctives despite the fact, which will be pointed out in the text, that Mullins himself deplored the spirit of controversy for controversy's sake which has often been associated with polemics. Mullins' approach to polemic theology was "constructive and irenic" by his own definition (see his statement in The Axioms of Religion [Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1908], p. 7); nevertheless, he resolutely set forth the Baptist position in many significant statements, both individual and corporate. In this sense he was the author of polemic theology.

examples will be given of his refutation of other denominational positions.

Mullins' New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith

The older Baptist polemic

E. Y. Mullins often warned against the type of polemic theology which is primarily negative in its approach. In an article written in 1903, he expressed the view that a continual emphasis upon doctrinal points which are controverted between Baptists and other denominations, coupled with the neglect of other equally important doctrines which Baptists hold in common with those denominations, produces a method which is both unworthy and ineffective.<sup>2</sup> He had no sympathy for the Baptist "cartoon technique" which tended toward exaggeration of a few notable features.<sup>3</sup> He condemned the "Baptist and a half" whom he described as follows:

They expend much time and ink in the task of belaboring their brethren of other denominations, and in their pursuit of some minor point of Baptist belief they reduce all Baptist beliefs to the magnitude of this one particular object of their devotion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>"The Importance of Doctrinal Preaching," Seminary Magazine, XVI (February, 1903), 159.

<sup>3</sup>"The Need of the Baptists: The Spirit of Service Which Rounds Out and Perfects Character," Baptist World, August 19, 1909, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>"Baptist Principles Axiomatic: Religious Ultimates," Baptist Argus, June 1, 1905, p. 1.

But he was equally wary of the "half Baptist," the one without any real conviction who had no real appreciation for the distinctives of his faith.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, he was able to express some appreciation for the older Baptist polemic literature which had concentrated almost exclusively on the traditional Baptist contentions regarding "the form and meaning of baptism, the nature and significance of the Lord's Supper, and the constitution and order of the church, and related subjects."<sup>6</sup> These polemicists had employed the method of marshalling exegetically the New

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>The Axioms . . . ., p. 70. Mullins does not identify the specific works to which he refers, but he may well have had in mind a book like the anthology entitled Baptist Principles Reset to which he himself had contributed in 1901. This work consisted of a series of articles on "Distinctive Baptist Principles" which Editor Jeremiah B. Jeter had written for the Religious Herald in 1876, which were being republished together with new articles by representative Baptist spokesmen in 1901. In the introductory article in this volume, the distinctive principles of Baptists are carefully isolated from the larger body of beliefs which Baptists share with other evangelical denominations and then this statement is made:

"The peculiar principles of Baptists, while they do not constitute the main doctrines of Christianity, deeply affect the purity, progress, and triumph of the kingdom of Christ."

Jeremiah B. Jeter, et al., Baptist Principles Reset (Richmond, Va.: Religious Herald, 1901), p. 11. The subjects discussed in the course of the book are the Baptist understanding of church membership, the Baptist interpretation of the ordinances, and the Baptist position on religious liberty. These are logically treated on the basis of the relevant Biblical texts. The method of Mullins' article on immersion does not differ greatly from the rest. See Edgar Young Mullins, "The Case for Immersion at Present," ibid., pp. 125-37.

Testament evidence for the Baptist claims concerning these vital points, and Mullins believed that their effort had been largely successful. He gratefully acknowledged it:

Now let me say at once that the Baptists have won their contention on the following points: Baptism by immersion, believers' baptism, and congregational polity.<sup>7</sup> The exegetical basis for our plea has been wrought with such success, indeed, that we may assert with the utmost confidence that the scholarship of the world, taken as a whole, stands with us in our conclusions.<sup>8</sup>

However, this very success was one of the reasons why he maintained that the time had arrived for a new kind of presentation of the Baptist message. Mullins also expressed doubt whether the older approach had ever allowed the full-orbed content of the body of Baptist beliefs to be set forth. The pressures of controversy had caused a few things to be emphasized to the exclusion of many things. This was another reason why he called for a restatement of the Baptist faith from a new and higher standpoint.<sup>9</sup>

What, then, do we need? We need a transfer of emphasis. We need a fresh analysis of our fundamental principles. We need to reverse the shield of our denominational beliefs and see what is on the other side, and then we need to proclaim what we find there with the same earnestness and zeal which have marked our conduct in the past.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 71-72.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-72.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 72.



Mullins believed that a "reversal of the Baptist denominational shield" would reveal that Baptist doctrine and polity are based upon a number of broad, general, self-evident principles which are at once scripturally sound and universally appealing. He proposed that these principles, these "axioms of religion," should now be expounded.<sup>11</sup>

The axiomatic approach to Baptist polemics

E. Y. Mullins' new interpretation of the Baptist faith was set forth in its most fully developed form in his book The Axioms of Religion which was first published in 1908.<sup>12</sup> Mullins' wife related the story of how the statement of the axioms came to him "like a flash" of insight as he was preparing an address to present to the American Baptist Publication Society in the spring of 1905.<sup>13</sup> However, it seems that the general idea of an axiomatic approach to Baptist polemics had been taking shape in Mullins' mind for a considerable period of time. Mullins himself said in the preface to his book:

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-78.

<sup>12</sup>The Axioms of Religion (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1908). The title page of this book carries the subtitle, "A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith."

<sup>13</sup>Isla May Mullins, Edgar Young Mullins: An Intimate Biography (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1929), pp. 138-40. Mrs. Mullins goes on to sketch the later use of the axioms in several of her husband's major addresses. Cf. E. Y. Mullins' own explanation in The Axioms . . ., pp. 7-8.

For a number of years the author has felt that a fresh statement of the Baptist position was possible which would enable the world to understand us better.<sup>14</sup>

As early as 1900, speaking to a Baptist young people's convention, Mullins had announced his conviction that the Baptist position could be interpreted in terms of broad and basic principles as well as in terms of a selected number of specific doctrines. He declared:

They [Baptists] believe in principles which cut up by the roots the idea of sponsors, infant baptism and many other things.<sup>15</sup>

Then, in an article written early in 1904, he further elaborated his thinking along these lines:

Baptists stand for the first truths in religion. They might reduce to religious axioms the laws of religious thought and life, fundamental in their convictions. Were they as a denomination blotted out these first principles would find no equal embodiment elsewhere in the world.<sup>16</sup>

Other hints of what was to come can be cited, but it was at the American Baptist Publication Society meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, in May, 1905, that E. Y. Mullins first answered his own appeal that Baptist denominationalism be restated in universal terms, in terms derived from the inherent nature of the kingdom of God. He listed in terse form

<sup>14</sup>The Axioms . . ., p. 7.

<sup>15</sup>"The All-Around Young Baptist," Baptist Argus, December 20, 1900, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>"Union of Churches in Australia: Able Address by President Carey Discussed at Several Points," Baptist Argus, February 11, 1904, p. 2.

the theological axiom, the religious axiom, the moral axiom, the ecclesiastical axiom, the social axiom, and the religio-civic axiom.<sup>17</sup> He said:

I want to see a book written on the subject of Baptist Beliefs as the Axioms of Universal Religion. They are few, and they are simple, these principles of ours, and we need to expound them in their universal bearing and significance.<sup>18</sup>

Later that same year, Mullins presented his axioms of religion to a world-wide audience when he spoke on "The Theological Trend" at the first Baptist World Congress which met in London in July.<sup>19</sup> Then he further developed his approach in a pair of addresses in Richmond, Virginia, in November, 1906. In the first of these addresses, delivered before the Virginia Baptist Historical Society, he set forth his statement of the fundamental and distinctive Baptist principle.<sup>20</sup> In the second address, delivered before the Virginia Baptist General Association, he gave the fullest discussion yet of the six axioms, relating them to the

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<sup>17</sup>"Baptist Principles Axiomatic: Religious Ultimates," Baptist Argus, June 1, 1905, pp. 1, 13. The address to the Society was entitled "Denominational Literature as an Aid to Church Efficiency."

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>19</sup>"The Theological Trend," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, First Congress (London, 1905), pp. 151-52.

<sup>20</sup>"The Historical Significance of the Baptists," Religious Herald, December 6, 1906, pp. 4-6.

previously identified fundamental principle.<sup>21</sup> Several months later, in May, 1907, speaking before the General Convention of Baptists of North America, he sought to demonstrate that the six Baptist axioms of religion are the analogues of the American political axioms.<sup>22</sup> By this time, Mullins was ready to incorporate all of his material into his book, The Axioms of Religion.

From then on, the axioms reappeared in many of Mullins' most significant writings and addresses. Sometimes they were only implied or partially stated.<sup>23</sup> However, sometimes they are repeated in full, as in the Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists which was prepared by E. Y. Mullins and others in 1919.<sup>24</sup> During the 1920's, Mullins added a seventh

<sup>21</sup>"A New Defense of the Baptist Position," Religious Herald, December 13, 1906, pp. 4-6.

<sup>22</sup>"The Contribution of the Baptists to American Civilization," Religious Herald, June 13, 1907, pp. 4-7.

<sup>23</sup>See, e.g., "Baptists and Education," Baptist World, September 28, 1911, p. 6; "Baptist Theology in the New World Order," Review and Expositor, XVII (October, 1920), 402-407; "The Baptist Conception of Religious Liberty," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, Third Congress (Stockholm, 1923), pp. 66-72; Edgar Young Mullins et al., "A Message of the Baptist World Alliance to the Baptist Brotherhood, to Other Christian Brethren, and to the World," ibid., pp. 223-28.

<sup>24</sup>Edgar Young Mullins et al., Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists (Richmond, Va.: Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919), pp. 13-14.

axiom to the list: the political or civic axiom.<sup>25</sup>

To be sure, E. Y. Mullins did not always interpret the Baptist faith from the standpoint of the axiomatic approach. His book, Baptist Beliefs, which appeared in 1912, only four years after The Axioms was published, was structured along the lines of the familiar topics of the traditional Baptist confessions of faith.<sup>26</sup> The "Baptist Faith and Message," which he helped to draft, is simply a revision of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith to which ten additional articles were added.<sup>27</sup> However, the axiomatic approach to Baptist polemics is most typical of E. Y. Mullins, and it is certainly his most original contribution in this field.

#### Mullins' Presentation of the Baptist Position

In his book, The Axioms of Religion, after demanding that the various Christian denominations demonstrate their validity in terms of the basic inherent characteristics of the kingdom of God, E. Y. Mullins then sought to locate the

<sup>25</sup>See, "The Contribution of Baptists to the Interpretation of Christianity," Hibbert Journal, XXI (April, 1923), 542; "Why I Am a Baptist," Forum, LXXV (May, 1926), 732.

<sup>26</sup>Baptist Beliefs (Louisville: Baptist World Publishing Company, 1912).

<sup>27</sup>Edgar Young Mullins et al., "Report of Committee on Baptist Faith and Message," Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1925, pp. 71-77. In the preparation of this "Report," some articles were deleted from the New Hampshire Confession also. See William L. Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), p. 391.

most distinctive Baptist principle, to expound the various axioms of religion which grow out of this mother principle, and to apply these axioms in several directions. This same pattern will now be followed as Mullins' presentation of the Baptist position is briefly set forth.

The distinctive principle of the Baptists

Seeking to identify the historical significance of the Baptists, Mullins raised the question: What is the principle which most clearly distinguishes the people called Baptists and which best represents their contribution to the religious thought and life of mankind?<sup>28</sup> Reviewing the variety of answers which have been offered to this question, he declared all of them to be inadequate.

What then is the Baptist conception of Christianity? Is it best expressed by Luther's great discovery of the doctrine of justification by faith? It is this but more. Is it the doctrine of the right of private interpretation of Scripture? Yes, but more. All depends on what you find . . . when you interpret. Is it soul freedom? Yes, but more. For the free soul may grope in darkness in its quest for truth, and the question of freedom is what a man will do with his freedom. Freedom does not imply capacity for self-government. Is it individualism? Yes, and more. A man is more than an individual. He is a social being, and must live and work in a social order. Is it the separation of Church and State? Yes, and more. For the separation of Church and State may involve tyranny in the Church and tyranny in the State.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to these, he named believers' baptism, obedience to the revealed will of Christ, the authority of the Scriptures,

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<sup>28</sup>The Axioms . . ., p. 50.

<sup>29</sup>"The Historical Significance . . .," p. 5.

the Lordship of Christ, regeneration as a condition of church membership, the priesthood of all believers and democracy in the church. Mullins agreed that all of these are vital principles which are championed by Baptists, but he denied that any of them is simultaneously so inclusive and exclusive as to deserve to be called the fundamental and distinctive Baptist principle.<sup>30</sup>

Mullins then offered his own definition: "The competency of the soul in religion under God" is the distinctive historical principle of the Baptists. This principle does not deny man's bondage to sin, nor does it ignore his dependence on divine revelation, grace, and redemption. However, it does affirm that man is made in God's image, that he has a capacity for God, and that he can respond to God's appeal. It means, therefore, that priesthods and hierarchies and all forms of religion by proxy are both unnecessary and improper because it is intended that every soul shall deal directly and personally with God.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 50-53; cf. "The Contribution of Baptists to the Interpretation of Christianity," p. 536.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 536-37; cf. The Axioms . . ., pp. 53-58; "The Historical Significance . . .," p. 5. It should be pointed out that E. Y. Mullins sometimes wavered in his definition of the distinctive Baptist principle. In an article written in 1915, he cited the Lordship of Jesus Christ as "the cornerstone of Baptist doctrine." See "The Message of Baptists to the Modern World," Baptist World, June 17, 1915, p. 5. In 1918, he noted that there were various ways of stating the fundamental Baptist principle and concluded:

Mullins believed that although this great principle had been directly contradicted by Roman Catholicism and partially obscured by general Protestantism, nevertheless, it represented the summary and the highest expression of the modern ideals of progressive civilization. Thus the Baptist ideal of religion has been the most progressive which the world has ever seen, blending the noblest ideals of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Anglo-Saxon political tradition.<sup>32</sup> From this basic seminal principle, Mullins drew the axiomatic propositions which he believed represented the key structural ideas of the Baptist message. These must now be outlined.

The axioms of religion expounded

The theological axiom: The holy and loving God has a right to be sovereign.--The essence of this axiom is the recognition that character is the vindication of sovereignty.

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"For practical purposes the best form of the statement is that it is obedience to Jesus Christ." He then went on to show how other Baptist principles follow from this fundamental one. See "A True Denominationalism," Baptist World, May 16, 1918, p. 3. However, despite these occasional "lapses," Mullins continued to repeat his earlier definition throughout his career. Cf. the two articles cited supra, p. 341, n. 25. As late as July, 1928, he said: "The fundamental principle of Christianity, as Baptists understand it, is the direct relation of the individual soul to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior." See "The Baptist World Alliance," Review of the Churches, V (July, 1928), 356. (This is the doctrine of soul-competency viewed from a new perspective.)

<sup>32</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 59-69.



Once men assume that God is both holy and loving, they have no difficulty in accepting the fact that this God is rightfully a sovereign God. Indeed, the eyes which have been opened by faith discern that the sovereignty of a holy and loving God affords the only true hope for a secure and orderly universe.

In creation, incarnation, and providence, God demonstrates his sovereignty in accordance with his holiness and his love. At every stage God's exercise of his sovereignty has safeguarded man's freedom because the creation and salvation of a free moral being is itself the most significant expression of God's holy, loving sovereignty. God's election of men to salvation and service is his sovereign effort to save the greatest number in the shortest time under the conditions imposed by the moral freedom of man. In his work of human redemption, God makes use of opportune times and strategic men.<sup>33</sup>

The religious axiom: All men have an equal right to direct access to God.--This axiom asserts the inalienable right of every soul to deal with God for himself. God's grace can be given to all men alike. This invalidates every attempt to set up a class-system in religion, and it implies that any barriers imposed between men and God represent a type of spiritual tyranny. Christ alone is a proper and sufficient

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 79-91; "A New Defense . . . ," p. 4.

mediator between God and man. Thus a special priestly caste among Christian believers is an anachronism. This does not mean that there can be no division of labor within the Christian community, but it does mean that there must be no usurpation of spiritual functions by a limited number of ecclesiastical officials.<sup>34</sup>

One soul cannot assume either the spiritual privilege or the spiritual obligation of another. Vicarious or proxy religion is of no avail. Probably the most glaring and wide-spread abuse of this principle has been in the practice of infant baptism which implies the possibility of the indirect access of the soul to God. For this reason, E. Y. Mullins felt compelled to expend considerable effort to refute this practice by pointing out the fallacies in its development and the follies of its maintenance.<sup>35</sup>

The religious axiom affirms the principle of individualism in religion. In Mullins' view, the religious relation is initially and primarily a relation between God and the individual man. No corporate arrangement should be

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<sup>34</sup>The Axioms . . ., p. 93. Mullins does not say much about the ministry of the Church in connection with the axioms of religion; however, in other writings he commits himself to an acceptance of the traditional two-fold view long held by Baptists. According to this view the scriptural officers of a church are bishops or elders and deacons, the first two terms being understood as synonymous. See Baptist Beliefs, p. 67.

<sup>35</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 99-126.

allowed to mar this relation.<sup>36</sup>

The ecclesiastical axiom: All believers have a right to equal privileges in the church.--This axiom is closely related to the preceding one. It is because men are equal before God that they are equal in their ecclesiastical standing.

What is the church? It is simultaneously and paradoxically both an absolute monarchy because Christ is Lord and a pure democracy because each member remains autonomous under his Lord. Here is Mullins' definition:

. . . the church is a community of autonomous individuals under the immediate lordship of Christ held together by a social bond of common interest, due to a common faith and inspired by common tasks and ends, all of which are assigned . . . by the common Lord.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 92-98. "A New Defense . . . ," pp. 4-5.

<sup>37</sup>The Axioms . . ., p. 129. Cf. the following, more formal definition:

"A Church is a body of immersed believers voluntarily associated together, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for the maintenance of the ordinances, for the spiritual growth and mutual helpfulness in Christian life, for the advancement of all forms of righteousness, and to preach the gospel to the whole world."

See the Letter of E. Y. Mullins to J. M. Frost, January 20, 1915. (The Presidential Correspondence of Edgar Young Mullins, from which several quotations are made in this dissertation, is preserved in files in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.) Both these definitions obviously apply to the local church. In his discussion of the axioms of religion, Mullins had little to say about the distinction which is often made between the universal church and the local church; however, he understood the distinction and accepted both aspects of the doctrine. See, e.g., Baptist Beliefs, pp. 62-68. Here he said that the universal church, composed of all the true believers in

The church arises as a result of the interaction of divine spiritual initiative and voluntary human response. Through the prompting of the Holy Spirit men are first brought into a proper direct relation to God and then into a voluntary association with each other on terms of equality. The New Testament description of the church as the body of Christ strikingly points up the twofold relationship of the church member: he has a direct relation to the head of the body and a relation of equality to other members of the body.

Mullins contended that the only appropriate polity

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Christ of all the ages, is practically identical with the kingdom of God. During the early years of his seminary presidency, both Mullins and the Seminary were attacked by some of their fellow Baptists because they taught the doctrine of the universal spiritual church. Mullins defended his position by declaring that the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, practically all standard books on Baptist theology and ecclesiology, all Baptist seminaries, the first generation of professors at Southern Seminary, and the Abstract of Principles of the Seminary all had taught the doctrine which he held. See Edgar Young Mullins, "President Mullins Interviewed: About the Spiritual Church," Baptist Argus, January 22, 1903, p. 1. Cf. the following selections from Mullins' correspondence during this period: Letter to A. J. S. Thomas, Editor, Baptist Courier, January 3, 1903; Letter to T. T. Eaton, Editor, Western Recorder, January 5, 1903; Letter to T. T. Eaton, January 7, 1903; Letter to T. T. Eaton, January 9, 1903; Letter to T. T. Eaton, April 10, 1903; Letter to J. J. Taylor, March 5, 1903; Letter to J. J. Taylor, April 10, 1903. (In files in the Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.) These criticisms to which Mullins was replying evidently represented an attempt on the part of some persons to revive the issues of the Whitsitt controversy. In his farewell address as president of the Seminary, William H. Whitsitt had urged that "the fundamental Baptist doctrine of the universal spiritual church" be stoutly maintained. See William H. Whitsitt, "Dr. Whitsitt's Farewell Address," Seminary Magazine, XII (May, 1899), 424-426.

for such a church is pure democracy because only thus can the direct lordship of Christ over the individual members be exercised in their corporate relationships. The Lord of the church relates himself directly to each of his members through his revealed word and through his Spirit. Thus, the central authority in the church cannot be properly localized by any human structure because it is the omnipresent authority of Christ himself. Legislation is not needed in the church because the Scriptures are the rule of faith and practice and the Holy Spirit enables each believer to be an interpreter. Neither is there any place for a judicial body apart from the local congregation, and even there discipline is not so much a legal procedure as it is a life process by which the healthy organism sloughs off its impurities.

Pure democracy in the church is actually the institutional expression of two axioms of religion: the religious, which affirms the soul's right to deal directly with God, and the ecclesiastical, which proclaims the spiritual equality of Christian believers. Mullins believed that such a polity has developed and flourished through the centuries whenever men have been acted upon directly by the spiritual environment, untrammelled by external bonds. Unfortunately, however, other types of polities have developed when the principle of expediency has prevailed and the temporal and political environment has been allowed to impose its character upon

the spiritual body. The most graphic example of such a development has been the Roman Catholic Church. But even in the churches which result from the Reformation, polity has all too often been the product of a large measure of temporal influence upon ecclesiastical life and growth.

Mullins concluded that when fairly tried the democratic polity has always worked successfully and efficiently in the long run. Temporary problems and evils may arise, but since democracy allows no permanent barriers to be officially erected, intelligence and spirituality can gradually reassert themselves.<sup>38</sup>

The moral axiom: To be responsible the soul must be free.--Mullins declared that the truth of this axiom has been confirmed by man's self-consciousness despite repeated claims to the contrary. Neither the theological determinism of hyper-Calvinism nor the materialistic determinism of the modern understanding of heredity have succeeded long in causing man to deny his awareness of his own freedom.

Freedom is self-determination, and on the ground of the power of self-determination rests the idea of personal responsibility. If one is to be responsible for his choices, he must be allowed to determine those choices. This suggests another aspect of the error of infant baptism.

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<sup>38</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 127-49.

Its cardinal evil is that the religious choice of the child is forestalled by the parent. The religious destiny of the offspring is thus assumed by another without warrant from Scripture and without any rational justification from other sources. To baptize a child in infancy is to treat it not as a free moral personality, but as a thing.<sup>39</sup>

Mullins did not deny that the individual human will is influenced by external circumstances, by other human personalities, and by the pressure of divine grace. Because of this, he emphasized the validity of a proper form of positive Christian nurture.<sup>40</sup> But he stoutly contended that any ceremony or rite or form which does not address the human intelligence and will is alien to the genius of the gospel and is an affront to human freedom and responsibility.<sup>41</sup>

The religio-civic axiom: A free Church in a free State.--The entire content of this axiom can be summed up in

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 173-84. Mullins held that this Christian nurture should recognize the organic unity of the family, but it must distinguish between the church and the family. It must distinguish between natural and spiritual heredity and between the old and the new covenant. It should seek to create an environment for the child which will predispose it to Christ and the church and should bring all the elements of Christian character into the conscious experience of the child at the earliest possible moment. But in all of these efforts, a genuine respect for human personality must be maintained. It must be remembered that personality is a developing thing: in its earlier stages the child is not a developed person but only a candidate for personality. (Mullins was quite critical of Horace Bushnell's understanding of Christian nurture which, he believed, placed too much reliance on the spiritual significance of the organic unity of the family. See ibid., pp. 168-73.)

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 150-67.

the statement that the State has no ecclesiastical function and the Church has no civic function. Mullins said that this theory of the relations between Church and State, so generally accepted in the United States today, but standing in such dramatic contrast to the traditional religio-civic theories of Europe and England, is almost entirely a Baptist contribution to the modern world. In their first confessions of faith, English Baptists took their stand for the principle of the separation of Church and State. In Rhode Island, Roger Williams planted this seed in fresh American soil. In Virginia, the long struggle for religious liberty, carried on continually by the Baptists during the later colonial period, finally culminated in legislative disestablishment in that state which served as a model for the federal constitutional guarantee of religious freedom which soon followed. Mullins believed that this latter achievement was also brought about largely because of Baptist insistence.

The separation of Church and State is necessitated by the fact that the functions of the two are quite distinct. They are compatible but by no means identical. The ends for which governments exist are moral but not necessarily religious.

Church and State represent two different spheres of life. The former is a spiritual organization, the latter temporal. One is voluntary, the other compels obedience.



The State exists for the protection of earthly life and property, while the Church exists for the promotion of spiritual life. Mullins conceded that in a perfect society Church and State might coalesce into one; however, the experience of human history to date demands that they function separately.

An establishment of religion favors one religious group above others and, by the same token, it grants unfair privileges to one group of citizens. It thus represents an injustice in both the spiritual and the temporal realms.

Therefore Mullins concluded:

Both on its political and on its religious side the doctrine of the separation of Church and State holds good. Civil liberty and soul liberty alike forbid their union.<sup>42</sup>

The social axiom: Love your neighbor as yourself.--

The great truth of the worth of the individual must be supplemented by another truth: man is a social being.

Acknowledging that the rise of the modern "social theology" has been hastened by the presence of grievous social sins, E. Y. Mullins asked the question: What is the role of the Church in the development of social righteousness? His answer was that the primary concern of the Church must continue to be the regeneration of the individual. He maintained that regeneration contains in itself the seeds of

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 196. The discussion of the religio-civic axiom includes pp. 185-200. Cf. also, pp. 44-49.

all righteousness. At the same time, he urged a greater stress on the idea that the full implications of the new birth include the regeneration of the entire life.

No great moral interest, no great social concern is irrelevant to the Church. This needs to be clearly made known. But instead of engaging directly in particular reform movements, the task of the Church is to provide the kind of men and women who will employ Christian principles in every area of human enterprise. Mullins believed that the Christian who understood the meaning of his religion would be a force for civic, commercial, and social righteousness.

Thus Christianity in America will become the religion of the State, although not a State religion.<sup>43</sup>

Mullins was convinced that the separation of Church and State provided the environment in which the Church could best prepare men of spiritual character who would willingly serve society. Thus, the Church could render its best service to the State by remaining free from the State. He was further convinced that a simple, congregational church polity left the dedicated individual Christian most free to exercise his proper duties as a member of society.<sup>44</sup>

The civic axiom: The sovereignty of the State resides in the citizen.--The idea of self-determination in religion

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 201-11.

naturally leads to that of self-determination in government. Thus, the application of the Baptist principle of soul-competency as a formative influence in human government implies democracy there also.<sup>45</sup>

The axioms of religion applied

Baptists and institutional Christianity.--In spite of his tremendous emphasis upon the individual, E. Y. Mullins was profoundly convinced of the necessity for Christianity to express itself in an institutional form, i.e., in the church. He said:

No great religious body since the New Testament was written has ever attempted with any sort of success an anti-institutional form of Christianity. Great truths and ideals must have institutional embodiment if they are to become great historic forces.<sup>46</sup>

The most distinctive institutional features of Baptist churches are the two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper. While vigorously condemning the sacramental conception of these ceremonies, Mullins stressed their value as symbols of the vital elements of Christianity. He held that baptism accents the individual aspect of the gospel and the Supper the social aspect. Both ordinances, therefore, bear witness to Christ. Baptism is a prerequisite to church

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<sup>45</sup>"The Contribution of Baptists to the Interpretation of Christianity," p. 542; "Why I Am a Baptist," p. 732. This seventh axiom does not appear in Mullins' earlier writings. He added it to the list in some articles published during the 1920's.

<sup>46</sup>The Axioms . . ., p. 249.

membership and to participation in the Lord's Supper.

Intended to represent death, burial, and resurrection, it must be by immersion or else its very meaning is destroyed.<sup>47</sup>

Rightly understood, the ordinance interprets religious experience to the obedient soul and keeps faith directed toward its proper object.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Mullins was certain that modern scholarship had confirmed the Baptist claim that immersion was the original mode of baptism in New Testament times. See *ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>48</sup>Mullins had considerably more to say about the ordinances than a reading of The Axioms alone would indicate. See, e.g., the definitions and discussions of baptism and the Lord's Supper in Baptist Beliefs, pp. 67-71. Mullins frequently wrote on various aspects of these subjects for the denominational press. When questioned about his position with regard to "alien immersion," he answered that he advocated the rebaptism of immersed members of Pedo-Baptist churches who apply for membership in a Baptist church on the grounds that the order and regularity of the church are best preserved by this means. However, he did not believe that the issue should be made a test of fellowship among Baptist churches. Mullins maintained that his view was in line with that of James P. Boyce, John A. Broadus and Southern Seminary professors generally. See "The Seminary and Alien Immersion," Baptist World, August 20, 1908, p. 8. Cf. his Letter to W. L. A. Stranburg, April 29, 1903; Letter to W. L. A. Stranburg, May 13, 1903; Letter to A. B. Dunaway, July 8, 1904.

In an article written for the Baptist Argus in 1900, Mullins contended that Baptists properly restrict the Lord's Supper to believers, who have been immersed, and whose Christian walk is orderly. In a private letter a few years later, he stated unequivocally that he was opposed to extending the invitation to the Supper to immersed Pedo-Baptists because their very membership in such a church indicates that their walk is not orderly. On the issue of whether the local Baptist congregation should further restrict the invitation to the Supper to its own membership, Mullins seems not to have committed himself. Cf. "Communion: The Baptist Position as to Restricted Communion," Baptist Argus, April 12, 1900, pp. 3-4; Letter to A. B. Dunaway, July 8, 1904.

Mullins warned against the multiplication of ordinances and forms, and he pointed out the necessity for careful distinction between the real causes and the mere outward expressions of religious life. On the other hand, he saw the folly and disobedience involved in discarding all institutional forms, and so he opposed current trends in that direction.<sup>49</sup>

Baptists and general organization.--Mullins said that while Baptists opposed the "Church State," the undue centralization of ecclesiastical administration and ecclesiastical authority, they recognized the necessity for Christian cooperation beyond the local church level for the sake of efficiency in religious work. The question to be considered then is this: What is the true theory of general organization for religious purposes?

The Baptist answer to this question grows out of the fundamental Baptist principle, the competency of the soul in religion under God, and three of the derived axioms, the religious, the ecclesiastical, and the moral.

Direct access to God, equality of privilege in the church, and individual responsibility are the core of the Baptist view.<sup>50</sup>

The necessary implication of all these ideas is that the voluntary principle must control in all Baptist general

<sup>49</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 235-254.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

organization. Just as individual Christians are voluntarily drawn together into a Baptist church because of their common life in Christ, their common motives and ends, so the churches voluntarily cooperate together and coordinate their efforts by means of larger denominational bodies which they gradually develop as changing needs demand.

When they organize into larger groups covering larger areas, as district associations, conventions, or unions, the voluntary principle controls. These larger bodies have only advisory and never legislative powers.<sup>51</sup>

Mullins believed that this system of voluntary cooperation enabled Baptists to attain most of the advantages of centralized church governments without the usual problems and abuses which authoritarianism produces. Moreover, he interpreted the voluntary system as being the only method in keeping with Baptist principles. He admitted the apparent inefficiency and imperfection of the system because it is dependent on the harmonization of many human wills, but he still maintained that the end result was more spiritually sound than that achieved by any system involving less freedom.

Mullins contrasted the Baptist system of general organization with all other systems. He believed that a representative system in which authority is delegated to selected groups leads logically to papal infallibility as certainly as does episcopacy. Baptists must not mix either

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<sup>51</sup>"The Contribution of Baptists to the Interpretation of Christianity," p. 540.

episcopacy or presbyterianism with their pure democracy if they would develop "after their kind."<sup>52</sup>

Baptists and Christian union.--Mullins recognized that no more difficult or complex issue challenged the religious leaders of his generation than the question of Christian union. The appearance of the Lambeth articles in 1888 had dramatized the appeal of many for actual progress toward organic union of kindred churches. Then in 1908, the formation of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America had brought many American denominations together in a loosely-organized program of cooperative Christian activities.

Mullins readily conceded the legitimacy of the desire for Christian union, but he questioned whether genuine union could be achieved through organization or ecclesiastical legislation. He expressed the conviction that organic Christian union, something quite beyond the mere spirit of unity and cooperation, could be successful only if it expressed the essential nature of Christianity itself.

The institutions of Christianity must conform to its inner nature. The polity will answer to the life, and conserve those fundamental relations of the soul of man to God which constitute the core and essence of the New Testament revelation.<sup>53</sup>

But how is the proper form of church organization to

<sup>52</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 212-20.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

be determined? After considering the possibility that all church polities are equally valid, Mullins announced his conclusion that this theory afforded no basis for an ultimate solution of the problem of unity. Under such a theory, a federation of incongruous and contradictory systems was the most which could be hoped for. Turning then to the theory that there is one proper scriptural and logical principle of polity, Mullins affirmed that the only genuine alternatives were a congregationalism like that advocated by the Baptists or an authoritarianism like that practiced by Roman Catholicism. Only these two are self-consistent. Mullins believed it was inevitable that congregationalism must ultimately become the polity of all Christendom.

Still the question of how Christian unity can be brought about has not been answered. Mullins contended that it could not be effected by a method of addition whereby the various groups would add their own distinctives to the pool of principles already accepted. Unity could only be produced by a method of subtraction whereby each denomination would endeavor to strip away all elements of church organization which were unacceptable to others. Mullins believed that the simple polity of Baptists, rooted directly in the universal axioms of religion, contained no elements which were not recognized as valid throughout the evangelical world. On the strength of this assumption, he offered his challenge:



If the evangelical bodies which have added to their systems those elements which contravene the axioms and subvert the spiritual rights of the race, will discard them, Christian union will come of itself.<sup>54</sup>

Mullins said this did not mean that all groups should adopt the Baptist organizational structure. The voluntary principle under which Baptist organization has evolved would leave other groups free to develop otherwise. It did mean, though, that evangelicals would secure unity of doctrine and polity and could stand together against sacerdotalism, sacramentalism, episcopacy, and infant baptism, all of which violate the axioms of religion.

Thus, Mullins believed that the axioms of religion held the key to the solution of the problem of Christian union. He said that because of their loyalty to these axioms, Baptists had made little effort toward organic unity on some other basis.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 221-34. Mullins' attitude toward Christian union remained basically the same throughout his career, although in other writings he placed more stress upon the desirability of Baptist cooperation with their brethren bearing other names. Cf. "Union of Churches in Australia: Able Address by President Carey Discussed at Several Points," Baptist Argus, February 11, 1904, p. 2; "Baptists in the Modern World," Review and Expositor, VIII (July, 1911), 350; "Baptists and Co-Operative Christian Work," Baptist World, April 17, 1913, pp. 5-6; "Objections to Co-Operative Christian Work," ibid., April 24, 1913, pp. 6-7; "A True Denominationalism," ibid., May 16, 1918, p. 3; "The Union Movement: The Use of Terms," ibid., August 22, 1918, pp. 3-4; However, since his method was to appeal to reason rather than to dogmatism, he did not escape suspicion and criticism. Especially

Baptists and American civilization.--E. Y. Mullins defined civilization as the movement of human society under the influence of general ideas, and he asserted that the greatest ideas are ultimately religious. Thus a civilization reflects religious presuppositions. Mullins believed that the Baptists have made an invaluable contribution to American civilization which can be summed up in a fivefold classification.

1. "Baptists have been the only adequate interpreters of the Reformation."

2. "Baptists have furnished to American civilization the most spiritual interpretation of Christianity the world has seen."

3. "Baptists have exhibited to American civilization the most striking example of denominational unity."

4. "Baptists gave to American civilization the complete idea of liberty."

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after his address at the National Congress of the Disciples of Christ in 1906, in which he expressed a desire for greater unity between that group and the Baptists, he was compelled to reply to repeated attacks over a period of several years. See Baptism and the Remission of Sins (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.); "President Mullins at the Christian Congress," Baptist Argus, May 3, 1906, p. 17; Edgar Young Mullins and Charles R. Brock, Correspondence on the Subject of Organic Union between Baptists and Other Religious Organizations, (Denver, Col.: By Charles R. Brock, 1907); "Dr. Mullins on Baptists and Christian Union," Baptist Argus, October 3, 1907, p. 16; Mullins, "More Light on the E. R. Lewis Letter," Baptist World, December 10, 1908, pp. 8-9, 25; Mullins, "Dr. Mullins Replies to Brethren Cooke, Weaver and the Editor of the Western Recorder," ibid., January 21, 1909, pp. 13, 32; Mullins, "Dr. Mullins Makes a Further Statement in the Western Recorder," ibid., February 4, 1909, pp. 13, 29; Mullins, "Correction by President Mullins," ibid., July 6, 1911, pp. 12-13.

5. "Baptists have furnished the spiritual analogues of our entire political system."<sup>56</sup>

Amplifying this last point, Mullins went so far as to declare that a direct correspondence can be demonstrated between the Baptist axioms of religion and the fundamental American democratic political ideals. The principle of the religious competency of the soul under God is matched by the democratic assumption of the civic competency of the citizen. The theological axiom has its counterpart in the recognition of God's sovereignty by the American State which refuses to claim jurisdiction over the Church.<sup>57</sup> Mullins further elaborated:

The "equal right of all men to direct access to God" finds its counterpart in the American axiom, "All men are created free and equal." To the assertion that "all believers are entitled to equal privileges in the Church" corresponds the political truth of democracy that government is "of the people, by the people, and for the people." The moral axiom that "to be responsible man must be free" corresponds to the democratic fundamental assumption of freedom in the exercise of the franchise. The religio-civic axiom, "A free Church in a free State," is the recognition of the distinct functions of the two bodies, defines their mutual relations, and supplies a common spiritual foundation in freedom. The social axiom, "Love your neighbor as yourself," answers to the political ideal of "equal rights to all and special privileges to none."<sup>58</sup>

Thus, the American Baptist can well afford to be patriotic

<sup>56</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 258-73.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 273-74.

<sup>58</sup>"The Contribution . . . to . . . Christianity," pp. 542-43.

because his religious and political ideals are so closely related.<sup>59</sup>

Baptists and world progress.--To attempt to relate the axioms of religion to the advancing civilization of the whole human race is to examine them in the largest possible context. Postulating the notion that the key concept of modern civilization is the significance of personality, E. Y. Mullins endeavored to show that the fundamental Baptist principle of soul-competency, together with the several axioms, contains the elements necessary for the proper guidance of the course of world progress. Seeking to establish this contention, he considered the axioms as a moral and religious force, as an intellectual force, and as a social and political force. In the sweep of his argument, he discussed the significance of evangelism as a well-spring of the religious freedom on which all freedoms ultimately rest, the importance of democracy in ecclesiastical organization, the progress of Christian missionary endeavors, the true basis for Christian union, the development of modern educational theory, the foundations of modern science and philosophy,

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<sup>59</sup>For the discussion of this whole topic, see The Axioms . . ., pp. 255-76. Mullins later conceded that the democratic form of church government can flourish under any just form of political government because of the Baptist principle of the separation of Church and State. See "Why I Am a Baptist," pp. 731-32.

and the spread of political democracy in the modern world.<sup>60</sup>

Mullins concluded that all the great lines of human progress are vitally connected with the comprehensive Baptist principles.

Intellectual liberty, or the right to think; aesthetic liberty, or the right to self-expression in the realm of art; economic liberty, or the right to work and a fair wage; political liberty, or the right to vote; religious liberty, or the right to worship--all these are the fruit of the direct relation of men to God.<sup>61</sup>

#### Mullins' Refutation of Other Positions

The main thrust of Mullins' polemic endeavor was directed toward a fresh presentation of the historic doctrinal position of the Baptists. However, he did not hesitate to criticize the positions of other Christian denominations at the points where they contradicted the Baptist interpretation of Christianity. In connection with the axioms of religion, he sought to refute both Roman Catholicism and historic Protestantism.<sup>62</sup> The burden of Mullins' criticism

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<sup>60</sup>Incidentally, he rejected socialism as an economic and political philosophy because it overlooks the realities of individualism. See The Axioms . . ., pp. 304-307.

<sup>61</sup>The Contribution . . . to . . . Christianity," p. 543. For the entire discussion of this topic, see The Axioms . . ., pp. 277-308.

<sup>62</sup>In other connections, Mullins took issue with non-Baptists on various doctrinal points. A notable example was his interpretation of the relation of baptism to the remission of sins which he delivered before the National Congress of the Disciples of Christ on April 25, 1906. After examining the New Testament passages which deal with regeneration,

of these positions can be indicated briefly.

The error of Roman Catholicism

Mullins' criticism of Roman Catholicism was a basic one indeed: he viewed the whole Catholic system as one erroneously founded upon the principle of the incompetency of the soul in religion.

In a word, the incompetency of the soul to deal directly with God is the formative principle in the Roman Catholic system, as Baptists see it.<sup>63</sup>

Mullins believed that the assumption of this principle affected every aspect of Roman Catholic thought and practice. It determined their teaching regarding the nature of religious

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salvation, the remission of sins, Mullins found that they fell into two distinct groups: one which connected the great elements of salvation with baptism, the other which connected them with repentance and faith. He maintained that these were two closed circles of teaching: one emphasizing the ceremonial principle in Christianity, the other emphasizing the spiritual principle. Mullins concluded that the New Testament taught both a spiritual remission of sins through repentance and faith and a ceremonial remission through baptism. While he allowed that the two were never disassociated in the New Testament, he emphasized, nevertheless, that spiritual remission is the actual one. Thus, the emphasis of Mullins' conclusion constituted in effect a refutation of a major doctrinal position generally held by the body to which he spoke. See Baptism and the Remission of Sins (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.). Cf. his Letter to J. B. Gooch, March 7, 1903, for an earlier example of this same approach to New Testament interpretation. Dealing there with Acts 2:38, he said:

"Repent unto real, genuine remission, and be baptized unto symbolic or ceremonial remission; that is to say, repentance secures actual remission and baptism is the symbolic expression of what has already taken place."

<sup>63</sup>"The Contribution . . . to . . . Christianity," p. 537.

and ecclesiastical authority, the interpretation of Scripture, the power of the priesthood, and the necessity of the sacraments.

From the standpoint of this fundamental principle, Roman Catholicism is only being consistent when it violates almost all of the axioms of religion which Baptists espouse. The religious axiom is violated when the church, the priesthood, and the sacraments are all interposed between the individual soul and God. The ecclesiastical axiom is violated by the creation of an ecclesiastical hierarchy which culminates in an infallible pope. The moral axiom is violated by the practice of infant baptism which robs the individual of his right to be thus obedient to God for himself. The religio-civic axiom is violated by an unspiritual union between Church and State. The civic axiom regarding political sovereignty is obviously at variance with a system which denies that the individual is sovereign in any other area.<sup>64</sup>

Mullins regarded Roman Catholic sacerdotalism, sacramentalism and authoritarianism as products of temporal expediency. He summarized the antagonism between the Baptist faith and Roman Catholicism in no uncertain terms.

Democracy versus autocracy; individualism versus a closed ecclesiastical system; regeneration by the Holy Spirit versus regeneration by baptism; the direct relation of

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 537-38; The Axioms . . ., p. 75, et passim.

the soul to God versus the indirect; believer's baptism versus infant baptism; the priesthood of all believers versus a priesthood who are custodians of divine grace; the New Testament versus an infallible pope; personal faith versus proxy faith. In a word, Christ and his free salvation on the one side and the church and its sacramental salvation on the other. There is no middle ground.<sup>65</sup>

His conclusion was: Either Baptists are right or Roman Catholics are right. Both cannot be right.

#### The inconsistency of historic Protestantism

E. Y. Mullins readily acknowledged the theological agreements and spiritual affinities between Baptists and the great Protestant movement. Indeed, he proclaimed that Baptist theology could be analyzed into two groups of elements: those which are shared by all evangelical denominations and those which are distinctive of the Baptists themselves. He did not contend that Baptists held a monopoly on all the truth.<sup>66</sup>

However, Mullins did maintain that the points of divergence between Baptists and Protestantism in general were the result of the failure of the Protestant bodies to carry out consistently the inner logic of their own movement. This failure to develop consistently was the great shortcoming of Protestantism, and it had begun to be evident as early as the time of the Reformation itself. In his presidential address

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<sup>65</sup>"Italy and the Baptists," Western Recorder, December 9, 1920, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup>"Baptist Theology in The New World Order," Review and Expositor, XVII (October, 1920), 402.



before the Southern Baptist Convention in 1922, Mullins declared:

Early Protestantism, coming out of Roman Catholicism, was like a newly hatched chicken which came forth with some of the egg shell still clinging to its head. Protestantism made great discoveries and then great compromises. It tried to mix the gold of truth with the clay of error. It tried to mix the gold of personal faith in its doctrine of justification with the clay of proxy faith in its doctrine of infant baptism. In the ordinances it mixed the gold of symbolism with the clay of sacramentalism. It mixed the gold of obedience to Christ with the clay of obedience to centralized governments. It tried to mix the gold of soul liberty with the clay of union of Church and State. And so on through the whole range of doctrine and life.<sup>67</sup>

The basic error was the attempt to combine the Roman Catholic principle of the incompetency of the soul with the spiritually authentic principle of soul-competency. This in turn has caused Protestantism to violate several of the axioms of religion, especially the religious and the moral (by the retention of the practice of infant baptism), the ecclesiastical (by centralized systems of church government), and the religio-civic (by the union of Church and State).<sup>68</sup>

Mullins had great admiration for the major Reformers, especially Luther, but he believed that the continental Anabaptists, whom he regarded as the spiritual ancestors of English and American Baptists, represented the genuine idealism

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<sup>67</sup>"Southern Baptists at a Crucial Hour," Western Recorder, May 18, 1922, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup>The Axioms . . ., pp. 63-65, 107-26, 139-40, 157-67, 185-87.

of the Reformation as opposed to the practical expediency of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. He often acknowledged the kinship of Baptists to other Protestant evangelicals, but he also affirmed that Baptists alone have been adequate and consistent interpreters of the Reformation. Therefore, he emphasized the necessity for Baptists to maintain their theological position and to propagate the principles of their faith to the ends of the earth.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp. 258-63. Cf. "Southern Baptists at a Crucial Hour," pp. 1-2; "Baptist Theology in the New World Order," pp. 402-407.

PART III

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MULLINS' THEOLOGY

CHAPTER IX

AN EVALUATION OF MULLINS' THEOLOGY

## CHAPTER IX

### AN EVALUATION OF MULLINS' THEOLOGY

The content of Edgar Young Mullins' systematic, apologetic, and polemic theology has now been set forth in considerable detail following a survey of some of the personal and environmental factors which guided its formation. In support of the major thesis of this dissertation, an attempt has been made to demonstrate that the main intention of Mullins' endeavor in each of three principal areas of theological concern was to offer a restatement of theological truth which would be more acceptable to his generation than previous statements had been.

It is appropriate at this point to consider the significance of Mullins' theology, both for his day and for the present day. That consideration will be the task of the third part of this dissertation. In this ninth chapter, an evaluation of Mullins' theology will include an explication of some elements of strength and weakness in his work of theological restatement, a classification of his theological position, and an indication of the lasting influence of his theological production. Finally, as a consequence of this entire project of study, a concluding statement will be made regarding the contemporary relevance of Mullins' thought.

The Strength and Weakness of His Restatement

An analysis of the strength and weakness of Mullins' program of theological restatement can be made on the basis of the following criteria: the originality of his approaches, the consistency of his developments, his congruity with the demands of his day, his continuity with evangelical-Baptist orthodoxy, and the acceptability of his restatement today in the light of more recent trends. This method of analysis is designed to deal in a general way with Mullins' work as a whole and, thus, it does not necessitate the passing of judgments on each of his doctrinal positions. However, some references will be made to Mullins' more distinctive doctrines.

The originality of his approaches

Systematic theology.--In the area of systematic theology, the most original aspect of Mullins' work was his deliberate attempt to give a prominent place to Christian experience as a formative principle in his theological construction. As pointed out previously,<sup>1</sup> E. Y. Mullins was one of the earliest American advocates of this procedure. To be sure, by the time he had completed the writing of his textbook in systematic theology, quite a number of books dealing with various aspects of Christian experience had

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, pp. 164, 206-207, 225-27.

been published in this country.<sup>2</sup> However, Mullins' originality is attested not only by the fact that he was one of the first theologians in the English-speaking world to attempt to employ the principle of Christian experience throughout a comprehensive systematic exposition of the doctrines of Christianity<sup>3</sup> but also by the fact that he sought to combine the witness to truth of Scripture and experience in a truly unique way.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>In addition to the books by L. F. Stearns and F. H. Foster which impressed him so favorably (see supra, pp. 169-72), Mullins took notice of a number of others. See his review of Henry W. Clark's The Philosophy of Christian Experience, in Review and Expositor, IV (October, 1907), 631-34; review of Josiah Moses' Pathological Aspects of Religious Experience, ibid., 316-19; review of T. Rees' The Holy Spirit in Thought and Experience, ibid., XIII (January, 1916), 141-42; review of C. L. Slattery's The Authority of Religious Experience, ibid., X (January, 1913), 118-19. See also the bibliography in Why Is Christianity True? (Chicago: Christian Culture Press, 1905), pp. 435-36.

<sup>3</sup>Perhaps the most notable exceptions to this statement are William Newton Clarke, An Outline of Christian Theology (4th ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), and William Adams Brown, Christian Theology in Outline (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906). Clarke's book was first published in 1894, and Brown's work was, to a great extent, a revision of it. Although the doctrinal positions of these men differ considerably from those of E. Y. Mullins, there is sufficient similarity in their approaches to justify a specific consideration of the possible influence of their work upon his. The author of this dissertation deliberately refrained from such a study, however, since Mullins provided no definite clues to such influence.

<sup>4</sup>W. T. Conner testified to the originality of Mullins' method of combining Scripture and experience. See his review of Edgar Young Mullins' The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression, in Review and Expositor, XIV (October, 1917), 495.

Other aspects of the originality of Mullins' systematic restatement include his appropriation of the method of biblical theology for the support of his doctrinal positions as contrasted with the older "proof-text" method; his rearrangement of the order of theological topics; his interpretation of certain doctrines such as revelation, the incarnation of Christ, election, atonement, and sanctification; and his inclusion of considerable apologetic material in his systematic textbook.

Apologetic theology.--W. O. Carver once said that E. Y. Mullins' most distinctive contribution to Christian apologetics was his utilization of the evidence of Christian experience as a major bulwark for the claims of the Christian faith.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that this is true. However, when Mullins' apologetic writings are compared with those of representatives of the older tradition, such as Theodore Christlieb, A. B. Bruce, and G. P. Fisher, the originality of his overall approach becomes apparent.<sup>6</sup> In none of these

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<sup>5</sup>W. O. Carver, review of Edgar Young Mullins' Why Is Christianity True? in Baptist Argus, October 5, 1905, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>See Theodore Christlieb, Modern Doubt and Christian Belief, trans. H. U. Weitbrecht and ed. T. L. Kingsbury (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1878); Alexander Balmain Bruce, Apologetics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892); George P. Fisher, The Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895). Christlieb's work was being used as a textbook in the course in apologetic and polemic theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary when E. Y. Mullins became a student



works is there such a definite attempt to come to grips with the modern challenges to evangelical Christianity as was made by E. Y. Mullins. In none of them is there such a precise identification of the fundamental issue which separated evangelical believers from their detractors at that time, and in none of them is there such a deliberate reapplication by an evangelical of the methods and tools which were preferred by his opponents. Thus, there were elements of originality about both the form and the content of Mullins' restatement of apologetic theology.

Polemic theology.--The most distinctive feature of Mullins' polemic work was his axiomatic approach to the subject as compared with the more strictly exegetical approach which had been employed by most of his predecessors. Instead of majoring on the discontinuity between Baptist doctrines and those of other denominations, Mullins presented the Baptist position as the one which most consistently embodied the basic principles of the Christian faith.<sup>7</sup>

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there. Later, it was replaced by Fisher's book. Cf. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Catalogue, 1881-82, p. 19, and Catalogue, 1884-85, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup>W. O. Carver offered a similar evaluation of the nature of Mullins' new statement of the Baptist position. See W. O. Carver, Out of His Treasure: Unfinished Memoirs (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1956), p. 109. Cf. his "Recollections and Information from Other Sources Concerning the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary" (typewritten copy of unpublished notes in the files of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 82.

Two other aspects of Mullins' polemical originality should be recognized: his definition of "the competency of the soul in religion under God" as the fundamental and distinctive Baptist principle and his statement of "the axioms of religion" which grow out of it. Mullins' definition has been accepted as one of the classic answers to the question concerning the key principle of the Baptists,<sup>8</sup> and Mullins' list of axioms seem to have been uniquely his own creation.

The consistency of his developments

Original ideas must be consistently applied if maximum effectiveness is to be achieved. A recognition of the originality of Mullins' approaches must be followed, therefore, by an inquiry as to the consistency of his developments in the several areas of theology.

Systematic theology.--It is in the area of systematic theology that Mullins' work is most vulnerable to criticism at this point. In the first place, Mullins did not make sufficiently clear the roles of Scripture and Christian experience and their relation to each other in the construction of Christian doctrine. His systematic

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<sup>8</sup>See, e.g., the several principles listed by Monroe F. Swilley, Jr., "Basic Baptist Principles," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, I (1958), 146-48. Cf. the list in the final paragraph of J. Leo Garrett, "History of Baptist Theology," ibid., II (1958), 1413.

textbook has been described by one person as a theology "written from the standpoint of Christian experience as squared by the Bible."<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, W. T. Conner said that Mullins made the objective, historical, personal revelation of God in Christ as recorded in the Scriptures primary and determinative in his theological system and then proceeded to interpret this revelation in the light of Christian experience.<sup>10</sup> The implications of the former statement are that Christian experience furnishes the content of Mullins' theology while the Scriptures furnish the form; the implications of the latter statement are vice versa. E. Y. Mullins cannot be completely absolved from his role in creating this confusion. In his more careful statements and, apparently, in his more successful doctrinal expositions, he held the two factors in a dialectical tension, believing that

experience would ever go astray without the ever-present corrective influence of the Scriptures, and the authority of the Scriptures would never become for us a vital and transforming reality apart from the working of God's redeeming grace in us.<sup>11</sup>

All too often, however, he tended to imply the priority of either one of the factors to the other one.

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<sup>9</sup>C. W. Cline, "Some Baptist Systematic Theologians," Review and Expositor, XX (July, 1923), 315.

<sup>10</sup>Conner, loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup>The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917), p. 27.

In his inaugural address at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Harold W. Tribble, Mullins' teaching successor, inadvertently gave a clue to another element of inconsistency in Mullins' systematic developments when he said that Christian experience "has a more vital and immediate bearing upon some phases of Christian theology than others."<sup>12</sup> In his treatments of the various theological topics, E. Y. Mullins found it possible to explicate the contribution of Christian experience to some doctrines much more clearly and fully than to others. The doctrine of eschatology especially seemed to resist his method. He was certain that the Christian experience implied the general idea of an ultimate completion of God's great work of salvation but for the details of the eschatological picture he was completely dependent upon the biblical revelation.

Apologetic theology.--As Mullins so often contended, the crucial significance of a man's presuppositions cannot be over-emphasized. This truth is applicable to the apologetic work of E. Y. Mullins. If one accepts Mullins' basic philosophical assumptions, especially his personalistic world-view and his pragmatic theory of knowledge, and if one agrees with his identification of naturalism versus

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<sup>12</sup>Harold W. Tribble, "The Place of Christian Experience in Theology," Review and Expositor, XXIV (January, 1927), 21.

supernaturalism as the fundamental theological issue of his day, then one can recognize his critical and constructive apologetics as constituting a consistent alternative to the modernistic interpretation of Christianity.<sup>13</sup>

Polemic theology.--Here again, the presupposition is the crucial thing. If one agrees with E. Y. Mullins that "soul-competency" is the basic Baptist principle, it is possible to applaud his logical development of "the axioms of religion" from that root. However, an admission of the logical consistency of Mullins' polemic theology still leaves unanswered the further question of whether or not a sufficiently comprehensive interpretation of the Baptist position can be expounded by means of the axiomatic method.

His congruity with the demands of his day

In a recent study of American religious liberalism, Kenneth Cauthen has analyzed the new climate of opinion which appeared in the modern world by the end of the nineteenth century as a result of new developments in philosophy, religion, and the sciences. Cauthen insists that the modern milieu tended toward a demand for an emphasis on

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<sup>13</sup>J. Gresham Machen, e.g., found much to commend in Mullins' Christianity at the Cross Roads. His major criticisms grew out of his dissatisfaction with Mullins' epistemology. See Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," Princeton Theological Review, XXIV (January, 1926), 38-66.

continuity rather than discontinuity in the world, toward a recognition of the autonomy of human reason and experience as contrasted with an authoritarian divine revelation, and toward a stress on the dynamic rather than the static nature of life and the world.<sup>14</sup>

When the theology of E. Y. Mullins is examined in the light of such a cluster of requirements, it is evident that he was cognizant of the demands of the modern mind as he engaged in his work of theological restatement. The following examples illustrate this point with regard to the principles of continuity, autonomy, and dynamism.

The principle of continuity.--Although Mullins did not abandon the orthodox emphasis on the principle of discontinuity, he did smooth it down to such an extent as to make possible the explication of elements of continuity. He taught the immanence of God as well as his transcendence. In his doctrine of creation, he admitted a principle of development by which man was recognized as the goal of the natural order and the connecting link between the physical and the spiritual realms. In his doctrine of providence, he declared that even the miraculous can be regarded as natural when understood as encompassed within the ultimate continuity between the physical and the spiritual realms

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<sup>14</sup>Kenneth Cauthen, The Impact of American Religious Liberalism (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 5-25.

which is comprehended by the eternal purpose of God. In his doctrine of revelation, he made allowance for the factor of the human appropriation of the divine communication. In his doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement, he emphasized the capacity of man for the divine.

The principle of autonomy.--Mullins' recognition of the principle of autonomy is seen in his belief in the ability of man to apprehend God in religious experience and to comprehend him by means of his experientially-enlightened reason. In each area of theology with which he dealt--systematic, apologetic, and polemic--Mullins presented the evangelical-Baptist interpretation of the Christian religion as doctrine which commended itself to rational men and which was subject to verification by all who were willing to comply with the Christian requirements.

The principle of dynamism.--Mullins' acceptance of the principle of dynamism is indicated by his recognition of the developmental nature of man's religions which was affirmed by the science of comparative religion in his day. It is evidenced also by his doctrine of progressive revelation which applied the findings of biblical historical criticism regarding the transformation and gradual perfection of the concepts and teachings within the Bible. It is seen in his optimism concerning the prospects for the progress of the divine rule among men on this earth.

It is seen in his eschatology in his denial of the static character of heaven itself. Perhaps most significant of all, it is seen in his advocacy of the necessity for theological restatement as men comprehend religious truth with increasing clearness.

His continuity with evangelical-Baptist orthodoxy

The contention that E. Y. Mullins sought to make his restatement of theology relevant to the men of his time by emphasizing the principles which were popular at that time has just been illustrated. Another aspect of Mullins' strategy was his attempt to confront and actually to utilize the most influential intellectual disciplines of his day: modern science, modern philosophy, historical criticism, and comparative religion.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, however, Mullins' practice should not be interpreted as an indiscriminate capitulation. While he was willing to take into account the demands of the modern outlook, he was determined, at the same time, to

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<sup>15</sup>Most interpreters have agreed with E. Y. Mullins that these disciplines were among the most formative factors in the molding of the modern religious mind. Although he drew up no such list, Kenneth Cauthen included all of these disciplines in his discussion. See Cauthen, loc. cit., passim. Henry Steele Commager took notice of the importance of these factors as had James Orr many years previously. See Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 166; James Orr, "Prevailing Tendencies in Modern Theology," Review and Expositor, III (October, 1906), 571-87.



stand within the bounds of the orthodox evangelical-Baptist tradition and to present the established facts of that tradition albeit in a new and more acceptable way. Always aware that a teaching may be true and yet not be the whole truth,<sup>16</sup> he endeavored to supplement such principles as continuity, autonomy, and dynamism with an emphasis on discontinuity, authority, and finality, principles which had long been prominent in orthodox theology.

The principle of discontinuity.--Mullins did not hesitate to teach doctrines which implied discontinuity. Although he acknowledged the immanence of God, he resolutely upheld the doctrine of the divine transcendence as a safeguard against pantheism. He stressed the absolute distinctiveness of man as the only creature who bears the divine image. He contended for the sovereign freedom of the personal God to act always according to his own providential purpose. He emphasized the absolute supremacy of the Christian revelation to the imperfect insights of other religions, and he affirmed the absolute uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the fully-divine Person who became fully man, not as the outcome of an evolutionary process but because of the redemptive initiative of God. He taught that the work

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<sup>16</sup>For examples of Mullins' expression of this idea, see The Christian Religion . . ., p. 305; also "Doctrinal Developments of One Hundred Years," Baptist World, September 6, 1917, pp. 3-4.

of salvation is a characteristically divine work which the best efforts of men could never achieve.

The principle of authority.--Mullins always regarded man's autonomy as an autonomy which had been bestowed upon him by a sovereign God. The soul-competency of which he spoke was to be understood as a competency under God. Despite his appreciation for the role of Christian experience in the attainment of religious knowledge, Mullins emphatically denied the adequacy of a purely subjective principle of authority. He would never have agreed with those men of his day who contended that a theology could be constructed on a purely empirical basis.<sup>17</sup> Mullins insisted on the necessity of a divinely-given, authoritative revelation. He believed that such a revelation had been perfectly made in Jesus Christ and faithfully recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Religious experience enabled men to appropriate the truth of the revelation but not to transcend it or displace it.

The principle of finality.--Mullins' acceptance of dynamic concepts did not prevent him from affirming the elements of finality in the Christian religion. The providential nature of the rule of the sovereign Creator-God over

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<sup>17</sup>Perhaps the most notable example of such an attempt was that of Douglas Clyde Macintosh, Theology as an Empirical Science (New York: Macmillan Company, 1919). Mullins reviewed this book shortly after its publication and was quite severely critical of it. See Review and Expositor, XVII (January, 1920), 94-97.

his world, the culmination of the divine revelation to man in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the reliability of the biblical witness to the revelation, the indispensability of Christ's work of atonement, the necessity of men's repentance and faith, the cruciality of regeneration by the Holy Spirit for the restoration of a right relationship between sinful man and holy God, the priority of individual redemption to social progress, the certainty of the ultimate fulfillment of the biblically-based Christian eschatological hope--E. Y. Mullins was profoundly convinced that all of these were established facts which would never be outmoded, superseded, or falsified.

The aspect of ecclesiology.--Despite these indications of his continuity with evangelical-Baptist orthodoxy, however, there is one aspect of Mullins' work which appears disturbingly deficient when compared with the best orthodox tradition. It is the aspect of ecclesiology.

It is regrettable, first of all, that Mullins did not include a doctrine of the Church in his comprehensive book of systematic theology. Although such an omission was not unprecedented among Baptist and evangelical theologians,<sup>18</sup> the usual Protestant practice, at least from

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<sup>18</sup>Some of the systematic works of nineteenth-century Baptist theologians which are generally regarded as "classics," contain no doctrine of the Church. These include E. H. Johnson, Outline of Systematic Theology

the time of Calvin onward, had been to include ecclesiology among the topics of systematic theology. In spite of the practical reasons which have been suggested for his decision to omit it,<sup>19</sup> the absence of an ecclesiology must be judged a serious weakness in Mullins' systematic work.

It is equally regrettable that Mullins' most influential book in the area of Baptist polemics, The Axioms of Religion, did not include a full-orbed doctrine of the Church, describing its nature and its significance, its ordinances and its ministry, its worship and its work. As demonstrated in the preceding chapter of this dissertation, Mullins' views on most ecclesiological issues can be determined by a gleaning of all his writings. However, when the ground covered in his most significant polemical work is compared with that covered by most of the previous Baptist polemicists, Mullins' originality is much more obvious than is his continuity with his predecessors.

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(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1891); William Newton Clarke, op. cit.; and even James Petigru Boyce, Abstract of Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), and F. H. Kerfoot's revision of the same.

<sup>19</sup>In December, 1917, in reply to criticism which had been made of The Christian Religion at this very point, an editorial in the Baptist World explained that Mullins had decided to omit ecclesiology from his book since it was designed to serve as a text for the systematic theology course at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and ecclesiology was not being taught in that course. See Baptist World, December 27, 1917, pp. 4-5.

Of course, Mullins clearly announced that he proposed to go beyond the usually recognized Baptist distinctives in order to deal with the basic principles on which the distinctives rest. But in the interest of preserving his continuity with his polemical tradition, perhaps he could have done what he did without leaving the other undone.

The acceptability of his restatement today

There is obviously much acceptable truth which is of permanent worth in the theological restatement of E. Y. Mullins because his is fundamentally and generally an evangelical-Baptist theology which certainly belongs within the broad stream of Protestant orthodoxy. However, a number of trends in theological thought since Mullins' lifetime have served to make his work less acceptable today than when it was first produced. Examples of such trends in the different areas of theology are given below. They do not imply that his work is invalid today, but they indicate that it is deficient when judged by present-day criteria.

Systematic theology.--Kenneth Cauthen has said that recent theological thought, especially that influenced by neo-orthodoxy, has tended toward a rejection of the principles of continuity and autonomy and a modification of the principle of dynamism, all of which were in vogue earlier in the twentieth century. If this be true, then

E. Y. Mullins' acceptance of these principles, which has been demonstrated above, is saved from disqualification only by the fact that in each instance he also emphasized the contrary principle.

A most significant area in which the more recent trends have resulted in a new perspective is the whole area of man's knowledge of God. While leading contemporary theologians agree in their rejection of that form of biblical authoritarianism which has been characteristic of much of Protestant orthodoxy, they also agree in their unwillingness to grant autonomy to religious experience as the source of religious knowledge and in their insistence upon the necessity of a divinely-given revelation. The general consensus of Protestant theologians today is that revelation is effectuated through an encounter between God and man in events in which God gives himself to be known by man. The unique and decisive event of revelation was the appearance of Jesus Christ among men in this world. As the authoritative witness to the divine revelation which culminated in Christ, the Bible is the indispensable mediator of that revelation to men. It becomes the Word of God to men as it speaks to the heart of the Spirit-inspired believer. Then, out of this whole context of revelatory encounter, with the aid of the biblical norm and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, men are able to distill doctrinal formulations

which approximate the truth of the encounter in varying degrees.<sup>20</sup>

It is to the credit of E. Y. Mullins that his view of religious knowledge and authority and of theological expression bears far more similarity to that which has just been outlined than it did to the view of infallible biblical propositions which had been taught by previous generations or the view of the autonomous subjective religious experience which was taught in his day. Mullins' view actually included all the right factors: Christ, the Scriptures, the personal experience, and the Holy Spirit. However, in the opinion of this author, some of the more recent thinkers have clarified more acceptably the role of each of these factors and their relation to each other.<sup>21</sup>

Apologetic theology.--Many of the key insights of E. Y. Mullins in the area of apologetic theology are quite acceptable to Christian apologists today. It is generally conceded by contemporary apologists that since men cannot

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<sup>20</sup>For other outlines of the contemporary consensus concerning revelation, see Cauthen, op. cit., pp. 243-48; John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, Protestant Christianity Interpreted Through Its Development (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), pp. 273-76; John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956).

<sup>21</sup>For an excellent statement which gathers insights from many directions, see John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959).

be compelled to Christianity by rational arguments, the task of Christian apologetics is primarily to demonstrate that the Christian understanding of reality is a living option which is intellectually respectable. Alan Richardson has said that Christian apologetics, in order to accomplish its task,

. . . deals with the relationship of the Christian faith to the wider sphere of man's "secular" knowledge--philosophy, science, history, sociology, and so on--with a view to showing that faith is not at variance with the truth that these enquiries have uncovered.<sup>22</sup>

E. Y. Mullins would heartily agree with this approach.

As for the matter of acceptance or rejection of the Christian message, it is still possible to hold with E. Y. Mullins that the crucial issue is naturalism versus supernaturalism. If a person is unalterably committed to a naturalistic world-view, then the total Christian message will be irrelevant to him and even the most effective presentation of it will not make it palpable.

The anti-supernaturalists of today, however, are far more bold than those of Mullins' day. The main threat to evangelical Christianity today is certainly not Christian or semi-Christian modernism. It is, in the opinion of many observers, that atheistic or agnostic secularism which is

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<sup>22</sup>Alan Richardson, Christian Apologetics (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 19.



so rampant in the contemporary Western world.<sup>23</sup> This change has laid new demands upon Christian apologetics.

Another notable development since Mullins' day is the change which has taken place within the several intellectual disciplines which he attempted both to criticize and to utilize in his apologetic work. In the field of science, for example, the fact of biological evolution is much more widely and easily accepted today than it was when Mullins discussed it. This has come about with the increasing recognition that "evolutionary theory as such is not inconsistent with the Christian Faith."<sup>24</sup> This fact, together with the change of emphasis from continuity and mechanical causality to discontinuity and indeterminism on the part of contemporary scientists,<sup>25</sup> indicates that the principal issues in the dialogue between modern science and Christian theology have been considerably refocused since E. Y. Mullins' day.

In the field of philosophy, the pantheism, idealism,

<sup>23</sup>See supra, pp. 7-8.

<sup>24</sup>E. L. Mascall, Christian Theology and Natural Science (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1956), p. 254. Cf. Arthur F. Smethurst, Modern Science and Christian Beliefs (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), pp. 104-111.

<sup>25</sup>Cauthen, op. cit., pp. 234-36. Cauthen quotes Alfred North Whitehead, Lincoln Barnett, George Stuart Carter and others whose writings indicate recent changes in basic scientific theories.

personalism, and pragmatism which Mullins analyzed and criticized have been far less significant lately than have logical positivism and existentialism,<sup>26</sup> philosophies which received little or no attention from him because they were largely undeveloped in his day. In the field of biblical criticism, also, the most significant innovation of recent years, Formgeschichte, or form-criticism, was not discussed by E. Y. Mullins because it had made little impact on the English-speaking world during his lifetime.<sup>27</sup>

When the effect of such developments as these on the task of contemporary Christian apologetics is considered, the conclusion is inescapable that although Mullins' apologetic restatement was incisively conceived and vigorously executed, the changes which have taken place in the past thirty-five years with regard to the foes to be faced and the weapons to be used would necessitate that it be

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<sup>26</sup>Cauthen agrees that "recently the prevailing philosophies have . . . been logical positivism and existentialism." Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>27</sup>Of course, there have been many other significant developments in the field of biblical criticism since Mullins' day. For insight into these developments with regard to the New Testament (Mullins never discussed Old Testament criticism to any significant extent), see Archibald M. Hunter, Interpreting the New Testament 1900-1950 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951). A more recent analysis of critical trends is Reginald H. Fuller, The New Testament in Current Study (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962).

drastically redirected in order to be effective today.

Polemic theology.--Logically, contemporary criticism of Mullins' polemic theology should begin at the point of his identification of "the competency of the soul in religion under God" as the basic and distinctive Baptist principle. Although this definition has been quite influential,<sup>28</sup> it has by no means been universally accepted as definitive.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>See, e.g., W. R. McNutt, Polity and Practice in Baptist Churches (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1935), pp. 21-35 et passim. Although McNutt did not mention the name of E. Y. Mullins in his book, he based his whole view of Baptist polity upon the principle of soul-competency, calling the principle "the major contribution of Baptist thought to the Christian world."

<sup>29</sup>H. Wheeler Robinson said that it is "the assertion of Believers' Baptism which characterizes Baptists." See his Baptist Principles (4th ed.; London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1925), p. 7. W. T. Whitley said that the distinctive feature about Baptists is their doctrine of the Church. See Whitley, A History of British Baptists (London: Charles Griffin & Company, 1923), p. 4. Henry Cook said that it is the "emphasis on the supremacy of the New Testament in all matters of the Church's faith and practice that constitutes the basis of the Baptist position." See his What Baptists Stand For (3rd ed.; London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1958), p. 18. B. H. Carroll placed at the head of his list of distinctive Baptist principles: "the New Testament, the only law of Christianity." See his Baptists and Their Doctrines (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1913), pp. 7-14. At the same Baptist forum in which E. Y. Mullins introduced his axioms of religion to a world-wide audience, J. D. Freeman defined the basic and essential Baptist principle to be the direct and undelegated authority of Christ over the souls of men. See J. D. Freeman, "The Place of Baptists in the Christian Church," Baptist World Alliance, Record of Proceedings, First Congress (London, 1905), pp. 22-23. Delivering the Holland Foundation Lectures at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1950, Arnold T. Ohrn criticized Mullins' definition as being too anthropocentric. He favored Freeman's approach and, thus, defined the basic Baptist principle as the direct, personal,

Winthrop Hudson has deplored particularly the highly individualistic connotations of Mullins' definition and has declared that it "was derived from the general cultural and religious climate of the nineteenth century rather than from any serious study of the Bible."<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, Hudson's criticism has broad ramifications because individualism is such a dominant motif in Mullins' thought. It is also obvious that in more recent years there has been a revival of the societary concept at the expense of the idea of extreme individualism which has affected all of modern thought. Thus, the whole notion of the church as a purely voluntary association of individuals who regard their interrelatedness as merely an expedient option which has no necessary connection with their

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undelegated, and undivided sovereignty of Jesus Christ. Ohrn allowed that Mullins' principle of soul-competency could be regarded as a secondary corollary to the primary principle of the absolute Lordship of Christ. See Arnold T. Ohrn, Holland Foundation Lectures, delivered at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in February, 1950 (copy in the files of Ray Summers, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky). W. O. Carver combined two ideas when he said that "regenerate individualism under the lordship of Jesus Christ sums up the basal Baptist belief and message." See his Baptist Opportunity (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), p. 22. It should be recalled that Mullins himself revealed some uncertainty as to the best statement of the distinctive Baptist principle. Supra, pp. 343-44, n. 31.

<sup>30</sup>Winthrop S. Hudson, "Shifting Patterns of Church Order in the Twentieth Century," Baptist Concepts of the Church, ed. Winthrop S. Hudson (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), p. 215.

salvation is much less appealing to contemporary minds than it was to the men of Mullins' day. Furthermore, there are many Baptist scholars today who deny that the principle of extreme individualism is in harmony with the ancient Baptist concept of the Church as the one inspirited Body of which Christ is the Head.<sup>31</sup>

Hudson has also criticized the adequacy of Mullins' principle to serve as a basis for church order and church life.<sup>32</sup> This question in turn suggests another unsatisfactory aspect of Mullins' whole axiomatic approach to polemic theology from the standpoint of more recent trends: it is not grounded firmly enough on biblical exegesis. Under the influence of the revival of biblical theology, perhaps, present-day Baptist scholars, when setting forth the Baptist position, seek to support it with all the scriptural evidence which they can marshal.<sup>33</sup> Contemporary polemicists are not as confident as was E. Y. Mullins that Baptist principles will be received as self-evident by all enlightened minds.

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<sup>31</sup>This is an implication of the essay by Dale Moody, "The Nature of the Church," What Is the Church? ed. Duke K. McCall (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), pp. 15-27.

<sup>32</sup>Hudson, loc. cit., pp. 215-16.

<sup>33</sup>Two good examples of the contemporary Baptist polemic methodology are Duke K. McCall (ed.), What Is the Church? (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), and A Gilmore (ed.), Christian Baptism (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959). Both of these books are collections of essays. The former was produced in America, the latter in Britain.

One additional point needs to be made. Present-day Baptist theologians see much more theological content in the Baptist understanding of the church ordinances than did E. Y. Mullins.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

Many elements of great strength can be cited in the theological restatement of Edgar Young Mullins. However, a critical survey of his work reveals various weaknesses as well, some of which have become much more apparent because of recent theological trends.

Originality is an important factor in successful restatement, and E. Y. Mullins was definitely quite original in his approach to systematic, apologetic, and polemic theology. Judged from the perspective of his chosen starting-points, Mullins' programs of restatement were generally quite consistent although it can be contended that he never fully mastered the use of the principle of Christian experience of which he was so fond.

Mullins made a valiant attempt to tailor his theology to the requirements of the intellectual climate of his day without departing from the broad outline which distinguishes the evangelical-Baptist faith. He demonstrated

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<sup>34</sup>Several of the essays in the two collections just cited illustrate this point quite effectively. See also G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament (London: Macmillan and Co., 1962).

great skill in blending a variety of theological components; nevertheless, it is obvious that any theology which is as eclectic as his is open to the criticism of being indecisive and even contradictory in its content. Mullins' most obvious lapse from the orthodox standard, however, was in the area of ecclesiology. His understanding of the Church, so far as it was expressed in his writings, was not unorthodox, but it was less than the best orthodox understanding.

But what mitigates most greatly against the complete acceptability of Mullins' work today are the developments which have taken place in the last three decades. New emphases have become prominent. New conclusions have been reached. New demands have been laid upon Christian theology in an era which some have described as "post-Christian."<sup>35</sup> E. Y. Mullins was, to a great extent, a child of his time, and it must be recognized that time has brought great changes since his day.

#### A Classification of His Position

Various persons have pinned a variety of labels on E. Y. Mullins and his theology. Henry Nelson Wieman and Bernard Eugene Meland called him a traditional supernaturalist

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<sup>35</sup>The term "post-Christian" has been used by many shrewd observers to describe the present and, possibly, the future era in which Christianity and Western civilization no longer embrace each other but rather stand over against each other in contrast and often in deliberate conflict. See, e.g., W. A. Visser't Hooft, "An End--and a Beginning," Student World, XXX (First Quarter, 1937), 1-2; and Joachim Mueller, "The End of the Christian Era," ibid., pp. 15-34.

on account of his underlying religious philosophy.<sup>36</sup> Norman F. Furniss grouped him with the fundamentalists on the basis of his contribution to the collection of essays which were published as The Fundamentals during the years 1910-12.<sup>37</sup> Walter Marshall Horton classified Mullins' Christianity at the Cross Roads along with J. Gresham Machen's Christianity and Liberalism as one of the fundamentalist writings.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, however, Horton expressed uncertainty as to the accuracy of calling E. Y. Mullins a fundamentalist. He suggested that his theological system, as set forth in The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression, like the writings of P. T. Forsyth, might be better denominated as "modern-positive."<sup>39</sup>

Kenneth Cauthen also refrained from calling Mullins a fundamentalist, apparently in deference to the judgment of Horton. Instead, he spoke of him along with A. H. Strong

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<sup>36</sup>Henry Nelson Wieman and Bernard Eugene Meland, American Philosophies of Religion (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Company, 1936).

<sup>37</sup>Norman F. Furniss, The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 12. Elsewhere in his book Furniss said that Mullins stood "between the camps of the liberals and the Fundamentalists" with regard to the evolution controversy of the 1920's. Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>38</sup>Walter Marshall Horton, "Systematic Theology," Protestant Thought in the Twentieth Century, ed. Arnold S. Nash (New York: Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 112.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., n. 10.



and J. Gresham Machen as one of the scholars "of a conservative bent" who stood in opposition to the liberalism of his day.<sup>40</sup> In a survey of modern evangelicalism, Roger Nicole described Mullins as "one of the stalwart representatives of the evangelical faith."<sup>41</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom has recently said that Mullins' work, taken as a whole, was "a 'free-church theology' par excellence."<sup>42</sup>

The uncertainty with which these several labels have been applied illustrates the fact that the theology of E. Y. Mullins, because of its eclectic nature,<sup>43</sup> does not lend itself easily to simple classification.

<sup>40</sup>Cauthen, op. cit., p. 260, n. 14; pp. 31-32.

<sup>41</sup>Roger Nicole, "Theology," Contemporary Evangelical Thought, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 99. However, Nicole went on to criticize Mullins for laying "undue stress upon religious experience as a source of truth." He said that this led Mullins to questionable positions on the doctrine of the person of Christ and of the atonement.

<sup>42</sup>Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Theology in America: A Historical Survey," The Shaping of American Religion, Vol. I of Religion in American Life, ed. James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 308.

<sup>43</sup>Ahlstrom recognized Mullins' eclecticism. He said that Mullins "incorporated and integrated" various influences and tendencies. While Ahlstrom identified Mullins as an orthodox Southern Baptist and described him as "the leading philosophical and theological spokesman for conservative Baptists in a difficult time of controversy," he also regarded him as an urbane, conciliatory, and reasonable "moderate," who "was profoundly influenced by the forces which molded Liberalism" and whose "argumentation and evidence . . . leaned heavily on that developed or adduced by prominent Liberals." Ibid., pp. 303-309.

When the scale of modern theological positions recently proposed by Kenneth Cauthen<sup>44</sup> is laid alongside that of Robert Handy<sup>45</sup> and that of John Dillenberger and Claude Welch,<sup>46</sup> one sees a sequence which runs from fundamentalism on the one extreme through strict conservatism, conservative evangelicalism, evangelical liberalism, and modernistic liberalism to post-Christian humanism on the other extreme. But even with such a scale in mind, the student of the works of E. Y. Mullins finds it difficult to categorize him. He certainly does not belong with the schools on either end of the spectrum. However, Handy's descriptions of both conservative evangelicalism and evangelical liberalism apply to Mullins to some extent.<sup>47</sup> And while Mullins' theology is usually regarded as conservative if not fundamentalist, Cauthen's definition of the central aim of liberal theology<sup>48</sup> is by no means opposed

<sup>44</sup>Cauthen, op. cit., pp. 26-33.

<sup>45</sup>See supra, pp. 30-36.

<sup>46</sup>See supra, p. 31, n. 8.

<sup>47</sup>See supra, pp. 31-32.

<sup>48</sup>Cauthen believes that liberalism was primarily concerned "to harmonize Christ and culture under the conditions set by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." He says that "the central aim of liberal theology was to make it possible for a man . . . 'to be both an intelligent modern and a serious Christian.'" (The phrase is Harry Emerson Fosdick's.) See Cauthen, op. cit., p. 27.

to the aim of E. Y. Mullins' theological restatement, and several of the formative principles of liberalism which are listed by Dillenberger and Welch<sup>49</sup> are principles to which E. Y. Mullins was quite sympathetic.

Perhaps the best clue to the truth of the matter is that which was provided by Mullins' teaching colleague, W. J. McGlothlin, when he said that Mullins "was conservative as to position and progressive as to method."<sup>50</sup> Mullins was willing to utilize the insights and the techniques of the modern world because he believed that they would only confirm and clarify the conclusions of the orthodox evangelical-Baptist tradition to which he believed himself to be irrevocably committed, and, in his way of thinking, they always did.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, he was always willing to see the boundaries of the realm of theological truth enlarged.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Dillenberger and Welch, op. cit., pp. 211-17. The authors list such principles as "the liberal spirit" of open-mindedness and devotion to truth wherever it is found, respect for science and the scientific method, confidence in man and his future, the authority of Christian experience, and the centrality of Jesus Christ.

<sup>50</sup>See supra, p. 137. The reference is to W. J. McGlothlin, "Mullins, Edgar Young," Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Dumas Malone, XIII (1934), 322f.

<sup>51</sup>See, e.g., The Christian Religion . . ., p. viii.

<sup>52</sup>See supra, p. 215, esp. the quotation from Mullins' inaugural address.

Thus, on the basis of McGlothlin's clue, and with the support of several other opinions,<sup>53</sup> the theology of E. Y. Mullins can be most satisfactorily classified as conservative-progressive, or better still, as an example of progressive conservatism.

#### The Lasting Influence of His Work

Testimony is abundant to support the claim that the theological work of E. Y. Mullins exerted considerable influence not only among Baptists and especially Southern Baptists but also among other evangelical Christians.<sup>54</sup> This influence was the result of several factors in addition to the inherent worth of the work itself. One factor was the personal influence of the theologian. Mullins was for many years the president of the largest Baptist theological seminary in the world. He attained a position of great leadership within his own denomination, among the Baptists of the world, and to some extent, among evangelicals in general. Because of this enormous personal prestige, it is no wonder that his theological work was taken quite seriously by those who admired him.

In the second place, he served as a professor of theology in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for

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<sup>53</sup>For the opinions of William A. Mueller and C. W. Cline, see supra, pp. 133-35.

<sup>54</sup>For examples of this testimony, see supra, pp. 5-6.

almost thirty years and his theological system continued to be taught in that school for approximately twenty years after his death. During that half-century thousands of students were trained in the Mullins theological tradition who went out to propagate his ideas widely through preaching and teaching. At least one of those students, Walter Thomas Conner, became a prominent Baptist theologian himself.<sup>55</sup>

Third, Mullins was a prolific writer whose works were often published and widely read. Some of them were translated into other languages and read in other countries. Some of his books were used as textbooks at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and elsewhere. In addition, Mullins helped draft some of the most significant doctrinal statements which Baptists have presented to the public in the twentieth century.<sup>56</sup> All of these circumstances combined to make E. Y. Mullins an influential theologian.

Evidence that Mullins' theological work continues

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<sup>55</sup>James Leo Garrett, who has carefully studied Conner's works, testifies to the influence of Mullins on Conner. See J. Leo Garrett, "The Theology of Walter Thomas Conner" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1954), pp. 67-81. Garrett says that "the teaching of Mullins seems to have been the greatest single influence on Conner's system." Ibid., p. 76. Cf. also Garrett's "Conner, Walter Thomas," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Wade Cox, I (1958), 310.

<sup>56</sup>Mullins' literary output is surveyed supra, pp. 87-105.

to be influential today, at least among Southern Baptists, is furnished by the fact that his writings continue to be reprinted<sup>57</sup> and by the fact that he is often quoted or referred to by persons writing for the Baptist press.<sup>58</sup> It is also quite significant that the Southern Baptist Convention, troubled by theological controversy at its annual session in 1962, appointed a special committee to reconsider the Baptist Faith and Message statement which was prepared by E. Y. Mullins and others in 1925 and to present a similar statement to the Convention in 1963.<sup>59</sup>

Recognition of the influence of Mullins' theology should be qualified at two points, however. First, it should be noted that his work has been most influential at the popular level rather than at the more scholarly level. It would be difficult to identify a single major twentieth-century theologian, with the possible exception of W. T. Conner, whose thought has been decisively influenced by the theology of E. Y. Mullins. Second, it should be observed that Mullins' greatest influence has probably been due more to some of his best insights and conclusions

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<sup>57</sup>See supra, p. 95; p. 98, n. 75.

<sup>58</sup>See, e.g., C. Dewitt Matthews, "Understanding the Bible's Meaning," Western Recorder, July 5, 1962, p. 11; Herschel H. Hobbs, "What Is in a Name?" ibid., August 16, 1962, pp. 3, 15.

<sup>59</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1962, p. 64.

than to his theology as a system or his work as a whole. Those who quote him have usually been impressed by some particular aspect of his thought.<sup>60</sup> This is not necessarily equivalent to an acceptance of his total theology.

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<sup>60</sup>See, e.g., the quotations of Mullins in Augustus Hopkins Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1951), pp. 717, 738, 754-55. Even W. T. Conner's references to Mullins are usually of this nature. See, e.g., his Revelation and God (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1936), pp. 29, 51, 73, 143, 194, 263, 280; also The Gospel of Redemption (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1945), pp. 64, 76f., 95, 100, 111, 118, 119, 200, 271.

CONCLUSION



## CONCLUSION

The most striking thing about the theological outlook of E. Y. Mullins was his advocacy of theological restatement. The most notable aspect of his theological work was his attempt to contribute to his generation a new approach to systematic theology, a new method of Christian apologetics, and a new interpretation of the Baptist faith.

As a particular case of theological restatement, Mullins' work had elements of both strength and weakness. Changes which have occurred since Mullins' day, more than anything else, have made it impossible for Mullins' theology in toto to be generally acceptable as adequate for today. In the swiftly changing modern world, this would be expecting too much of a theology which was developed in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Mullins himself implied as much when he said of his work in 1912:

The author has no sort of thought that his statement is the best that can be made, or in any sense final. Others will improve on these statements and we shall come more and more to a clear understanding of the meaning of the Bible and of the religion of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Baptists and other evangelical Christians found in

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<sup>1</sup>Baptist Beliefs (Louisville: Baptist World Publishing Company, 1912), p. 10.

Edgar Young Mullins a great leader and spokesman. Contemporary Baptists and evangelicals can still learn much from him. Much of the material in his theological writings has retained its value because it still rings as true today as it did forty or fifty or sixty years ago. However, perhaps more significant, more relevant, and more desperately needed in today's troubled theological world than any or all of Mullins' doctrinal expressions is the insight, the outlook, and the open-mindedness of the fundamentally orthodox and conservative man who penned these words:

We must ever return to the Scriptures for new inspiration. We must ever ask anew the questions as to Christ and his relations to the needs of each generation. He does not change. His religion is the same in all ages. But our difficulties and problems are shaped anew by the forces of life which ever change about us. Hence we must revitalize our faith by deepening our communion with God and witnessing to his power in us.<sup>2</sup>

As autonomous and free, and as dealing with the greatest of all realities, the [Christian] religion in every age of the world comes to redeem men. They accept it under the conditions of their own age, confronted by their own difficulties and problems. Hence arises the need for restating its doctrines in terms of the living experience of each generation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: Roger Williams Press, 1917), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10. (Italics mine.)

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