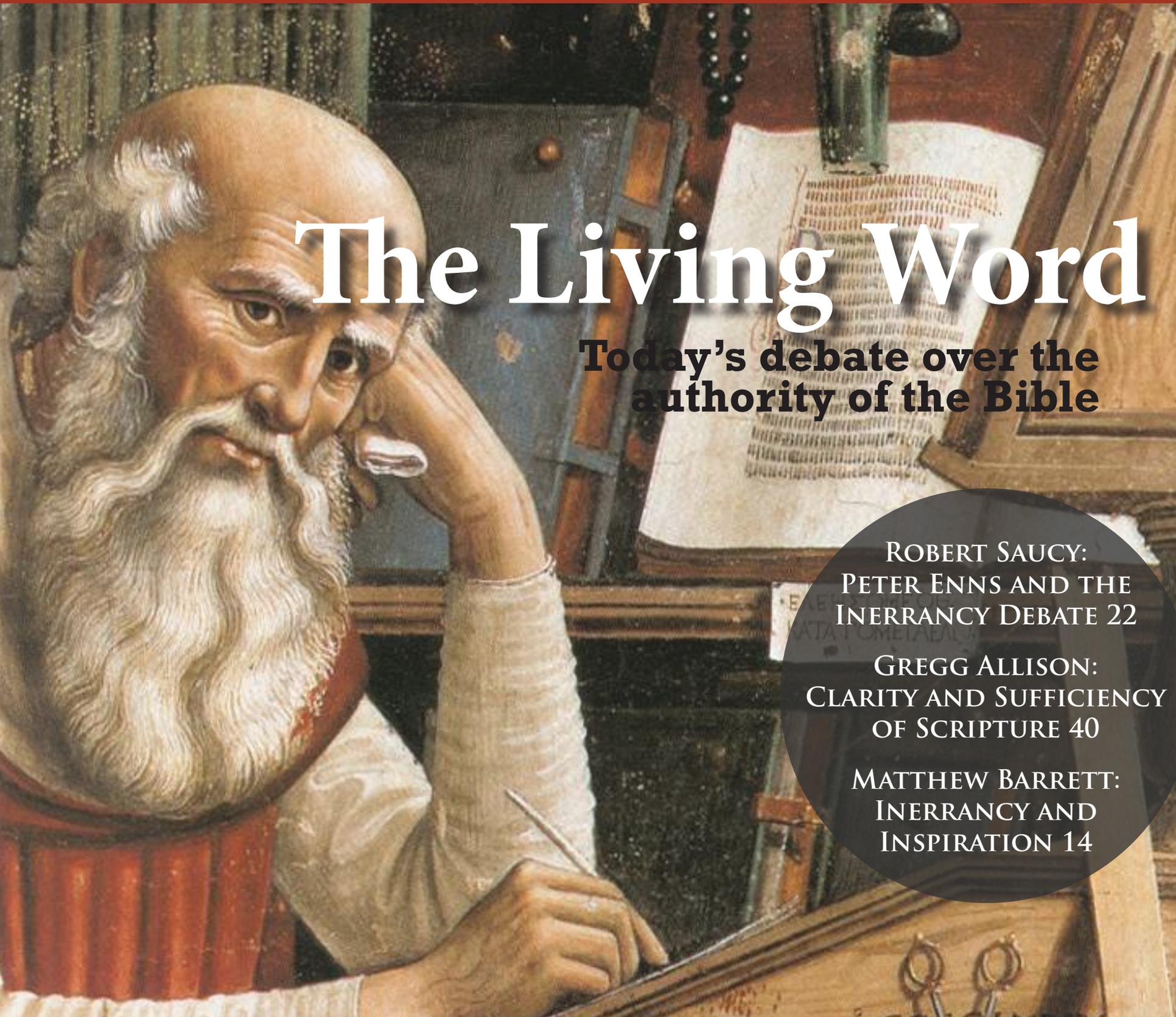


CREDO

Issue 1 - October 2011



The Living Word

**Today's debate over the
authority of the Bible**

ROBERT SAUCY:
PETER ENNS AND THE
INERRANCY DEBATE 22

GREGG ALLISON:
CLARITY AND SUFFICIENCY
OF SCRIPTURE 40

MATTHEW BARRETT:
INERRANCY AND
INSPIRATION 14

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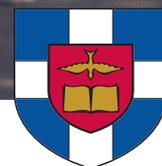
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Editorial

Q

uo warranto. “By what authority?” This question gets to the very heart of this month’s issue. Is Scripture our authority in life and in death? The contributors of this issue answer with a resounding “Yes.” Scripture alone is the Word of God. Scripture alone is the authority for the church. Sola Scriptura must be the heart-beat of every believer.

Unfortunately, the authority of God’s Word has been questioned by contemporary scholars. Like previous generations, we live in a day where the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture are doctrines brought under continual criticism. For many, Scripture must be put to the test. Scripture does not stand in judgment over us, but we stand in judgment over Scripture. We determine what is and is not inerrant. We determine what is and is not inspired. We determine what is and is not historical. Suddenly, man, not God, has become the ultimate authority in matters of faith and practice. Therefore, it is refreshing when a group of pastors and scholars come together to write, defend, and retrieve the biblical understanding of Scripture.

In this issue, that is exactly our aim. We have brought together an outstanding group of thinkers in order to stand upon and affirm the inerrancy, inspiration, clarity, sufficiency, and authority of Scripture, which we believe is “breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Matthew Barrett
Executive Editor

CONTENTS

The Living Word • October 2011

14 *Inspiration, Inerrancy and the Trustworthiness of God*
Matthew Barrett

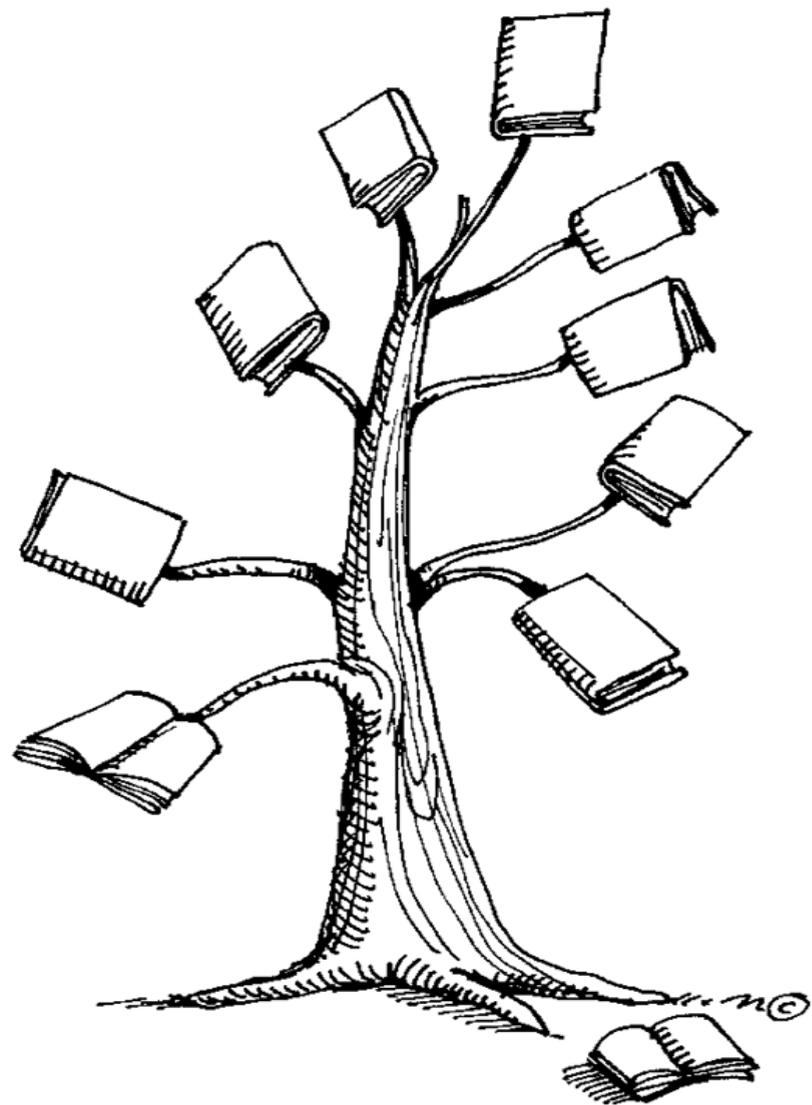
22 *Today's Battle for the Bible*
The Enns-Beale Debate
Robert Saucy

30 *Sola Scriptura*
The Authority of the Word
Owen Strachan

40 *The Clarity and Sufficiency of Scripture*
Gregg Allison

45 *B. B. Warfield on Inerrancy*
Fred Zaspel

52 *"Zeal to Promote the Common Good"*
The Story Behind the KJV
Michael A.G. Haykin



Ten Questions
8 with Bruce A. Ware

Ink that Speaks
10 *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, interview with John Frame

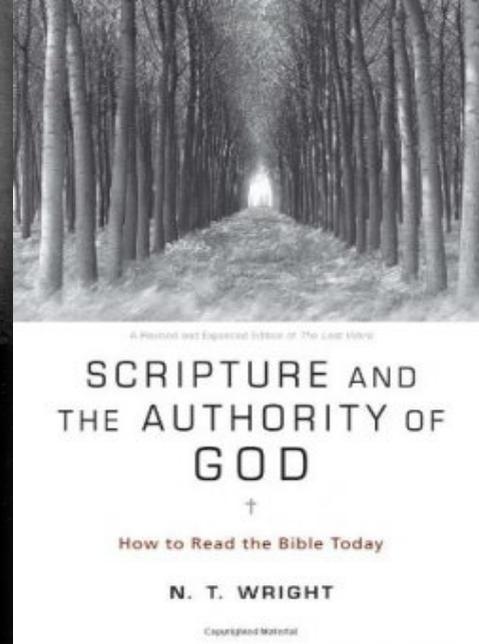
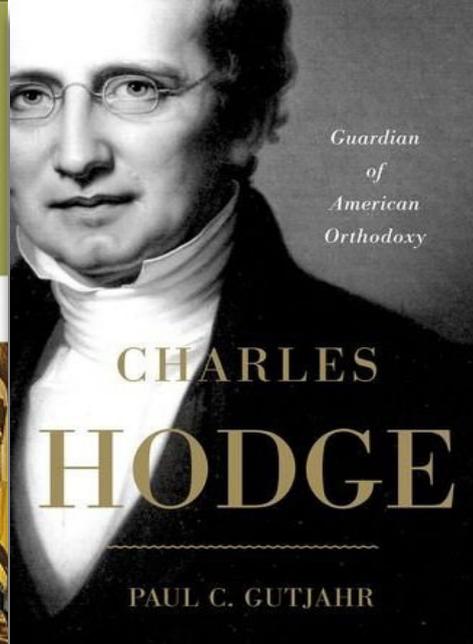
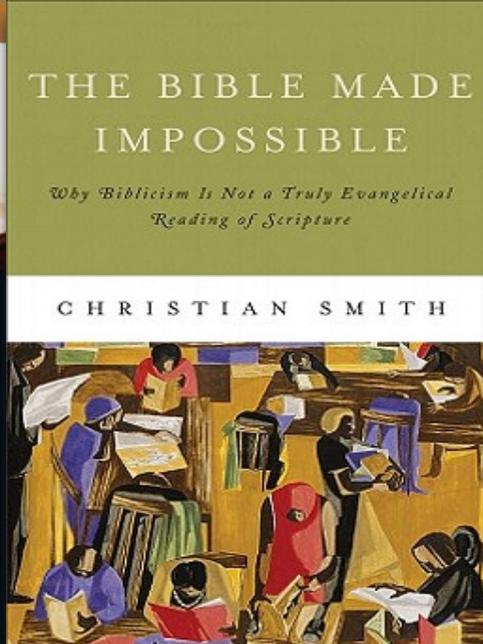
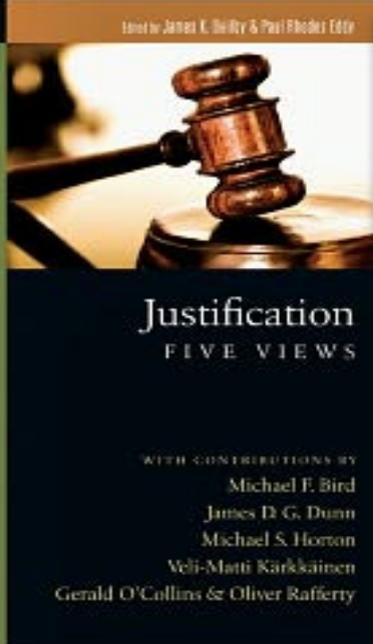
68 *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, interview with Timothy George

Connecting Past and Present
72 *Andrew Fuller and the Word of God*
by Michael Haykin

The Reformed Pastor
62 *Plant the Gospel; Plant Churches*
by Tony Merida

64 *Revelation, Inspiration, Illumination*
by Tim Challies

First Principles
91 *Scripture in the Family Room*
by Matthew Barrett



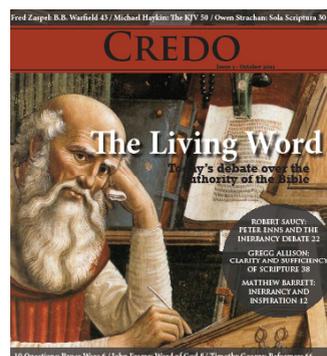
CONTENTS CONTINUED...

Executive Editor Matthew Barrett
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On the Cover
 St. Jerome in His Study (1480), by Domenico Ghirlandaio.

In Every Issue

13 *From a Scale of 1 to 10*

39 *From the Horse's Mouth*

84 *Brandishings*

Extras

21 *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*

38 *Drowning in Study Bibles* by J. V. Fesko

51 *Who is B. B. Warfield?* by Chris Cooper

Book Reviews

74 *The Bible Made Impossible* by Christian Smith reviewed by Fred Zaspel

77 *Welcome to the Story* Stephen J. Nichols reviewed by Tim Raymond

78 *Justification: Five Views* Michael S. Horton, Michael F. Bird, James D. G. Dunn, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Gerald O'Collins S.J. and Oliver P. Rafferty reviewed by Thomas Schreiner

80 *Scripture and the Authority of God* N. T. Wright reviewed by David Burnette

83 *Historical Theology* Gregg R. Allison reviewed by Chris Cooper

85 *Charles Hodge* Paul C. Gutjahr reviewed by Jeff Straub

86 *Ephesians* Clinton E. Arnold reviewed by Joshua Greever

89 *Paul and Scripture* Steve Moyise reviewed by Richard Lucas



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10 Questions

Professor and author **Bruce Ware** discusses family, theology, and challenges we'll be facing in the next 20 years

How did you become a Christian?

My parents and grandparents (who lived nearby) were committed Christians. I learned at a young age of my sin and the reality of divine judgment, and I learned the good news that Jesus had taken my sin and paid its penalty on the cross. At six years of age, I asked my grandmother to help me pray to trust in Christ for the forgiveness of my sin, and she did. I was baptized shortly thereafter. I've never seriously doubted the reality of my conversion at that young age. I am quite confident this was the work of the Spirit in my young heart.

What do you and your wife Jodi like to do for fun?

We love travelling, sight-seeing, hiking, and reading together. We also both love music, both playing and singing together as well as listening to wonderful classical, jazz, and Christian music.

What advice would you give to husbands as they seek to love their wives?

Listen, listen, listen!!! Well, this reflects one of the greatest failures and weaknesses in my own relationship with Jodi. I love my wife dearly, but I



need to show this love in ways she can feel and experience my love, and one of the most important ways for my wife is by careful, attentive, engaged, and responsive listening.

How did your relationship with your daughters bring about Big Truths

for Young Hearts (Crossway)?

For a number of years, when our two daughters were young, I spent time at their bedsides at night taking them through different teachings of the Christian faith. I recall those years with such joy. I would always start with a key verse of Scripture, and then we would unpack some doctrinal truth bit by bit over several nights. Well, many years later, Bethany and Rachel urged me to write up these “lessons” that we had gone through, and eventually I did, and Crossway kindly published this as “Big Truths for Young Hearts.”

What was your dissertation topic at Fuller Seminary and why did you choose it?

I wrote an evangelical reappraisal of the immutability of God. My wife, Jodi, suggested this topic to me, and I nearly dismissed it. “What’s to write on here?” I said! Tom Schreiner (in the program also at Fuller) said I should check this out. I did, and was shocked to see how much was being written on divine immutability – mostly from RC and Process theo-

gians. So, by God’s grace, I was able to “get in” on a highly significant discussion – one that would relate much to the openness controversy that was yet to spring onto the evangelical scene – and think through a web of important issues as one committed to biblical authority and deeply respectful of the tradition.

Many people know you through your writing against Open Theism. Where do you see the impact of Open Theism today?

My sense is that the main body of literature on the openness controversy – by both advocates and critics – has now been written. Yet, open theism is not going away. Rather, now it is more of the “background” theology of much other work that is being presented, largely by those in the emergent movement and on the evangelical left. So, though it is not as prominent, it continues to exert a significant influence.

You have spent years thinking about the Trinity. Why has this doctrine been so important in your own personal life?

About 15 years ago, while reading my Bible, the Lord began to open my eyes to begin noticing the pronouns used of “God” in many of the books of the New Testament. What I began to see is that these pronouns refer, not to “God” generically, but rather to one or another member of the Trinity. I began noticing the specific actions and roles that each member of the Trinity were said to carry out, and along with

this, the authority and submission structure of the Trinity seemed nearly to jump off the page. About this same time, I was asked to speak at a pastors’ conference on the doctrine of the Trinity, so this allowed me the beginnings of my work in processing and writing up this material. How grateful I am to the Lord for helping me put on “Trinitarian glasses” to begin to see what I had previously only read past.

As a pastor what role does theology play in the local church?

The whole of life as a believer – from initial conversion through the complex process of sanctification to preparing to die well, to the glory of God – is affected deeply by whether one knows theology, and what the content of that theology is. A pastor who downplays theology is either ignorant of what theology is, or he is deceived in thinking that the wisdom of our world (e.g., pragmatism of some sort or other, in all probability) is the key to our people’s betterment. But A. W. Tozer is right: What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us!

What challenges will young scholars/pastors face in the next 20 years?

I suspect that more of the pressure of a growing hostile, secular, anti-Christian culture will prompt even more “evangelicals” to depart from central Christian convictions in order to devise some warped and unfaithful version of the “Christian faith” that reflects ideals and intuitions of

the culture far more than anything deeply biblical. The divide between those who truly are Christian and those who are not, despite self-designations, will likely increase. Commitments to fear God, not men; to go with the Bible, not the culture; to remain faithful to the gospel of Christ, not the “gospel” of the “enlightened” – these are the commitments deeply needed for those who will lead the church forward.

You speak and travel a lot. What city have you enjoyed visiting most?

be honest, I hardly notice where I am when I travel, since what I LOVE doing when I’m there is sharing with others the glorious truths God gives me the privilege to teach and preach. But I must say, that when Jodi travels with me, my interest in seeing something of the place we’re at increases. She and I had the privilege of doing some conferences in the UK earlier this year, and our memories of preaching and visiting in Edinburgh (since you asked for one city – how difficult!) are especially dear.

Bruce Ware is professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Ware has co-edited with Thomas Schreiner Still Sovereign. He also has authored God’s Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism; God’s Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance.

The Doctrine of the Word of God

An Interview
with John Frame

by Oren Martin

Tell us a little bit about yourself—how God brought you to himself? Where did you go to school?

My parents were fairly affluent folks, my Dad a business executive. We lived in Mt. Lebanon, a suburb of Pittsburgh. (I am the same age as R. C. Sproul, also from Pittsburgh.) Our home was “nominally” Christian, but I made a commitment to Christ through the youth ministry of our church at around 13 years old. I did my A. B. at Princeton University in Philosophy, then a B. D. (now called “M. Div.”) at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. I then earned an M. A. and an M. Phil. in Philosophical Theology at Yale.

The last volume in your Theology of Lordship series, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, has been recently published. For whom did you write it? What do you hope to accomplish through it?

DWG, like the other lordship books,

is a text for my seminary classes. I think most anyone with some college education, probably some with only high school, can follow it. It’s a bit easier than my other lordship books. I hope that the book will strengthen the church’s stand for the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, and the primacy of Scripture (over against tradition) in the work of theology.

You present the doctrine of the Word of God as a “personal-word model.” What does this model mean and how is it different from other models?

Well, Scripture has been understood as human beings witnessing of their religious experience, as a book of doctrines, a book of commands, etc. More recently theologians have recommended the model of a “redemptive history,” though



much of the Bible is not historical in form. I myself have recommended Kline’s “covenant document” model, and I think there is still truth in that. But behind all those models, the main thing is that God is speaking to people, as he spoke to Adam and Eve, to Noah, to Abraham, etc. Our attitude toward his speech should be like theirs: accepting it as our supreme authority, obeying his commands, embracing his promises, etc. That is the “personal word model.” It differs from the others in that it is a more general description of what God is doing in revelation, and therefore in that it encompasses more forms of revelation than the other models do.

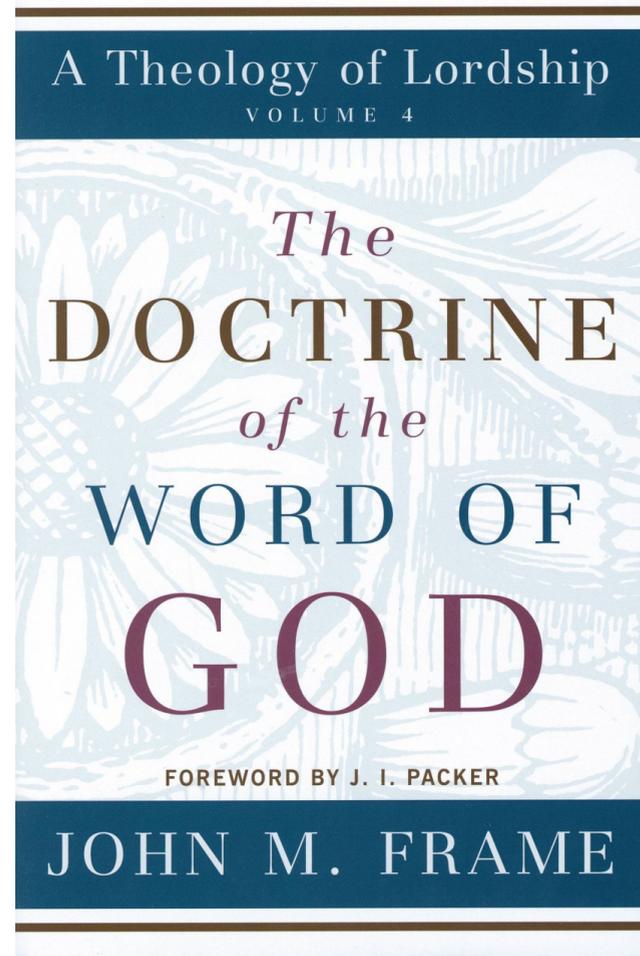
In your book you encourage your readers to rethink the traditional distinction between general and special revelation. Why is this distinction unhelpful and what do you propose in its place?

Well, “general revelation” is supposed to be (1) nonverbal and (2) about things other than salvation. But what of redemptive history? It is not words (though there are words about it), and it is about salvation. And what of the “pre-redemptive revelation” before the fall? That doesn’t fit the definition of either special or general. Further, neither “general” nor “special” embraces the personal work of the Spirit in our hearts, which is called “revelation” in Matt. 11:27 and Eph. 1:17. For that I use an additional category, “existential revelation,” which creates a threefold distinction and fits into my system of triangles.

What does it mean for God’s Word to be an “event-, word-, and person-revelation”? How should this affect our understanding and study of Scripture?

God reveals himself in events, words, and persons: events of nature, history, and redemptive history; human words spoken by God from heaven, by prophets and apostles, and in written words; and in persons (Christ himself, the apostolic example, etc.) We should

understand Scripture as (1) a record of revelatory events, (2) itself verbal revelation, and (3) a verbal portrait of revelatory people.



As is apparent by the diversity in theological systems, denominations, etc., biblical interpretation is not monolithic. What does it mean to be “biblical” in our theology? What caution(s) would you offer to students of God’s Word?

Much could be written about this, but I try to encourage Bible interpretation that is responsive to tradition, but not captive to it. The chief rule of Reformation hermeneutics is that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, under

the illumination of the Holy Spirit. “Biblical” theology is often defined as a method of Bible interpretation focusing on redemptive history. That’s fine, but it should not be the only method we use. Redemptive history may be the chief content of Scripture, but there are many things in the Bible (Psalms, Proverbs, e.g.) that are most narrowly historical.

In approaching the study of God’s Word, what do you see as the proper relationship between Scripture and extra-biblical materials (e.g., historical confessions, church history, commentaries, etc.)? How should these materials be used in order to faithfully understand and apply God’s Word?

We should certainly learn from people God has appointed to teach the word, both in our generation and in the past. However we should be ready to make a break with the past if Scripture forces us to do that. That itself has an important precedent in tradition: the Protestant Reformation. And when we do make use of tradition in our theology, we should not be narrowly confined to the tradition of our own denomination. Theology today, in my view, partly because of the nature of graduate education, is far too focused on theologians in the past and present and far too little focused on Scripture itself. The best balance is in John Murray’s work.

Biblical inerrancy has been fiercely debated and rejected by many in recent years, even by those who identify themselves as evangelical. How would you define inerrancy and is it important to affirm? If so, why?

Inerrancy is simply “truth” in the conventional sense. It is not to be confused with “precision,” though a certain degree of precision is often needed to communicate truth. And yes, it is important to affirm inerrancy so defined, because God’s word is truth (John 17:17).

What role should the Spirit and the church play in our

interpretation and application of Scripture?

The church is our teacher, but it is not infallible. The Spirit is absolutely necessary to illumine Scripture, persuade us of its truth, enable us to teach it rightly.

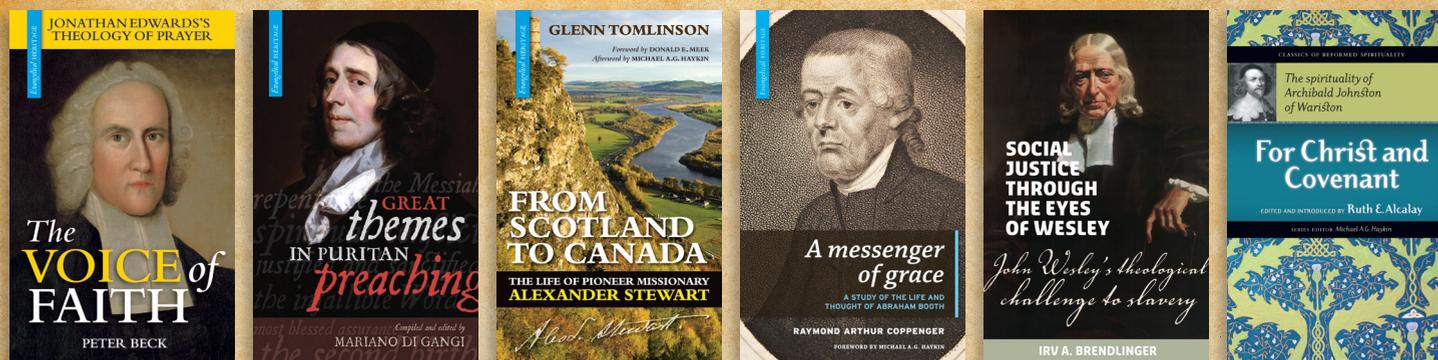
What books on Scripture have you found most influential in your own theological development and sanctification?

Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*; Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*; Kline, *Structure of Biblical Authority*; Murray, “The Attestation of

Scripture” in Stonehouse and Woolley, eds., *The Infallible Word*; Young, *Thy Word is Truth*.

What project(s) are you currently working on and what do you hope to write in the future?

I’m working on a *Systematic Theology* to be published sometime in 2013-14. I’m thinking that will be my last “big” book. After that I have a lot of ideas for short essays, that might be gathered into books on various topics, but my thoughts on those are very sketchy at the moment.



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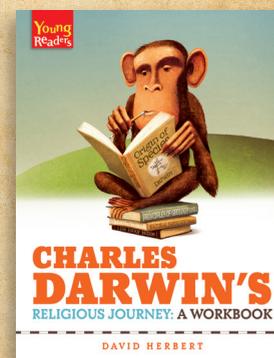
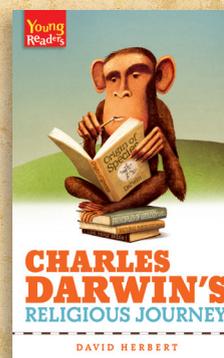
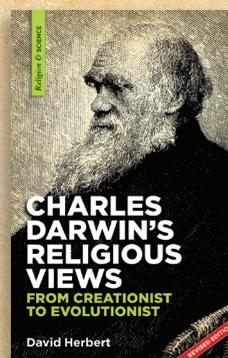
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Scale of 1 to 10

How difficult is it to interpret Old Testament Prophetic Literature?

James Hamilton

Southern Seminary

The Hebrew language and thought world is foreign and the prophets are long. Most significantly, the message of God's glory in salvation through judgment shocks our sensibilities and forces us to repent or reject these books, to our peril or joy.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Peter Gentry

Southern Seminary

1 today and 10 thirty years ago. Nothing in the church, a first rate Christian home, or education really equipped me to read the prophets. Very few grasp how fundamental covenant and creation are to the story of Israel, or the Exodus as a model of future salvation, or the recursive nature of Hebrew literature and thought, just to name two or three issues.



Walter Kaiser, Jr.

Gordon-Conwell Seminary

It is relatively easy, for God meant it to communicate meaning to us rather than thinking it is a code to be unraveled. The best strategy is to read extensively in the Old Testament prophets.



David Talley

Biola University

The major issues for me are 1) OT prophetic literature is often embedded in poetry and therefore the language is terse and somewhat vague; and 2) the message is often not, or loosely, connected to the "story" found in the Old Testament.



Danny Hays

Ouachita Baptist University

If we try to interpret the Prophets as if we are reading NT epistles then they can be very difficult and confusing. But if we place them into their proper literary and historical context, then the prophetic message is rather straightforward (and repetitive), at least most of the time.





Inspiration, Inerrancy, and the Trustworthiness of God

By Matthew Barrett

The notion of an inerrant text is inappropriately idolatrous.” Such a provocative statement comes from John Polkinghorne in his recent book, *Testing Scripture*. I don’t know about you, but I never considered evangelicals to be either inappropriate or idolatrous when it comes to affirming inerrancy. But nonetheless, this is the charge leveled against inerrantists today. Holding the Bible in such high regard is considered idolatrous because, as Polkinghorne argues, not “all of the Bible is great literature,” but some “parts are plainly pedestrian and some downright boring” (5). Therefore, he argues, we must be the ones to assess where historical truth in the Bible is to be found, “properly subjecting the Bible to critical analysis” (8). Polkinghorne is a case in point: it is not an exaggeration to say that no text has been criticized as much as the Bible. Polkinghorne, as the title of his book reveals, has an agenda, and that agenda is to test the Scriptures in light of our modern conceptions of science, which, of course, we know are true. Assuming an errant Bible is simply a necessity to such a project as Polkinghorne’s. Therefore, if you

dare defend the Bible as a text without error, well, you had better prepare yourself for criticism.

Where is the Slippage?

Another recent critic of inerrancy is sociologist Christian Smith. In his new book, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicalism is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture*, he argues that it is a serious mistake to argue that the “Bible is inspired by God; God does not and cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18); therefore everything in the Bible is true; therefore the Bible is inerrant.” Smith protests, “But this line of thought involves multiple instances of slippage and leaping” (81). So what are these instances of slippage and leaping? Smith lists three. The first “unwarranted leap” is to jump from rightly believing the Bible is “God-breathed” to erroneously assuming that the Bible down to the details of its words “consists of and is identical with God’s very own words written in human language.” The second slippage, says Smith, is when we apply statements in the New Testament about God’s inability to lie to a “more general abstract issue about the ontological nature of the Bible.” Smith goes on to clarify: “It simply does not necessarily follow from the idea that God cannot lie to the idea that every thing in the Bible is inerrant.” God’s truthfulness, in other words, does not mean that the Bible is also free from error. And third, we too often assume that the Bible’s notion of “true” means inerrant. Such an assumption, says Smith, is simplistic, given the “diverse literary nature of the Bible and many textual forms of conveying truths.”

Turns out, Smith is so upset with those who would read the Bible as an error-free document, that he goes so far as to say that those who do are “shamefully untrusting and ungrateful when it comes to receiving God’s written word as God has chosen to confer it” (128). Smith takes off the gloves in his next sentence when he says they “throw the Bible as it is back in God’s face” and want a Bible (an inerrant one!) that is different from the one God has given. “They essentially demand-in God’s name, yet actually based on a faulty modern philosophy of language and knowledge-a sacred text

that will make them certain and secure, even though that is not actually the kind of text God gave” (128). What kind of Bible is it then that God has given us? One with errors in it, says Smith, unashamed. And these errors not only pervade the details but even the viewpoints of the biblical authors. In the “process of divine inspiration,” says Smith, “God did not correct every incomplete or mistaken viewpoint of the biblical authors in order to communicate through them with their readers. That would have been distracting. The point of the inspired scripture was to communicate its central point, not to straighten out every kink and dent in the views of all the people involved in biblical inscripturation and reception along the way” (129). So it is the message, not necessarily the details that we are to pay attention to, even though even the viewpoints of those teaching this message will at times be incomplete or, worse yet, mistaken. Nevertheless, such a vantage point, says Smith, never leads us to question the Bible’s divine authority (134). In the end, inerrancy for Smith is a term far too “limited, narrow, restricted, flat, and weak” to represent the diverse speech in the Bible (160).

Who is Really Slipping?

Smith is convinced that inerrantists are slipping, forcing their faulty assumptions onto the Bible, making it something it is not. And in doing so inerrantists are ungrateful, throwing the Bible back in God’s face! But is Smith right? Is it true that belief in the inerrancy of the Bible stands on the erroneous logic that since God is true, unable to lie, therefore his word must also be without error? And are we mistaken to assume that because the Bible is God-breathed so also is it perfect in every way, not only in its message but even in its details? Are we “forcing” our doctrine of inerrancy onto the Bible? And can it possibly be the case that an errant word of God never leads the reader to lack assurance in its credibility and reliability?

When we look at what the Bible says, it becomes very clear that reality is far different than the picture Smith paints. In fact, it is Smith who is really slipping, not inerrantists. Inerrantists are simply seeking to remain

faithful to what the Bible says about itself, namely, that God is truth and likewise his word is perfect, reliable, trustworthy, and credible in every way. Therefore, in what remains, it will become evident that the God who is trustworthy has left us with a trustworthy word. What else would we expect from the word *of God*?

Verbal inspiration has the wonderful effect of making God's word to us personal. The very words the authors used in writing Scripture were intended by God for us.

What is Inspiration?

Before we can understand why it is that God's word is without error we must first take a step back and comprehend what it means for the Bible to be *inspired* by God. Today, we use the term in a variety of ways. "I was so inspired when I heard the Beatles in concert." "You have inspired me by your painting." "If I don't get some inspiration soon I will never finish this poem." However, when we use the term inspiration to refer to Scripture we have a very different meaning in mind, namely, the very words of Scripture are spoken by God himself. Our ordinary language and use of the term simply does not do justice to the biblical sense in which this term is applied. Therefore, other words have been used synonymously. For example, by inspiration we mean that the Bible is "God-breathed." As Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is *breathed out by God* and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, *breathes out* his word by means of human authors. Unfortunately, in our vocabulary, inspiration often gives the impression that God *breathes into* the Bible. However, as seen here, 2 Timothy 3:16 conveys that God *breathes out* his word. Perhaps expiration is a more fitting word. But again, our English vocabulary fails us since expiration is usually associated with dying (and God's word is no dead letter!). Therefore, inspiration, properly understood, is a sufficient term.

Some may object, however, that inspiration is

problematic because it is not the text that is authoritative but God himself. Andrew McGowan makes this objection in his book, *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*, where he resides "the authority in God rather than in the Scriptures themselves." Certainly, if we mean that Scripture has authority apart from God himself, then yes, we have a problem. However, if we believe Scripture is breathed out *by God* then there is no difficulty in arguing that authority does reside in the Scriptures. As John Frame observes, are we to think that God cannot "represent his authoritative words in writing"? If so, we are in error for this is precisely what Scripture teaches (see 2 Tim 3:16). In the words of the Bible we have the authoritative words of God. "There is no biblical reason," says Frame, "to think that God's oral speech is more authoritative than his written speech" (*The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 529). Otherwise, we empty the meaning of "God breathed" in 2 Timothy 3:16. It is not just that God approves of the words in Scripture, but that these words are actually his very speech. To put the point in our common language, in Scripture we have *God-talk*.

While inspiration often focuses on God's divine act of breathing out Scripture, we must not neglect the human role. God inspired Scripture through human agents whom he had providentially chosen. Moses, David, Paul, Peter, and many others were real, human persons, selected by God. Occasionally God would literally dictate his words to the human author. We see this in Exodus 34:27 when God gives Moses the words of the law. We see it again in Jeremiah 36:4, "Then Jeremiah called Baruch the Son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord that he had spoken to him." Or consider Revelation 2 and 3 where the risen Savior, Jesus Christ, instructs John to write as he dictates to him. The result of this dictation was the letters to the seven churches in Asia. Some have complained that dictation is a degradation of the human role in Scripture. However, as John Frame retorts, "To be God's secretary must be a wonderful thing indeed. Speaking for myself, I would consider it a transcendent privilege to receive dictation from God.

What a wonderful experience it must have been, for Moses, Baruch, and John” (*DG*, 141).

I agree! What a magnificent privilege it must have been for God to dictate his word to Moses. However, the majority of Scripture was not communicated through dictation. Instead, God chose certain men (e.g., apostles and prophets) and these men wrote down what we now have in the books of the Bible. While these men were chosen by God

to author the books of the Bible, they used their own style to do so. We see this as we read different books of the Bible. Paul sounds very different than Moses or David. Even among the four gospels we can observe differences in writing style or personal emphasis.

Abraham Kuyper and

Herman Bavinck identify this human flavor of each book of the Bible as the “organic” nature of inspiration. By organic they simply mean that God intentionally used the qualities, peculiarities, and idiosyncrasies of each author to communicate his word to us. These men were led by the Holy Spirit to communicate exactly what God intended for us. As Peter explains, “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). God did not have to communicate his word to us in this way, but he did. He chose to use authors from a variety of educational,

social, political, and economic backgrounds. Some were kings, others were fisherman. But what each of them had in common is that they were carried along by the Holy Spirit to speak and write exactly what God intended for his people.

Inspiration can be parsed more precisely still. First, inspiration is “plenary,” meaning that all or everything in Scripture is God’s word. It is not as if 75% of the

Bible is inspired but 25% is not. To the contrary, *all* of Scripture is inspired by God. Practically, what this means is that we cannot choose what books of the Bible or what passages we think are inspired and what passages we think are not inspired. To do so not only contradicts the plenary inspiration of Scripture

but makes man, not God, the authority in determining Scripture. Second, inspiration is “verbal,” meaning that the very words of Scripture are inspired. It will not do to say that only the concept or message of Scripture is inspired but not the words. No, every word of Scripture is inspired by God. Verbal inspiration has the wonderful effect of making God’s word to us personal. The very words the authors used in writing Scripture were intended by God for us. As Frame explains, “At no point in this redemptive history is God content to give thoughts or ideas to his spokesmen, without giving them words in which to express those thoughts. Rather,



he assigns them the role of speaking and writing his words” (*DG*, 143). Consequently, not only are the writers inspired by God but the very words themselves are inspired by God. Therefore, it is not satisfactory to argue that God only inspired the writers but not the text of Scripture itself. The text has just as much authority as the voice of God himself. In this sense, as Frame notes, not only can we say inspiration is plenary and verbal but it is *textual* as well.

What is Inerrancy?

Inspiration is not the only term used when referring to the nature and character of the Scriptures. Another term used is inerrancy. The inerrancy of Scripture simply means that all of the Bible, in its original manuscripts, never asserts anything that is contrary to fact or in error, but always speaks the truth on every matter it discusses. Scripture, and all of Scripture, is free from falsehood, fraud, and deceit. While the Bible does not inform us of every fact on any particular subject, nevertheless, in what it does address on any subject it is true and without fabrication (2 Pet 1:21). One of the best definitions of inerrancy comes from Paul Feinberg when he writes, “Inerrancy means that when all facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences” (*Inerrancy*, 294).

Unfortunately, many opponents of inerrancy grossly misunderstand its meaning. Feinberg, whose work dates back to 1980, outlines several misunderstandings of inerrancy (299). However, many, if not most, of these misunderstandings of inerrancy prevail today.

1. Inerrancy does not demand strict adherence to the rules of grammar.
2. Inerrancy does not exclude the use either of figures of speech or of a given literary genre.
3. Inerrancy does not demand historical or semantic precision.
4. Inerrancy does not demand the technical language of modern science.
5. Inerrancy does not require verbal exactness in the

citation of the Old Testament by the New.

6. Inerrancy does not demand that the *Logia Jesu* (the sayings of Jesus) contain the *ipsissima verba* (the exact words) of Jesus, only the *ipsissima vox* (the exact voice).
7. Inerrancy does not guarantee the exhaustive comprehensiveness of any single account or of combined accounts where those are involved.
8. Inerrancy does not demand the infallibility or inerrancy of the noninspired sources used by biblical writers.

Each of these is worth further investigation, but for our purposes I only wish to highlight one, which crops its head up relentlessly in every generation. *Inerrancy does not mean that there must always be semantic and historical precision.* One can be truthful without being totally precise. If someone asks where I was born, I would likely answer California. Have I been untruthful since, to be precise, I was born in Southern California, and not just Southern California but Glendale, California, which is a city within Los Angeles, and not just in Glendale but in a hospital, room 452 to be exact? It should be obvious that my original answer was adequate, and therefore truthful in every way. No error was committed. Similarly, the Bible is not in error should it estimate, round up, give an average, or speak in generalities at times. The authors of Scripture are situated culturally and utilize simile, parables, hyperbole, metaphor, and many other forms of speech just as we do. None of these preclude the Bible’s ability to speak truthfully. Too often we impose our assumption that to be truthful there must be absolute technicality, when in reality we live in a world where reliability does not necessarily require meticulous exactitude. As The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy observes, “Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.”

What is the Difference Between Inerrancy and Infallibility?

Sometimes the word “infallible” is used synonymously

with the term “inerrancy.” It is possible, however, to distinguish between these two terms. Infallible may be the stronger term. While inerrancy means that the Bible does not error, infallibility means that the Bible cannot error or that it is incapable of erring. Not only does the text of Scripture contain no error (inerrancy), but it is impossible for it to error (infallibility).

Unfortunately, some have abused the term “infallibility” as well as the distinction between inerrancy and infallibility. They have argued that infallibility allows for errors in the Bible, as opposed to inerrancy which does not. But this is a distortion of the terms themselves. As we saw already, by definition inerrant means Scripture is without error and infallible denies the possibility that Scripture can error. We can even say God’s word is inerrant precisely because it is infallible. Stated in the reverse, because God’s word cannot error, we can be assured that his word never does error. Therefore, as The Chicago Statement makes so clear, the Bible cannot be “at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions.” While infallibility and inerrancy may be differentiated, they cannot be separated.

God is Truth and His Word is Truth

As seen already, Smith believes we make an unwarranted leap if we jump from the perfection of God to the inerrancy of Scripture. But Smith has forgotten the obvious: every bit of Scripture is *God’s* word. Therefore, if Scripture errors, God errors. And if God errors what could be more discrediting to his authority? He would be either unintentionally ignorant or intentionally deceitful. Thankfully we can rest assured that God does not lie (Num 23:19; 2 Tim 2:13; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18) nor is he ignorant (Ps 33:13-15; Heb 4:12-13). We know that God is a God of truth and his word is truth (Ps 119:43, 160). David writes, “As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the Lord is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him” (Ps 18:30). Here we see a direct connection between the perfection (blamelessness) of God and his word. Just as he himself is blameless, so also is his word, tried and true. And notice, the reliability of God and his word is the very reason David says we can take refuge in Him.

To divorce, as Smith does, God’s character and actions from his word is mistaken. Rather, there is a direct correspondence. God’s character is imputed to his word. The Lord’s testimony is sure (Ps 19:7) and he is faithful to his promises (Heb 10:23; 11:11). God’s speech is as reliable as God himself. Most will admit that just the thought of God being less than completely trustworthy is simply abhorrent. So why would we think any different about His word?

Most will admit that just the thought of God being less than completely trustworthy is simply abhorrent. So why would we think any different about His word?

What a refreshing reminder in our own day of postmodernism where “truth” can mean anything – your truth is as good as my truth even if they contradict each other. However, truth is objectively grounded in God himself since truth, understood biblically, is a perfection of God. That being the case, the very meaning of truth cannot include imperfection. Since God is truth, his speech is never false. This should not surprise us since the Spirit, the divine agent by which we receive God’s word, is called the “Holy” Spirit. No wonder the Spirit is titled the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6). And lest one think that the Spirit’s truthfulness does not come to bear on the writings of Scripture, listen to 2 Peter 1:21 where we learn that the biblical authors were “moved by the Holy Spirit” when they penned the books of the Bible we have today.

Limited Inerrancy and the Truthfulness of Scripture

Unfortunately, many today want to redefine inerrancy. Limited inerrancy, they argue, is a better option. According to this view, Scripture is inerrant but only in regards to its message of salvation. The specific details are less important and can even be in error. Nevertheless, though minute details may be inaccurate, the main thing is right, namely, the story of redemption. Again, many advocates of this position like the word infallible, setting it over and against the word inerrancy.

However, when we look at Scripture itself, this is not the impression we get. All of Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for us (2 Tim 3:16), not just the parts we think are more important. Scripture is entirely true (Prov 30:5), perfect (Ps 119:96), and pure (Ps 12:6). As Grudem asserts, “The Bible itself does not make any restriction on the kinds of subject to which it speaks truthfully” (*ST*, 93). We shouldn’t either.

Furthermore, consider how the biblical authors speak of the Bible, God’s word, as perfect, truthful and reliable in every way. David declares, “The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times” (Ps 12:6). David compares God’s pure words to silver that is tested in the furnace, refined seven times (a reference to perfection). God’s word is like a metal that is impeccable, free from impurity (see Exod 25:11-29). The same word for purity in Psalm 12:6 elsewhere refers to cleanliness and ritual purity (Lev 10:10-14; 13:13-17; Deut 14:11, 20; Mal 1:11). Therefore, when it is applied to God’s Word it conveys the notion that Scripture is completely free from error.

Jesus himself states that the Father’s word is truth (John 17:17) as is his gospel (Eph 1:13; Col 1:5). Truth is a characteristic of God’s word. Therefore, Paul says he believes “everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). In Romans 15:4 Paul also says that “whatever was written” in the Old Testament Scriptures was “written for our instruction” and Jesus himself says in Luke 24:25 that the disciples are foolish because they were “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” Notice the totality of the words used in these passages: “everything,” “whatever,” and “all.” In other words, every part of Scripture, not just its main message, is reliable and trustworthy. No wonder the New Testament authors, including Jesus himself, can consistently cite specific details from the Old Testament – details, may I remind you, that they considered historical in nature and therefore true. No detail was too small. Jesus makes this abundantly clear when he says concerning the law, “For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, *not an iota, not a dot*, will pass

from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt 5:18). If we separate issues of faith and practice from the details of the Bible in order to say that the former are true while the latter have room for error, we fail to pay heed to what Scripture itself says. We also fail to realize that matters of faith and practice rely upon the seemingly (but not so seemingly!) small details of the Bible.

Why is Inerrancy so Practical for the Christian Life?

If we reject the doctrine of inerrancy there are serious consequences. First of all, a denial of inerrancy creates a grave moral problem, namely, how is it that we can still trust God if his word is not true? Scripture is God-breathed. Therefore, if Scripture contains errors it would have to follow that God intentionally misled us, even if it be in what some call less important details. If God intentionally speaks falsely, can we genuinely take seriously Paul’s admonition in Ephesians 5:1 that we are to be imitators of God? Furthermore, if God speaks falsely can we trust him in what he says? Notice the problem advocates of limited inerrancy face. They want us to believe that Scripture is inerrant in its message while its details error. But can we even begin to trust what God says in matters of faith and practice if he simultaneously speaks falsely to us, and intentionally so, in matters of fact?

And can we really be sure that errors have not crept into matters of faith and practice if other errors are present in the details of Scripture? Granted, an error in one part does not necessarily entail an error in every part. However, it is also true that the discovery of one error opens the door for the real possibility of many more errors throughout Scripture. Such a problem as this can rattle our confidence in God’s word, for an error in just part of the Bible definitely would bring into question the reliability of the whole.

Furthermore, any view (limited inerrancy included) that undermines our confidence in God’s revelation as trustworthy is, as Paul Helm observes, at the very least inadequate and at its worse “ultimately destructive of the Christian faith.” If we reject the trustworthiness

of Scripture, the very vehicle by which God has communicated to us, how can we avoid undermining our confidence in the trustworthiness of God? In other words, the trustworthiness of God's word is the very vehicle by which we know that God himself is trustworthy.

Problems like these plague the believer who denies inerrancy. But not so for the believer who trusts that God's word is true, not only in its message but in its every detail. God speaks truthfully in every way and therefore we can trust him in what he says. His word to us is reliable and sure, it is truthful and accurate. We can have great confidence that the God who is truth speaks the truth to us.

Conclusion

It never ceases to amaze me how relevant the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy continues to be, even today thirty three years removed. As seen with John Polkinghorne and Christian Smith above, the warning issued in the Chicago Statement rings true: "great and grave confusion results from ceasing

to maintain the total truth of the Bible." To affirm not only the inspiration but inerrancy of Scripture is to stand firmly upon the foundation laid by Christ and the apostles, as well as the heritage of orthodoxy throughout church history. To deny it is to undercut the very authority the Bible rests upon, and to erect in its place one's own critical reasoning. In doing this, it seems impossible to avoid what the Chicago Statement calls an "unstable subjectivism." On the other hand, by submitting ourselves to the authority of Scripture we affirm what Scripture says and in so doing we affirm what God says. We simply cannot separate the authority and truthfulness of God from the word he has given birth to for our salvation. Let God's *word* remain *God's* word.

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The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

The "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" was produced at an international Summit Conference of evangelical leaders, held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Chicago in the fall of 1978. This congress was sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. The Chicago Statement was signed by nearly 300 noted evangelical scholars, including James Boice, Norman L. Geisler, John Gerstner, Carl F. H. Henry, Kenneth Kantzer, Harold Lindsell, John Warwick Montgomery, Roger Nicole, J. I. Packer, Robert Preus, Earl Radmacher, Francis Schaeffer, R. C. Sproul, and John Wenham.

Preface

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully

obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstandings of this doctrine in the world at large.

! [Click here for the full statement](#)



TODAY'S BATTLE FOR THE

Bible

THE ENNS-BEALE DEBATE

By Robert Saucy

For some sixteen centuries the church believed (with few exceptions) that the Bible was the inspired Word of God—not simply the “witness” to God’s Word, or the Word of God in its “theological truth,” but totally God’s Word in all matters that it affirmed. They recognized, of course, that God didn’t write the Bible in heaven and drop it down to man. It was penned by human writers. But as Peter says, they were not writing simply out of themselves, but were “men moved by the Holy Spirit.” Thus they “spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:21). In short they firmly believed that the whole Bible was the words of God as well as human words.

This ancient conception of the Bible began to be challenged with the inception of what is known as the Age of Reason in the 17th and 18th centuries—a time characterized by new philosophical thought associated with the Enlightenment (18th century) and great changes in scientific thought and exploration. The underlying change of attitude taking place during this period is exemplified by Immanuel Kant’s description of the

“enlightenment” as “the liberation of man from his self-caused state of minority.” Describing “minority” as the “incapacity of using one’s understanding without the direction of another,” Kant goes on to explain that it does not mean a “lack of understanding,” but rather “a lack of determination to use it *without the assistance of another*” (emphasis added). In short, mankind need not look to the transcendent God for the way of true life. Man would make more progress toward perfectibility using his own abilities in determining what was finally true or false. As fallen humans we have always tended to prefer our own thoughts over the mind of our Creator. The Age of Reason simply made this spirit fashionable among the intelligentsia of the leading civilizations.

Up to this time, the primary source from which Western civilizations had sought assistance for the enhancement of life was the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures. The exaltation of human reason as the supreme authority on what is beneficial or detrimental for human life naturally dethroned this biblical authority. As a consequence, Scripture began

to be placed under the microscope of human reason and knowledge and was pronounced wanting in total factuality. To cite one definition of the Historical Critical Method that emerged and came to full flower in the 19th century, it is the historical reasoning: “(1) that reality is uniform and universal; (2) that it is accessible to human reason and investigation; (3) that all events historical and natural occurring within it are in principle interconnected and comparable by analogy; (4) and that humanity’s contemporary experience of reality can provide objective criteria by which what could or could not have happened in the past is to be determined.” (It is acknowledged that this method “rests on presuppositions . . . that are finally philosophical and theological in character.”¹)

This inaugurated the real battle over the nature of the Bible and consequently its authority. For some scholars, this new rationalistic criticism reduced the Scriptures to human writings that conveyed spiritual ideas and experiences. It included prescientific and prehistoric thought as well as mythical stories—including the account of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Others rejecting the anti-supernaturalism of this method that essentially ruled out supernatural miraculous events continued in various ways to affirm the Scriptures as a divine revelation. But for many a division was made between inerrant theological and moral teaching and other matters related to history and science.

The historic view of the full inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures prevailed in America and Britain against this critical attack into the 18th and early 19th centuries. But with the growing evolutionary movement, notably the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* in 1859, the idea of inerrancy began to be discarded in the church. The conflict between Darwin’s theory and the book of Genesis made it impossible for anyone who desired to be “scientifically instructed” to accept the total inerrancy of Scriptures. The weakening of inerrancy in relation to the creation facilitated the progress of the application of rationalistic criticism and the charge of errors throughout the Scripture.²

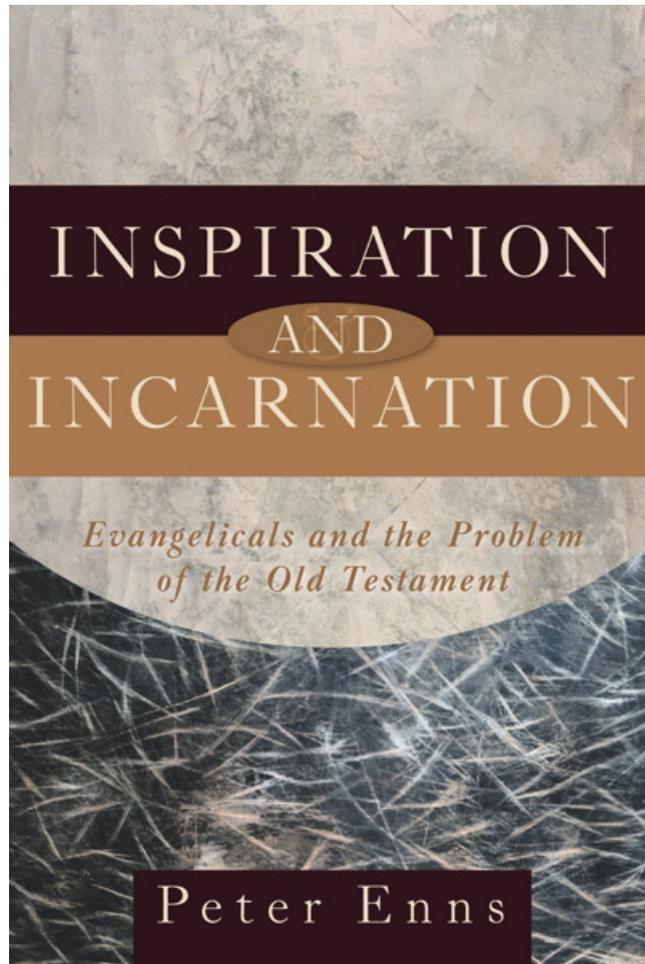
The controversy over inerrancy which has been present ever since this time notably in America has come to the forefront of evangelical theological discussion at three particular times due to particular challenges from within. The first contention erupted in 1874 when the noted Presbyterian scholar Charles Augustus Briggs in his inaugural address as professor of Hebrew and cognate languages at Union Seminary. While affirming the inspiration of Scriptures, he denied “the dogma of verbal inspiration” and asserted that the inspired original text contained errors. In response Warfield and Hodge set forth the classic view of biblical inerrancy which provided a foundation for inerrantists for decades.

The next outbreak of the inerrancy battle came in the 1970s with the controversy and ultimate rejection of inerrancy associated with Fuller seminary and Harold Lindsell’s *Battle for the Bible* (1976). The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy was also formed around this time in response to this challenge.

The question of the Bible’s inerrancy has again come to the fore in the present time although it may be questioned whether it yet has the same prominence within the evangelical community as the prior eruptions. Some recent theological views, such as “open theism” which denies that God can know all the future thoughts and actions done freely by humans, have raised the issue of inerrancy because they seem incompatible with the express teachings of Scripture. The same is true of the acceptance of certain evolutionary theories which are difficult to harmonize with the biblical account of creation.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of the present debate is represented in the discussions between two evangelical scholars, Peter Enns, formerly of Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) and Greg Beale (Wheaton Graduate School). The 2005 publication of Enns’ work, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, caused a major controversy at Westminster resulting in

his resignation from that institution. Enns' book was also criticized by others including D. A. Carson, Paul Helm, Richard Averbeck, and especially Greg Beale who wrote several journal articles dealing with Enns' teaching to which Enns also wrote responses. Beale brought this material together along with other things related to the discussion in his 2008 book, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New*



Challenges to Biblical Authority.

Peter Enns' Understanding of the Nature of Scripture

Enns stated purpose is “to bring an evangelical doctrine of Scripture into conversation with the implications generated by some important themes in modern biblical scholarship—

particularly Old Testament scholarship—over the past 150 years.”³ He does so by raising three issues which he believes have not been adequately dealt with by evangelicals: (1) other literature from the ancient Near Eastern world; (2) theological diversity in the Old Testament; and (3) the New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament. In Enns' view, these problems require evangelicals to rethink the nature of Scripture and the traditional evangelical view of inerrancy as expressed in the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (1978) which the Evangelical Theological Society also recently (2006) adopted as its understanding of “inerrancy.”

Briefly, Enns compares ancient writings from Israel's surrounding neighbors that have similarities with Scripture in relation to: (1) creation and the flood in Sumerian and Babylonian myths; (2) customs, laws, and Proverbs, e.g., the Code of Hammurabi, and, (3) the records of pagan kings. In each area he finds similarities that raise questions concerning the real nature of Scripture and what we mean when we speak of its inerrancy.

For example, he sees the writers of Genesis describing and assuming as factual “the world as a flat disk with a dome above” in accord with the ancient myths. In the realm of customs, laws, and Proverbs, Enns sees considerable differences within the Scriptures itself apparently derived from their relation to similar writings around them. The pagan records of their ancient kings clearly exaggerate their exploits raising the question of whether the different accounts of Israel's history (Samuel-Kings and Chronicles) also involve historical tensions due to the author's purpose.

In the second major area of “theological diversity,” Enns simply raises a number of texts that “say different things about the same thing” and seem to be contradictions” yielding a certain “messiness” in Scripture.⁴ Among the many examples set forth are references to “gods” (e.g. Ps. 86:8) along with the teaching that Yahweh alone is God. This suggests to Enns that God called Israel while they were within an environment of polytheistic belief and led them into “a full knowledge of who he is,” suggesting that some scriptural statements represent the author's belief in henotheism (i.e., belief in one god without asserting that this is the only god) while later ones indicate monotheism.⁵

With regard to the interpretation of Old Testament texts by New Testament writers, Enns argues that these later writers did not try to remain consistent with “the original context and intention of the Old Testament author.” Rather “they were . . . commenting on what the text *meant*,” i.e., “what the Old Testament means *in light of Christ's coming*.”⁶ In doing so, they utilized the

interpretive tradition of contemporary (Second Temple) Jewish writings which sought deeper than surface meaning through symbolic interpretation and various traditions and legends that had grown up around the text.

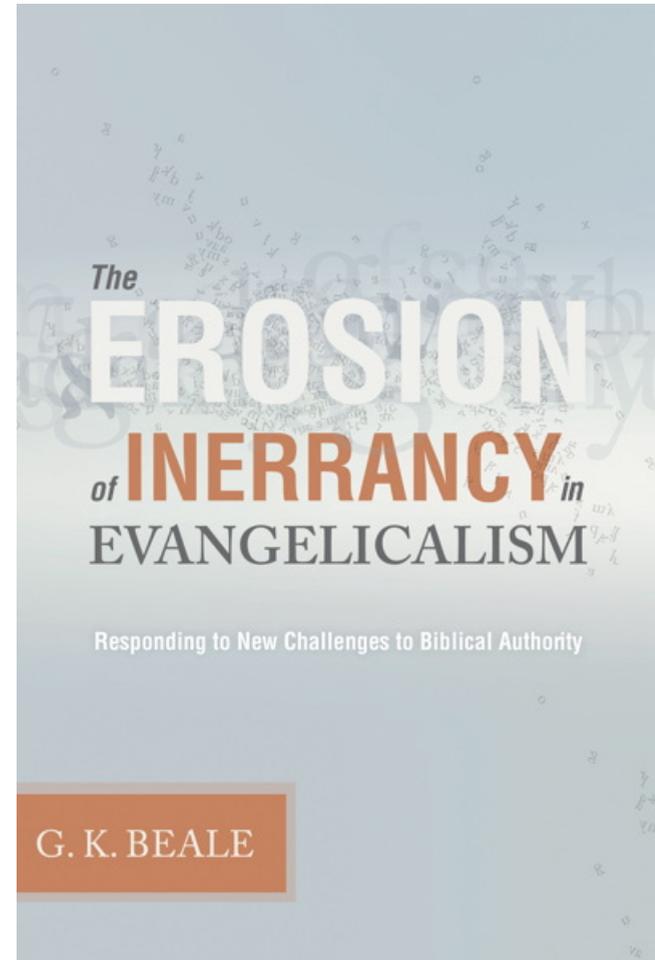
Some evangelical scholars concur that New Testament writers do evidence some hermeneutical similarities with these Jewish writings, but still understand that what the New Testament does include is fully truthful. Enns, however, seems willing to go beyond this. For example, in a separate essay—“The ‘Moveable Well’ in 1 Cor 10:4: An Extra-Biblical Tradition in an Apostolic Text”—Enns describes Paul’s reference to the “spiritual rock” that followed the Israelites in the wilderness as “‘legendary’ material” which “actually represented his own understanding of the event.”⁷ Thus seemingly, the apostle believed something to be historical and apparently included it in his inspired writing as such when in fact it wasn’t historical reality.

All of this scriptural data, Enns believes, should cause evangelicals to rethink the concept of inspiration and the very nature of Scripture. We have not adequately acknowledged the humanness of the Bible. What we see in Scripture is that in giving us his Word, God truly entered into human history and culture. In doing so, He spoke through human authors who utilized the worldviews and practices of their historical environment, some of which do not correspond to reality as we know it today—e.g. unscientific ancient worldviews, questionable biased historical records, interpretative methods that include legendary materials. Nevertheless, through all of this humanness, God conveys his inerrant Word which is all about the person and work of Christ. In the midst and under all of this data and tension, which we should allow to remain, there is a deep sense of Christ throughout Scripture.⁸

Enns sees his understanding of Scripture as parallel to the incarnation of Christ. As the union of God and man in the one person, Jesus Christ, is mysterious and beyond our understanding, so we cannot fully understand how God speaks his word through ordinary

humans. But it is this truth that makes the Bible unique. “As it is with Christ, so it is with the Bible—the ‘coming together’ of the divine and human sets it apart from all others”.⁹

In his proposal to rethink the nature of the Bible, Enns aims to rethink the nature of the Bible to “move beyond” the “battle for the Bible” between liberals and conservatives “by thinking of better ways to account for some of the data, while at the same time having a vibrant, positive view of Scripture as God’s Word.”¹⁰ As for inerrancy, Enns claims that he is not questioning “*whether* the Bible is inerrant . . . , but *how* the Bible is inerrant.”¹¹



Beale’s response

Greg Beale took up the task of responding to Enns’ work because he saw it as a symptom of a contemporary erosion of belief in inerrancy within some evangelical academic institutions.¹² Also since Enns’ work was addressed primarily to a popular audience, Beale thought that it might unnecessarily undermine the authority of Scripture for many in the church especially since evangelical answers to the data presented were not included.¹³

Beales response is essentially a defense of the traditional

evangelical understanding of inerrancy by providing scholarly explanations for the issues Enns raises. Since, as even Enns states, the issues that he presents are not new—the external documents such as the ancient Near East documents, and Jewish Second Temple writings have been known for 150 years, Beale gives to many plausible answers provided by evangelicals over the years. In many instances he adds his own scholarly analysis providing additional insight and further buttressing scriptural inerrancy.

Regarding similarities between Genesis and the ancient stories of creation and the flood Beale mentions four explanations proposed by inerrantists. He includes two chapters devoted to the interesting idea that the biblical writers used some of this similar language not literally to express scientific cosmology, but figuratively to express the universe as a huge temple for God.

In relation to what Enns terms theological “diversities” (but seems to treat more as irreconcilable differences

that cause problems for traditional inerrancy), Beale argues for the traditional evangelical explanation of complementary harmony. As for the New Testament writers utilizing the interpretive method of the Jews of their day in their own interpretation of the Old Testament, Beale acknowledges their use of some traditions not found in the Old Testament (e.g. the prophecy of Enoch, Jude 14), but sees no reason why these cannot be based on historical reality and passed along through truthful non-canonical (including oral) tradition. There is no evidence, according to Beale, that the New Testament writers utilized fanciful exegesis unconcerned with the original meaning, and unconsciously absorbed myth as in Second Temple Jewish writings.

In sum, Beale sees Enns’ understanding of divine inspiration and the nature of the Scriptures as contrary to the traditional evangelical view and the dominant view of orthodox Christianity throughout history. He rejects Enns’ suggestion that traditional evangelicals today



inappropriately define inerrancy using modern rational concepts of truth and error in science and history which were not present in the ancient world. He thus questions the validity of Enns' use of the incarnation of Christ as analogous to his view. Jesus' "humanness" can not entail the absorption of non-factual data from his human environment. In short, Beale's work is highly commended to all who are interested in better understanding these issues, and especially to those troubled by Enns' presentation of them.

Some questions to ponder

The present controversy brings to fore several issues that are always present when thinking about the nature of our Bible. I can only briefly mention two.

1. *What is the place of external data in interpreting Scripture and thus determining its nature?* Beale rightly, in my mind, believes that Enns lets extra-biblical materials determine the nature of the Bible, e.g., the Near Eastern stories determine the genre of Genesis as "myth," and Second Temple Jewish hermeneutics inform us as to the hermeneutics of the New Testament writers. Enns acknowledges that the issues he is raising are related to "the age-old question of the relationship between *special revelation* (the Bible) and *general revelation* (creation, i.e. everything else)." And, his desire is to allow "the evidence to affect how we think about what Scripture is as a whole."¹⁴

Surely extra-biblical sources, such as studies of ancient Near Eastern languages, backgrounds of biblical situations, or scientific knowledge, have helped us better understand Scriptures. Who doesn't acknowledge that the Polish astronomer, Copernicus, changed many believer's understanding of the relation of the earth and sun with his evidence for heliocentrism?

Care must be taken, however, that natural revelation or extra-biblical data is not subtly or not so subtly utilized to change the rather clear meaning of Scripture. Is this taking place even among evangelicals today? For example, in gender discussions (the issue of an order between man and woman or homosexuality), instead

of focusing on the biblical text various extra-biblical evidence is utilized to assure us that this teaching concerns this particular environment and not ours today. (It might also be noted that emphasizing ancient extra-biblical documents as vital to our understanding of Scripture and its nature, raises the question of how God's people could adequately understand the Bible prior to the discovering of these extra-biblical materials).

Following his departure from Westminster, Enns served as Senior Fellow, Biblical Studies with the BioLogos Foundation, an organization interested in integrating science (prominently, evolution) with the Christian faith. It seems clear from his writing in that capacity that the generally accepted viewpoints of academic science have influenced Enns' view of the nature of Scripture. In relation to the Genesis story of origins and Paul's Adam typology in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, including the human fall into sin (these last aspects don't fit with contemporary neo-Darwinian evolution), based on that story he proposes that evangelicals "*Rethink* the biblical origin story and related passages so as to *synthesize* Christianity with scientific reality."¹⁵

Enns' conclusion that Paul's use of the Adam typology "is not a straightforward matter, and his ancient assumptions of human origins cannot be expected to direct or influence scientific models of human origins"¹⁶ suggests that he has crossed the line from utilizing extra-biblical data to better understand the teaching of the Bible, to letting it demand a rethinking of the very nature of the Bible and the concept of inspiration.

2. *How shall we determine the nature of Scripture?* Coming to understand the nature of Scripture entails many facets of investigation involving internal and external data. But ultimately two methods can be identified, and both finally rest on faith. Enns represents the first approach when he desires to "listen to how the Bible itself behaves" and allow "the evidence to affect how we think about what Scripture as a whole *is*."¹⁷ In short, he tells us to examine everything the Bible says

in all areas of knowledge, i.e. history, science, morality, theology, etc. and draw our conclusion with regard to the nature of the Bible and the real meaning of its claim to be the inspired Word of God.

The other approach is to examine fully its own teaching about its nature—its claims to inspiration, to be breathed out by God, to not follow myths, and to be totally truthful with no indication of a distinction between matters pertaining to history and science and spiritual truth.¹⁸ Clearly the Bible bears the mark of a supernatural book. History reveals that many attacks against its inerrancy have been laid to rest by advances in human knowledge especially in history and archeology. Some problems remain, but none that have been proven to be beyond any possible explanation and therefore certainly non-factual.

In the present controversy Beale provides plausible explanations of the issues raised in harmony with his belief that Scripture teaches its own full truthfulness or inerrancy. Enns, on the other hand, rejects these explanations on the basis of extra-biblical evidence (e.g., ancient documents, and contemporary evolutionary theory) which he deems demonstrate that the writers in their true humanness incorporated non-factual data in their biblical writings. In both instances it seems impossible to escape the conclusion that the ultimate ground on which each judgment rests is faith—one in the final truthfulness of Scripture and the other in the truthfulness of human rational knowledge. But has human knowledge proven worthy of this trust over all of the evidence for the trustworthiness of Scripture?

Endnotes

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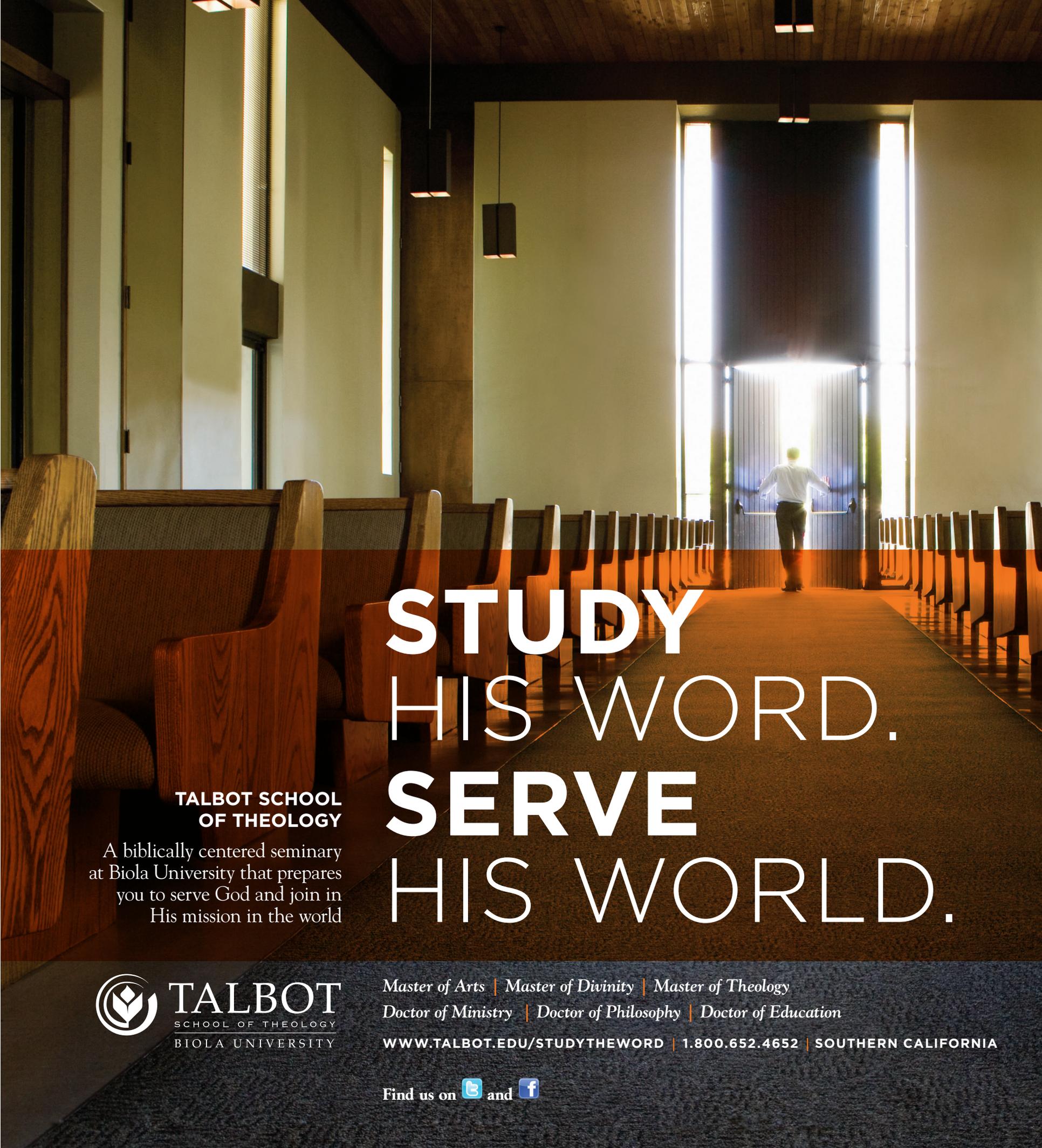
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A photograph of a church interior. A person is standing in the center aisle, looking out a large, bright window at the far end of the sanctuary. The pews are made of wood and are arranged in rows on either side of the aisle. The lighting is warm and dramatic, with strong highlights from the window and soft shadows in the pews.

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The Authority of
Sola Scriptura
the Word of God by Owen Strachan

In an accurate historical reconstruction of the famed Leipzig Disputation, Martin Luther is likely not cool and collected.

He's probably sweating up a storm.

Before a packed room hanging on his every word at the disputation of 1521, Luther parried with Johannes Eck for several hours over the matter of objective authority. The questions twisted and turned, but the epic struggle between the firebrand monk and the expert theologian boiled down to one simple matter: for Christians belonging to the church, what had final authority—the Pope, church councils, or Scripture?

Luther's answer threatened to place his entire life in jeopardy. His cataclysmic answer to Eck's question left him sweating, fearful, and as yet unaware that his answer would forever alter the course of human history. *Sola Scriptura*, the doctrine that the Word of God alone has theological and spiritual preeminence, came at great cost to the reformer—and to his clerical robes.

Biblical and Historical Foundations

The people of God have always believed that the word of God alone has ultimate authority and power. The supremacy of the Word is evident in Genesis 1, when God creates all that is by speaking. He continues to speak to humanity as its absolute authority, assigning Adam and his progeny his essential role in life (Genesis 1 and 2), decreeing terms of covenant relationship (Genesis 2, 6, 12, 15, 22), pronouncing sentences of life and death (Genesis 3 and 4), and charting right from wrong (Exodus 20), among many other functions. The word of God spoken to Israel comes from above, and is not taken as a suggestion by His people. From the beginning, God's speech is understood as preeminent, binding, wise, certain, and right.

The nation of Israel faces many challenges in its existence as a tiny upstart in the Ancient Near East, but its fate always stands upon one essential matter: whether it receives the Word of God and obeys it. The people may face insurmountable obstacles from their perspective—whether hordes of Egyptians or arid deserts or Babylonian sieges--but they are not required

to overcome these problems in their own strength, to solve them by planning and ingenuity. They are called merely to hear the Lord their God, to acknowledge His authority, and to respond in turn. In the words of Isaiah, the prophets of Israel call them simply to “Hear the word of the Lord!” (Isaiah 1:10) All that is needed to live is to listen to the authoritative one.

The doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is nothing other than the popular evangelical saying that in conversion, we confess at the core of our being that God is right, and we are wrong.

This kind of relationship is pictured poignantly in the relationship between Jesus, the very Word of God, and His disciples (John 1). Jesus’ preaching and miracle-working draws a crowd in the early days of his ministry, but this does not prevent many from dropping out. The confession of his inner circle, however, is that they cannot leave him: “Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:68-69) This is *sola Scriptura* by way of personal declaration. Jesus is the Son of God, and as such, He alone has “the words of eternal life.” Peter’s confession was an objective one, yes, but it was also personal. The Lordship of Christ exercised itself in words and claimed not only philosophical assent but spiritual obeisance.

The early church upheld this idea in seed form. Justin Martyr asserted rightly that Scripture is to “be believed for its own nobility and for the confidence due to him who sends it.” (Allison, *Historical Theology*, 80) Impelled to “take up” the Bible, Augustine knew that he was being summoned by a holy authority that would call him to heel and end his life of sin and searching. Later, the theologian would call fellow believers to “yield our assent to the authority of holy Scripture,” the first duty of every person and every church (Allison, *Historical Theology*, 82).

Augustine’s exhortation allows us to reflect on this matter of “assenting” to God’s truth. The doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is nothing other than the popular evangelical saying that in conversion, we confess at the core of our being that God is right, and we are wrong. Whether a heavy-cloaked pulpiteer or a child attending Vacation Bible School, every true believer comes to spiritual terms with this foundational theological reality. The faith that saves and justifies, after all, proceeds from a basic understanding that only the Lord can give such a salvific gift to His creation.

As Gregg Allison has shown, the Augustinian conception of Scripture held sway in the church for several centuries following. In the latter half of the Middle Ages, though, the authority of the Roman Catholic Church gradually usurped the rule of Scripture. Catholic theologians like Guido Terreni located ultimate authority in the church. The church rendered the Scriptures authoritative based on its spiritual supremacy, Terreni argued. Thomas Aquinas worked from a different angle but similarly undermined the authority of the Word of God through his development of natural theology into a means by which mankind could know God apart from the Scriptures. Aquinas was more nuanced than theologians sometimes present him to be; in his *Summa Theologica*, he pointed out that special revelation came in order that “the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more securely” (I.1.1). Nonetheless, the brilliant “Dumb Ox” helped lead the church away from the only sure guide to faith and practice.

The rise of the conciliar movement in the High Middle Ages due to papal corruption and widespread spiritual malaise further contributed to the climate of detachment from biblical authority. Though the councils attempted to address real problems in the church, they failed to cede theological and spiritual preeminence to the Word of God alone. The ecclesial vineyard, long malnourished and even poisoned in soil, worsened in health. Soon, a bull would enter it. Nothing would ever be the same.

The Reformation Crisis

Martin Luther is known to us as the hallowed reformer who stares contentedly, even confidently, at us in his bejeweled portrait. The picture cannot, however, capture the *sturm und drang* of the man's life. Scarcely a historical figure has known such drama as Luther; scarcely a figure has been so used of God to change the course of human history. This revolution was not struck in the calm of a study, though.

After he challenged the church's teaching publicly through his 95 Theses, Luther became a marked man. The Pope at the time, Leo X, condemned Luther by comparing him to "a bull in the Lord's vineyard." The metaphor was intended to wound, but it seemed only to embolden the young biblical teacher. The debate between magisterium and monk simmered for several years until coming to a theological head at the Leipzig Disputation.

Originally, Eck had engaged Luther's Wittenberg University colleague Andreas Karlstadt, but Luther felt compelled to speak his piece. He traveled to Leipzig with great weight on his shoulders and soon found Eck a worthy opponent. Over the course of the disputation, Eck effectively backed Luther into a corner. He lulled Luther into admitting that the Pope had no ultimate doctrinal authority over the believer. He then drew out from the Wittenberg theologian that the Council of Constance had erred in repudiating the doctrine of Scripture championed by the Bohemian neophyte Jan Huss, his name then akin to a swear-word in the upper echelons of the Catholic Church. This admission suggested that the church, which supported the council's condemnation in full, had erred, and that the heretical doctrine of Huss, emphasizing the ultimate authority of Scripture, trumped church teaching. The crowd was stunned.

Luther was stunned as well. He had effectively just signed a lease on a papal prison cell, or, even worse, made an appointment with a gallows attendant. In public, before officials public and sacred (each concept, to paraphrase the movie *Hitch*, rather fluid in that day),

Luther had stated that the Word of God alone—*sola scriptura*—was the church's authority. It was the objective standard by which truth and falsehood were measured. It alone had the power to order life and worship. As a later maxim of the Reformation averred, it was the norm that norms all other norms. Others had argued similarly; Huss died with this concept on his lips, and Wycliffe risked life and limb to defend the very same idea. But in taking this stand, no other man had come to such a public crisis point. This moment bore almost unthinkable historical freight.

As Luther affirmed the *objective* nature of Scripture's authority, he felt the existential weight of this truth keenly, as both Roland Bainton's *Here I Stand* and Erik Erikson's *Luther* make clear. Scripture was the creator of the church, and Scripture was the guardian of the soul. He was captive to the Word, and could do nothing but affirm this reality. *Sola Scriptura*, we see, is not a doctrine that we hold lightly. It is an explosive idea, one that asserts precedence over all other systems and that destroys our natural sinful claim to self-rule. To affirm this great Reformational idea is to affirm in simple biblical terms that God is true, and every man is a liar.

The doctrine that many hold in principle, Martin Luther declared to the Pope's face. After that moment, much changed.

Post-Luther to Now

The doctrine of *sola scriptura* was clarified at a particularly dramatic moment in time. Luther was not, however, the sole figure to contribute to the unearthing of this scriptural idea. John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli each based their ministry in the authority of God's Word. Calvin conducted the work of reformation in Geneva, France, though he wished to do nothing but read and write in solace. God, and Guillaume Farel, had other plans.

Calvin founded his magisterial program in Geneva on the conviction that "the Scriptures are the only records in which God has been pleased to consign his truth to perpetual remembrance" and thus "have come from



heaven, as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them.”(I.VII.I) The Reformer went hard after the Catholic view. He suggested that the idea that the church lends Scripture epistemological weight by recognizing it as God’s Word was the product of “ravings.” On the contrary, “When the Church receives it, and gives it the stamp of her authority, she does not make that authentic which was otherwise doubtful or controverted but, acknowledging it as the truth of God, she, as in duty bounds shows her reverence by an unhesitating assent.”(I.VII.II)

In Zurich, the nexus of the Reformation in Switzerland,

Ulrich Zwingli advanced similar convictions. Zwingli was a warrior in every sense of the word, as Michael Reeves’s *The Unquenchable Flame* arrestingly demonstrates. He attacked sacral liturgy with the same ferocity with which he faced the legions of the Holy Roman Empire in battle (and didn’t exactly tiptoe around credobaptists, either). If our dictionaries included pictures of Reformers, Zwingli would occupy the “iconoclast” spot. Zwingli acted dramatically upon the conviction that Scripture alone orders the church. He stained the church walls white, forbade songs that were not directly biblical, and participated in the “Affair of the Sausages,” which we could



nominate for best-titled event in church history. All this manifested his conviction that the church ground its worship on Scripture alone. This principle proceeded from Zwingli's book-by-book preaching of the canon. Long before spiritual pragmatism and the crisis in meaning spurred a widespread embrace of expositional preaching, Zwingli practiced and taught it to his school of preachers.

The Reformation, we see, was a preaching movement, as Timothy George has shown. Zwingli and his continental colleagues wrote important treatises and lived through epochal events, but their Reformation

spread like wildfire through preaching. As various figures came to the conclusion that the Bible alone possessed the preeminence, they preached nothing other than the Bible. If pressed for the reasons behind this stance, the Reformers might have noted that beyond a divine mandate, the proof was in the preaching. The people who sat under Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and the thousands of men they trained soon found themselves with an unquenchable hunger and thirst for the Word of God.

Subsequent generations of Christians defended the authority of the Bible and acted upon this principle in

foundational ways. The Puritan movement, the “new light” Calvinists of the First Great Awakening like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, and the gentlemen theologians of Old Princeton all subscribed to this crucial article and—importantly—lived and worked according to it. There is much gold to strike in these and other groups; for our purposes, though, the words of B. B. Warfield, the foremost theologian to work on the doctrine of Scripture in the last two centuries, will suffice. In a day when liberal Protestantism was migrating religious authority from the Bible to the conscience, Warfield affirmed the Reformational view, locating authority in Christ. He founded the church

Not directly by his own hands, speaking the word of God, say for instance, in thunder-tones from heaven; but through the instrumentality of a body of apostles, chosen and trained by himself, endowed with gifts and graces from the Holy Ghost, and sent forth into the world as his authoritative agents for proclaiming a gospel which he placed within their lips and which is none the less his authoritative word....All the authority of the apostles stands behind the Scriptures, and all the authority of Christ behind the apostles. (SSW, 2:537, 109)

This lively and lucid statement summarized the perspective of Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander, and the other adherents of the grand tradition of Princeton. In God’s providence, this view, including and entailing such terms as propositional revelation, verbal-plenary inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy, represents the dominant position of modern evangelicalism.

Carl Henry, Harold Ockenga, E. J. Carnell, and their fellow “neo-evangelicals” tacked hard to this position

in the mid-twentieth century, boldly championing it to a culture vastly different from the Protestant heyday of the Reformers. In Henry’s capstone theological project, his six-volume *God, Revelation, and Authority*, he declared on first principles “that revelation is given in the form of verbal truths inerrantly conveyed in the inspired prophetic-apostolic writings.” Without this character,

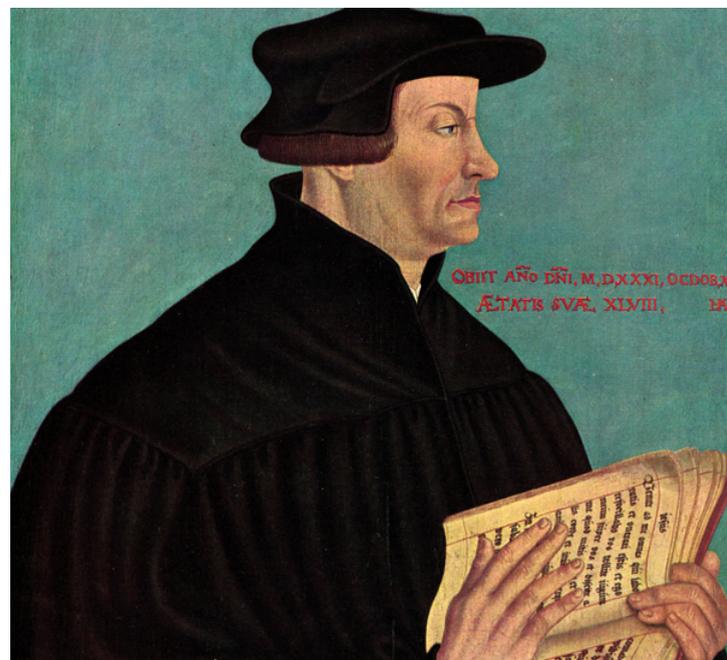
the Bible and its message “would lose its authority.” (77-78) Henry’s fellow apologist Francis Schaeffer concurred and grounded all his engagement with the spiritual pilgrims who flocked to his L’Abri study center on the idea that God is there (here!) and is not silent, to work off the title of his justly famed book.

The doctrine of the absolute authority of God found more formal expression when the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy wrote it into

the watershed Chicago Statement, produced in 1978 by a pan-evangelical gathering. A high view of biblical authority anchored the Conservative Resurgence of the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s; this same view animates the booming “young, restless, reformed” movement of the present.

Challenges to Sola Scriptura

In recent days, we have witnessed a number of skirmishes on this doctrine. Sociologist Christian Smith of the University of Notre Dame has long been a friend to evangelicalism; his sociological work has offered the church and the Christian academy many valuable insights. If he earned a nickel any time a pastor or professor used the word “moralistic therapeutic deism,” he would be on a Bahaman beach right now. Smith’s latest book, *The Bible Made Impossible*, reverses this prior course. Smith charges that many evangelicals hold to a doctrine of “solo Scriptura,” the idea that



only Scripture should factor into textual interpretation, not creeds, traditions, or confessions. Two responses are in order. Firstly, Smith asks the wrong question of *sola Scriptura*, making it about interpretation rather than authority. Secondly, as pastor-theologian Kevin DeYoung has pointed out, there are likely some out there in the evangelical hinterlands who hold this view. Most evangelicals, however, do not hold this view. From the Reformers on, evangelicals of varying kinds have used various documents and historical considerations in exegesis and doctrinal formulation. Scripture, however, is both our most significant resource and our final authority. This is both the traditional and the contemporary conception of the Reformation-derived doctrine of biblical authority.

The matter of supposed scriptural errancy presents another challenge, ultimately, to *sola Scriptura*. In books like *Inspiration and Incarnation* and *God's Word in Human Words*, respectively, Peter Enns and Kenton Sparks have each suggested in their own way that our Bible contains errors and even repugnant ideas, a perspective affirmed by both Brian McLaren and Rob Bell. Though these figures locate their discussion primarily in the realm of textual material, their collective program offers a significant challenge to the doctrine of the Bible's absolute authority. In questioning different passages of Scripture and discarding biblically derived teachings, these diverse scholars and pastors suggest, whether explicitly or inexplicitly, that the modern mind or conscience serve as a filter of the Word of God. Such theologizing suggests that the Bible, bearing errors, cannot be trusted. If this sounds like a slippery slope, it is not. It is more accurately a water-slide.

The doctrine of Scripture's authority is often challenged, but not always directly. That is to say, when core evangelical creedal affirmations like inerrancy or infallibility are opposed, so too is the doctrine of authority. Inerrancy tends to draw more attention than *sola Scriptura*, but opposition of whatever kind to inerrancy inevitably relates to the doctrine of biblical

authority. In addition, scriptural authority is challenged in less directly principal terms as well. When Christians locate their authority on matters of doctrine or practical spirituality (decision-making, e.g.) in a mystical experience, they offer a personal counter to the authority and consequent sufficiency of the Bible. We

Inerrancy tends to draw more attention than *sola Scriptura*, but opposition of whatever kind to inerrancy inevitably relates to the doctrine of biblical authority.

all need guidance from God's Spirit, and God moves in mysterious ways, but we are often tempted to overlook biblical wisdom and its application to all of life and to substitute our feelings and mystical experiences as our guiding light. I would suggest that the church might benefit from a fresh appropriation of the plentiful store of wisdom found in God's Word. Perhaps sermon series and sustained teaching on Christocentric wisdom might restore evangelical confidence in the divine nature and direct applicability of the Bible.

Conclusion

To study the doctrine of biblical authority in even a cursory way—as we have done—is, with Luther, to come into contact with a profound doctrinal choice. Luther articulated his confidence in God and His Word before a packed house. He sweated his choice out in a way that you and I may not. But we must not miss the reality of the German Reformer's decision. We must all answer the question, *What is your authority?* We all face a choice between God and Satan. Is God true? Has He spoken to us? Or is He silent? Is He well-intentioned, perhaps, but untrustworthy?

The doctrine of biblical authority calls forth a confession, a statement of belief, that every person must answer. As Christians gripped by God's mighty hand, we know that God and God alone is our Lord. Christ proclaimed that He was not only true, but Truth (John 14:6). The matter of biblical authority was initially a formal one, a doctrinal box to check. At its core,

however, we know from Scripture and the history it birthed that our affirmation of Scripture's absolute authority is more than a sentence to underline. As with all of God's truth, *sola Scriptura* bears existential weight. We assent to it of necessity, from obedience to God's Word. In doing so, we make a personal confession to all the principalities and powers of this world that God alone is our King, our Sovereign, and

that every other would-be authority is false. Here we stand; we can do no other.

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Drowning in Study Bibles

By J.V. Fesko

I recently received a Christian bookstore catalog in the mail and began flipping through its pages, naturally. One thing I noticed was how large the Bible section was. Among the many standard translations, KJV, NKJV, NIV, TNIV, NAS, CEB, ESV, RSV, NRSV, there was a glut of niche market Bibles: the KJV 1611 Bible, the KJV 400th Anniversary Study Bible, the Personal-Size Giant-Print Reference Bible, the Super Giant-Print, the Large-Print Thinline Bible, the Life Application Bible, the KJV Evidence Bible, the KJV Companion Bible, the KJV Thompson Chain-Reference Study Bible, the KJV Matthew Henry Study Bible, of course the Old Scofield Study Bible, the ESV Study Bible, the ESV Reformation Study Bible, the NKJV Scofield Study Bible, the Ryrie Study Bible, the Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible, the Archaeological Study Bible, the Life Principles Daily Bible, the Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible, the Maxwell Leadership Bible, the Max Lucado Life Lessons Study Bible, the Chronological Study Bible, the MacArthur Study Bible, the NLT Study Bible, the NCSB Study Bible, the Apologetics Study Bible, the Life in the Spirit Study Bible, the Quest Study Bible, the NIV Study Bible, the Daily Bible in Chronological Order, the NIV Women's Study Bible, the New Men's Devotional Bible, the Couples' Devotional Bible, the Soldier's Bible, the Woman's Study Bible, the American Patriot's Bible, the Message, the Message Remix 2.0, the NLT New Believer's Bible, the NLT Life Recovery Bible, the Amplified Bible, the Amplified Parallel Bible, the Adventure Bible for Children, the Backpack Bible, t

the NIV 2.52 Boys Bible, the Seek and Find Bible, the Teen Study Bible, the Metal Bible, the Bible in 90 Days Bible, the One-Year Bible, the Daily Walk Bible, the Geneva Bible 1560 Edition, the Complete Jewish Bible, and the Essential Evangelical Parallel Bible.

I really wonder how many Bibles are purchased each year and how many of them sit untouched? As a pastor, I would go on pastoral visits and made a point not to bring a Bible with me. When I wanted to refer to a passage, I would ask the people I was visiting for their Bible. I wanted to see where the Bible was kept—in the car, by the nightstand, on a shelf, or could it even be found? In other words, do we even read the Bibles we already own? Another thought crossed my mind in terms of how marketing is shaping the church. When God gave his people his holy word, he did not divide it up according to market demographics. Yet, how much influence do publishers have upon the church when they create a Bible that is not for the church but for one small niche of the church; teens, boys, girls, women, men, soldiers, etc? How is a minister supposed to preach a message to the whole church if people come in with expectations created, not by the Word, but by marketing executives? Sometimes I think it would be a very good thing for Bible sales to drop, not because people are not buying Bibles, but because they are reading the Bibles they already own. They should give their extra Bibles to those whom they witness.

From the Horse's Mouth

What is your all-time favorite book on the doctrine of scripture?

Thomas Schreiner

The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible By B. B. Warfield.



“It is enormously difficult to choose one book on scripture over another, but I choose Warfield because it is a classic, and it is a classic for a reason. Too often people note classics in footnotes but don’t read them. So, take up and read!”

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Paul Helm

‘Fundamentalism’ and the Word of God By J. I. Packer

“J. I. Packer’s *‘Fundamentalism’ and the Word of God* is still going strong after 50 years. The beauty of the book is that it sets the Warfieldian doctrine of scripture in a proper theological context, in prose that Jim Packer has become renowned for. It offers wisdom on authority, on faith and reason, tradition and much else.”



Timothy George

Holy Scripture By G. C. Berkouwer



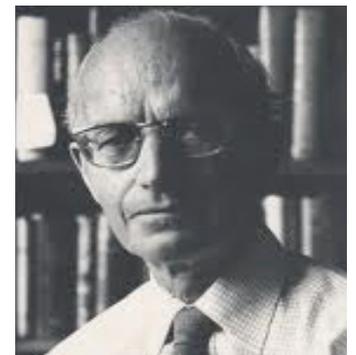
“While I have significant differences with Berkouwer’s doctrine of Scripture, I regard his method of doing theology as superb. I would call it a *responsible* theology—responsible above all to the biblical revelation, but also in dialogue with both the early church and the heritage of the Reformation (in his case, Dutch Reformed).”

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K. Erik Thoennes

Christ and the Bible By John Wenham

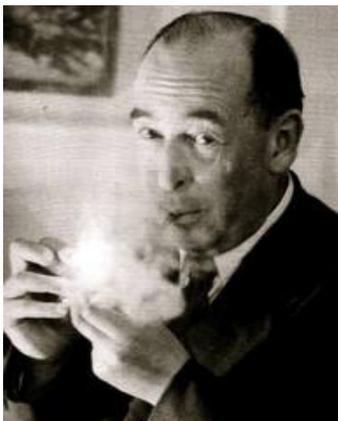
“The ultimate authority in the life of the Christian is Jesus Christ himself. So, believers need to have the same understanding of Scripture that Jesus has. Wenham’s book shows that submitting to Jesus means submitting to the inspiration, authority, clarity, and inerrancy, of the Bible.”

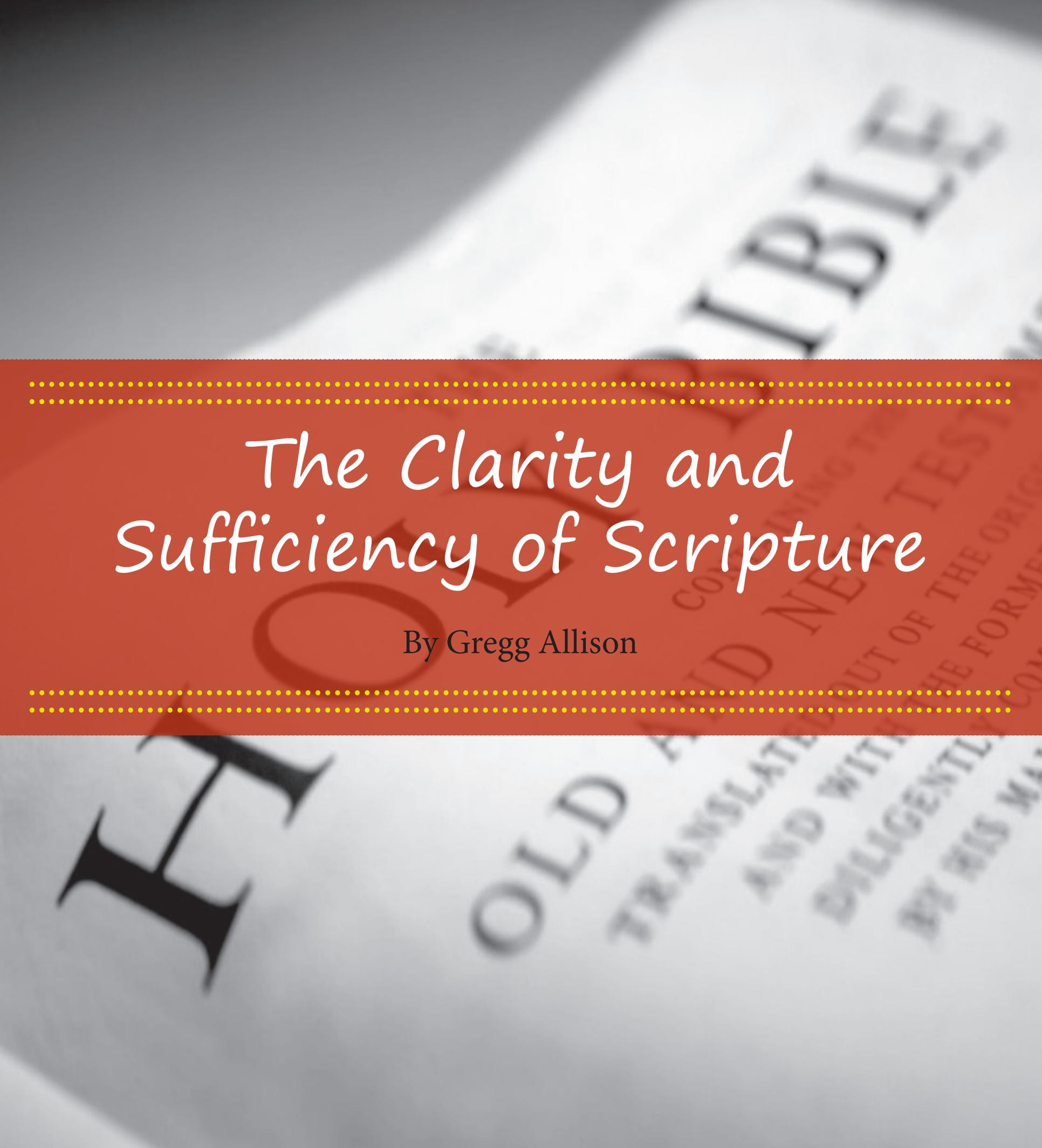


Gerald Bray

‘Fern Seed and Elephants’ By C. S. Lewis

“The reason is that Lewis was a seasoned literary critic who saw right through the pretensions of modern liberal theology and attacked them with an authority that only someone who really knows his subject can command. What is more, his essay is short, sweet and readable, which makes a pleasant change from so much that is written on the subject.”





The Clarity and
Sufficiency of Scripture

By Gregg Allison



Just as we can describe the characteristics or attributes of God—our triune God is self-existent, omnipotent, eternal, holy, omnipresent, truthful, and so forth—so we can rehearse the characteristics or attributes of Scripture: canonical Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, wholly true in all that it affirms (inerrant), authoritative, necessary, powerful to save fallen people and transform lives, sufficient, and clear. While some of these attributes are familiar to us, others are not so, and for this reason in this article I will concentrate on the sufficiency and clarity of the Word of God

The Sufficiency of Scripture

According to Wayne Grudem, “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God which he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”¹ When Moses composed the Pentateuch, his divinely inspired writing was sufficient for the people of Israel at his time, directing them to be justified by God’s grace appropriated by faith (e.g., Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom 4), encouraging belief in God and his provision (e.g., Exod 14), detailing how to please God (e.g., Exod 20:1-21), and teaching the fear of the Lord (e.g., Deut 31:9-13). As God raised up the prophets and added to the Pentateuch, the expanded canon of the Hebrew Bible—now with the historical books, the writings, and the prophets—became the sufficient Word of God for the later people of Israel. Following the incarnation of the Son of God, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to write four Gospels, a narrative of the church’s expansion, numerous letters, and an apocalypse, so we now have the completed canon consisting of both the Old and New Testaments, which is God’s sufficient Word for the church. It contains everything unbelievers need in order to be saved, and everything Christ followers need in order to be “complete, equipped for

every good work” (2 Tim 3:17), or entirely prepared to be, act, think, feel, reason, purpose, and serve so as to please God fully.

To be more specific, the sufficiency of Scripture is not absolute: it does not contain all theological truth, as Moses affirms: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut 29:29). Much truth about God and his ways remains secret because God in his wisdom and mercy does not reveal it; Scripture is not sufficient for those matters because it does not treat them—and we should not speculate about them. But whatever God does reveal, he reveals to his people so as to provide all they need to know—Scripture is sufficient for the purposes God intended for it to accomplish. Its sufficiency, therefore, is limited according to the divine intention.

Evangelicals, as heirs to the Reformation, champion this characteristic of Scripture over against the Catholic Church’s denial of its sufficiency.² For the Catholic Church, the one source of divine revelation has two aspects: written Scripture and sacred Tradition, or the teachings of Jesus Christ that he orally communicated to his apostles, who in turn orally communicated them to their successors, the bishops, who maintain this sacred Tradition in the church. Accordingly, Scripture is not sufficient; for people to be saved and live lives that are fully pleasing to God, they need Scripture plus Tradition, which together constitute divine revelation.³ Catholics, then, must believe that when their priest or bishop consecrates the bread and the wine mixed with water during the Eucharistic celebration, they become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they must look forward to their souls being purged of the taint of sin through suffering in purgatory before they will go to be with the Lord in heaven (there are exceptions to this future in purgatory both in the case of

“Christians should reject all writings that claim to be additions to the sixty-six books of the Protestant Bible, because such addendums—e.g., the Apocrypha of the Catholic Church’s Old Testament, the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, the *Book of Mormon*—violate the sufficiency of Scripture by adding to it.”

people who die in mortal sin and in the case of saints). Moreover, Catholics must believe certain dogmas about Mary—that she was immaculately conceived in the womb of her mother⁴ and, because she never sinned (evidenced by her perpetual virginity), her body was immediately assumed (taken up) into heaven when Mary died.⁵

Over against this Catholic theology, evangelicals reject sacred Tradition as being part of divine revelation and insist on the sufficiency of Scripture—Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*) is the Word of God and fully equips the people of God.

Practically speaking, this attribute of Scripture means that when Christians have searched out all that the Bible affirms about any particular doctrinal issue they are pondering or moral quandary they are facing, they should move ahead with confidence and act on this sufficient truth, not looking over their shoulder wondering if more truth is somewhere out there to be discovered. Also, Christians should reject all writings that claim to be additions to the sixty-six books of the Protestant Bible, because such addendums—e.g., the Apocrypha of the Catholic Church’s Old Testament, the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, the *Book of Mormon*—violate the sufficiency of Scripture by adding to it. Additionally, Christians should never elevate private impressions from the Lord or prophetic revelations delivered in the church (e.g., 1 Cor 14:26ff) to the level of biblical authority; such promotion contradicts the sufficiency of Scripture. Furthermore, Christians should be extremely cautious when reading popular-level books like *The Shack*, *Jesus Calling*, and *Ninety Minutes in Heaven*, thinking that these writings help them to know more about the Trinity, Jesus’ character and ways, and what happens after death. Moreover, Christians must never consider some attitude or action to be sin unless Scripture explicitly or implicitly indicates

it as wrong. Legalistic rules and regulations that many consider as evils in addition to the sins outlined in Scripture do not and cannot make Christians more holy (Col 2:16-23), because God does not grant his grace to overcome sins that are not affirmed as such in his sufficient Word. Finally, Christians must never embrace beliefs about God and his ways, and must never seek to obey commands about how to live so as to please God, if those beliefs and commands are not found in Scripture. The all too common notion that, even after confession of their sins (1 John 1:9), Christians need to placate God by engaging in good deeds and/or must stimulate his good pleasure toward them by working to earn his favor, is exposed as nothing more than hopeless self-righteousness that contradicts the sufficiency of Scripture.⁶

The Clarity of Scripture

The clarity of Scripture, simply put, means that Scripture is intelligible or understandable for Christians. In more detail, clarity “is a property of Scripture as a whole and of each portion of Scripture whereby it is comprehensible to all believers who possess the normal acquired ability to understand oral communication and/or written discourse, regardless of their gender, age, education, language, or cultural background.”⁷ That is, both men and women, young and old, the uneducated and seminary graduates, English and Spanish and Mandarin and Swahili and Arabic speakers, and WASPS and Slavs and Shona and aboriginals and boomers and gen-Xers and millennials—all can understand Scripture, with this one normally acquired prerequisite: they must be able to understand oral communication if Scripture is being read (or broadcast) to them, or they must have learned to read so that they can interpret a Bible that has been translated into their language. “However, the level of people’s comprehension of perspicuous Scripture is appropriate to and usually varies proportionately with

various factors, including, but not limited to, spiritual maturity.”⁸ Generally speaking, more mature Christians will understand Scripture better, though exceptions are not unknown: a new believer shares what she has discovered in her personal reading of Scripture that morning and expresses an insight into that biblical passage that her mentor has never before seen. To take another example, Christians who live in animistic societies usually possess a more adequate and proper worldview to understand the many passages of Scripture that treat angelic visitations, demonic mastery, and exorcisms than are believers who live in the rationalistic Western world (which is so dismissive of such realities).

Additionally, the clarity of Scripture “is always affirmed in the context of a believing community, a context which assumes the assistance of others in attaining a more precise understanding of Scripture, and [clarity] requires a dependence on the Holy Spirit for Scripture to be grasped and calls for a responsive obedience to what is understood.”⁹ The Lord has not only designed his Word in such a way that it is comprehensible, but he has also established for the church a teaching office—the eldership, or office of pastor (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; Eph 4:11)—that helps Christians better understand Scripture. With this human assistance is coupled the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:10-16), who opens and illumines the minds of Christians both to understand the Word of God and to apply it properly. This last point underscores the fact that understanding Scripture is not just a matter of intellectually grasping its meaning, but it entails obeying its commands, heeding its warnings, trusting its promises, enacting its directives, and so forth. Finally, this attribute of clarity “includes the comprehensibility of the way of salvation to unbelievers who are aided by the Holy Spirit, and it does not exclude some type of cognition of Scripture in general by unbelievers.”¹⁰ As people who are not yet redeemed move toward Christ through the prevailing influence of the Holy Spirit, the gospel message that previously had been utter foolishness to them (1 Cor 2:14) begins to make sense—becomes clear—not because the good news itself was not clear to begin with, but because an internal clarity is

being fostered by divine grace so they can understand and embrace the clear message (1 Cor 2: 1-5, 15-16). And even rank unbelievers, if they pay close attention to Scripture and interpret it carefully, can understand it because it is clearly written. Obviously, at the end of the day, they walk away from what they understand, because they do not welcome the truth but suppress it instead. For example, they can write excellent commentaries on Paul’s doctrine of justification by grace alone and faith alone from his letter to the Romans, working through word studies, attending to grammatical and syntactical structures, following the apostle’s flow of argument, situating it in its historical context, and much more. Such commentaries can be

“The clarity of Scripture should not be misunderstood to mean that Scripture is *easy to understand*, only that it is *understandable*.”

helpful resources for Christians, even though the non-believers who wrote them reject their own personal need for justification or go about attaining it through improper means. They understood Scripture, even though they rebuff its message, which is clear in and of itself.

Christians affirm the clarity of Scripture because the biblical writings “are characterized by the presumption of continued intelligibility even as those writings travel far from their original audience and their original historical, literary and rhetorical settings.”¹¹ Two examples of this principle will suffice: from a forward-looking perspective, the deuteronomic covenant, as evidenced by Moses’ prescription of a regular reading of it before all the people of Israel (Deut 30:11-14; 31:9-13) “anticipated its own intelligibility, abiding validity and applicability for the people of Israel throughout successive generations of people and time periods, in different socio-politico-cultural milieus, and in varying religious/spiritual climates.”¹² From a backward-looking perspective, in several of his writings (e.g., Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:1-11), “the apostle Paul reflects

on Old Testament Scripture and its utility for Christian believers. These are people far removed from those writings in terms of centuries of time and political, economic, cultural and linguistic distance, to mention nothing of the tremendous religious transformation from Judaism to Christianity that had taken place. His unadorned allusions to Old Testament Scripture demonstrate Paul's assumption that, despite these vast changes and distances, his audience was still capable of grasping the meaning of the Old Testament writings. More importantly still, he notes that it is especially New Covenant believers who are capable of comprehending them."¹³ Accordingly, it should be noted that even when Peter underscores what readers of Paul's letters still experience today—"there are some things in them that are hard to understand" (2 Pet 3:16)—he does not indicate that these difficult matters are impossible to grasp, and he never prohibits Christians from taking on the task of understanding Scripture, even when its interpretation requires hard work. The clarity of Scripture should not be misunderstood to mean that Scripture is *easy to understand*, only that it is *understandable*.¹⁴

The practical benefits of the clarity of Scripture are two: first, as Christians return home after a long and frenetic day of work, eat dinner, clean up afterwards, open their mail, then move into the living room and take a seat on the couch, they look on the coffee table and spy their open Bible. Bone tired yet eager for some readymade refreshment, they are tempted to listen to the latest sermon of Mark Driscoll or Tim Keller—nothing wrong with these resources!—downloaded onto their iPhone. The clarity of Scripture encourages them to pick up their Bible and read it with the expectation that they will understand it and thus be nourished by it and blessed by God. Secondly, those Christians should encourage other Christians to read and study Scripture with that same expectation—that they, too, will understand it and thus be nourished by it and blessed by God. This reality is so because of the clarity of Scripture.

Two attributes of Scripture are its sufficiency and clarity.

Though little is said today about these characteristics, their biblical, theological, and historical support is very strong, and their implications for following the Lord Jesus Christ are monumental.

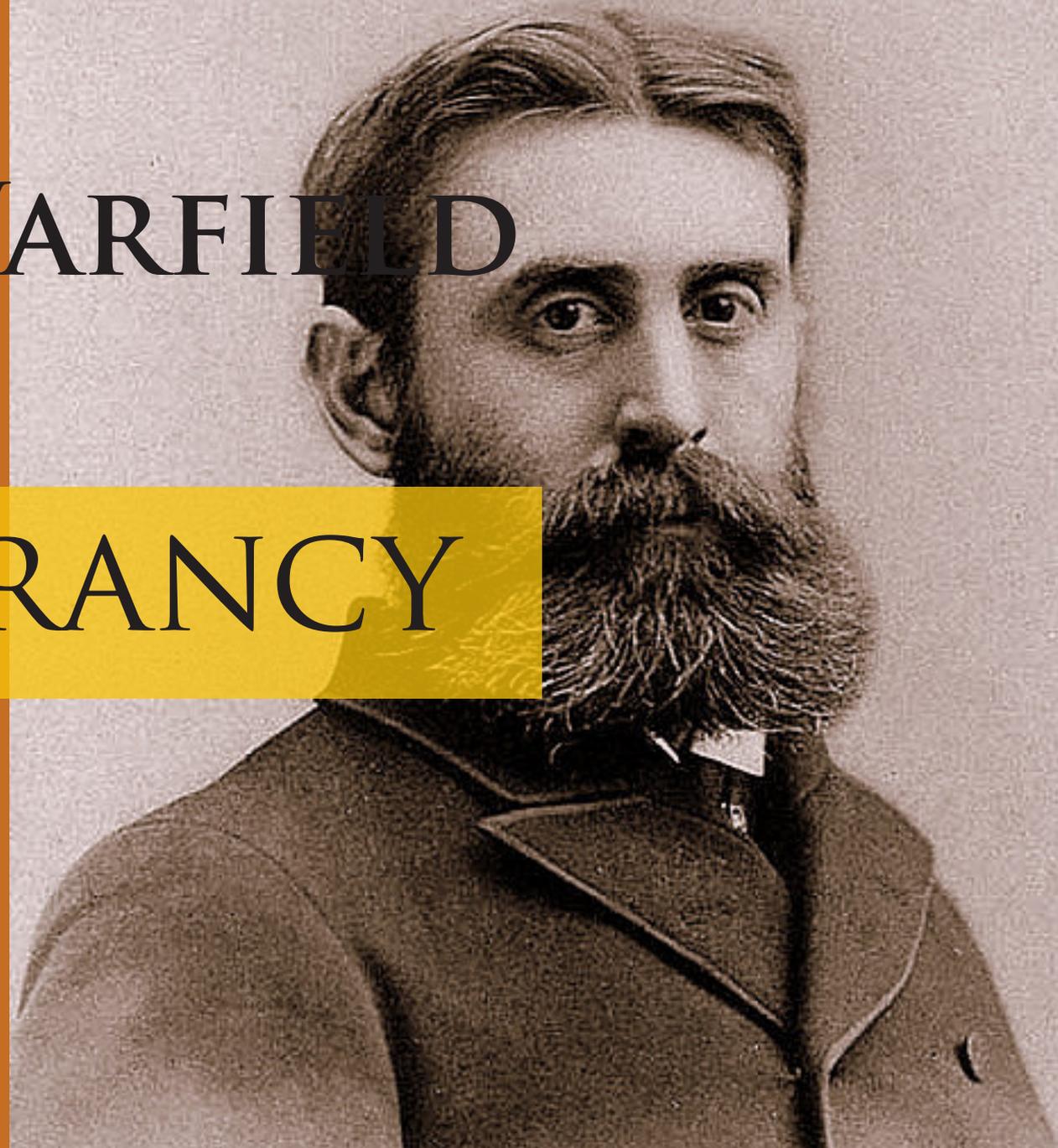
Endnotes

- 1 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994, 2000), 127.
- 2 For the historical development of this doctrine of Scripture, see: Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011), 142-61.
- 3 See Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, ch. 2.7-10. Available at http://www.catholicprimer.org/papal/dei_verbum.pdf.
- 4 *Ineffabilis Deus* (December 8, 1854). Available at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ineff.htm>.
- 5 *Munificentissimus Deus* (November 1, 1950). Available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-vii_apc_19501101_munificentissimus-deus_en.html.
- 6 For further discussion of these applications, see: Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 131-36.
- 7 Gregg R. Allison, "The Protestant Doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture: A Reformulation on the Basis of Biblical Teaching," diss. Ph.D. (Deerfield, Ill.: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995), 516-17.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid., 556.
- 12 Ibid., 557.
- 13 Ibid., 558.
- 14 For a systematic theological development of the clarity of Scripture, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 105-15; for its historical development, see: Allison, *Historical Theology*, 120-41.

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B. B. WARFIELD ON INNERANCY

By Fred Zaspel



The doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is so closely linked to the name of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921) that they sometimes seem nearly synonymous. This is not because Warfield originated the doctrine, of course, although some have mistakenly charged him with that. Inerrancy and Warfield belong together, rather, simply because it was Warfield who gave this doctrine its fullest statement and most thorough defense.

At various points in the history of the church God has raised up a man to speak to the specific needs of the hour. And so there is Augustine, the theologian of sin and grace. He did not originate the doctrine, but his exposition of this doctrine was a watershed moment in the church's understanding of it. Likewise there is Anselm, the theologian of the atonement — the one who spelled out so clearly the substitutionary nature of Christ's death as a penal satisfaction for sin. Similarly there is Luther, the theologian of justification by faith.

And so on. It is in this sense that B.B. Warfield is the theologian of inspiration and inerrancy.

The exposition and defense of this doctrine that Warfield gave was a milestone in the history of the church. As Warfield himself demonstrated at great length, his teaching was nothing other than the understanding concerning Scripture the church has always held. But no one before him had mounted such a massive argument in its defense or provided such an extensive exegetical ground for it. Indeed, in all the discussion on inspiration since, very little has been added to what Warfield said a century ago. And all sides recognize that whether in agreement with Warfield's position or not, we have not completed our study of the doctrine until we have studied Warfield carefully.

For his own part, the inspiration of Scripture was not Warfield's "center." Nor was it the area of Christian doctrine that occupied most of his attention. The person and work of Christ was clearly his center of gravity and the single largest division of his literary output. And Warfield stood to answer the advances of the "new theology" at every point. But the inspiration and origin of Scripture was in many ways the defining issue of the day, and Warfield was the one God raised up to speak to the issue. He is the theologian of inspiration.

Historical Setting

Warfield's career took place in the hey-day of theological liberalism, a movement born in Germany and marked chiefly by rationalism and naturalism — that is, a rejection of external authority and supernaturalism. The various "critical" methods of approach to Scripture had taken deep root, calling into question the historical reliability of Scripture and, therefore, its divine origin. Thousands of American theological students of the day (Warfield among them) spent time in German universities, in turn, "imported" this new brand of "Christianity" to America.

In 1880 the opposing forces within the Presbyterian Church, best represented by Union Theological

Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary, joined in the creation of the *Presbyterian Review*, edited jointly by Charles A. Briggs (1841-1913) and Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886). It was a marriage that could never last, but before the divorce Briggs and Hodge published a series of eight articles addressing the new issue of Biblical criticism, four from each viewpoint. The first of these was the landmark "Inspiration" (1881) by Warfield and A. A. Hodge. The two parties become increasingly defined both within the denomination and in the larger "Christian" scene, and eventually Briggs was suspended from Presbyterian ministry, and Union Theological Seminary left with him. Warfield played no small role in holding back the advance of the new views in the Presbyterian Church, but within a few years of his death his arguments had failed to hold sway.

“Warfield finds great humor in those few who attempt to use the Bible to prove that it teaches otherwise—an appeal to the authority of Scripture to prove that it is not authoritative!”

This was the larger religious scene when Warfield embarked on his theological career, and from the outset his commitment to the veracity of Scripture and utter confidence in its complete reliability was firm and pronounced. Interestingly, the earliest sample of Warfield's theology we possess is given to sounding this theme that in so many ways marked his career. In an 1876 sermon transcribed and published in the newspaper the twenty-five year old seminary graduate took his text from Romans 3:4 — “Let God be true and every man a liar.” It was a topical sermon that expresses an utter confidence in God's written Word and this in the face of the various objections, criticisms, and problems that have been brought against it.

In 1880 Warfield chose for his inaugural lecture at Western Seminary the topic “Inspiration and Criticism.” Lamenting the contemporary doctrinal defection even

within his own denomination he labors to demonstrate that the attacks against Scripture have yet to prove anything against it. Then came his famous 1881 “Inspiration,” co-authored with A.A. Hodge, a work that gained him wide recognition and established a course that would mark his life and career forever, culminating in perhaps 1,500 published pages devoted to the theme and a body of material that stands still today as the high-watermark in the exposition of this doctrine.

Warfield on Inspiration

In more contemporary Christian literature on inspiration frequent mention is made of Warfield’s extensive treatment of the doctrine of inerrancy. This is true but only in a secondary sense. It does not quite capture Warfield’s own burden in the debate. Indeed, it is surprising to many to learn that mentions of “inerrancy” are very seldom found in Warfield. He is very concerned for the doctrine of inerrancy, of course, and he speaks often of the Bible’s “trustworthiness” and “authority” and so on. But the focus throughout his writing is not on the narrow question of inerrancy. His attention is given, rather, to the *divine origin and character* of the Bible — the doctrine of “inspiration.” That is to say, Warfield’s over-riding concern is to demonstrate that the Bible is the very Word of God himself. Once it is established that the Bible is God’s Word, then the question of inerrancy-infallibility-trustworthiness-authority falls immediately into place. As he says in his 1880 inaugural lecture at Western Seminary, “Inspiration and Criticism,” inspiration is

a doctrine which claims that by a special, supernatural, extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, the sacred writers have been guided in their writing in such a way, as while their humanity was not superseded, it was yet so dominated that their words became at the same time the words of God, *and thus, in every case and all alike, absolutely infallible* (italics added).

More often and more formally he defined inspiration as

a supernatural influence [sometimes “superintendence”] exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.

Consistently Warfield presses the truth of the divine origin of Scripture, and it is this more fundamental concern that occupies his attention. And for this foundational concern he famously provided a massive exegetical defense.

One primary dimension of this defense, of course, was a comprehensive analysis of the major statements of the doctrine of inspiration found in the New Testament. Three passages stand out. The first is 2 Timothy 3:16, the primary contribution of which is its description of Scripture as “God-breathed” — “All Scripture is breathed out by God.”

Warfield quibbles with the older translation, “*inspired* of God.” The point is not that God breathed *into* the Biblical writings, thus giving them a divine quality. Rather, the point is that Scripture itself is breathed *out* by God. Which is to say, the Bible — “all” of it — is God’s spoken Word.

Second Peter 1:18-21 enforces and extends our understanding of 2 Timothy 3:16 by stating just *how* God “inspired” or “breathed out” Scripture.

We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.

Warfield highlights two assertions here. First, an emphatic denial: Scripture does not find its ultimate

origin in anything human. And second, an equally emphatic affirmation: Scripture was written as a direct result of the Spirit of God at work “carrying along” its human authors. *God produced the Scriptures by means of men who spoke and wrote under his direct influence.* Indeed, God did not merely “lead” the Biblical writers or “guide,” “direct,” or even “control” them — all of which could rightly be said. Peter goes further: the Biblical writers were taken up by the Holy Spirit and brought by his power to the goal of his own choosing. In short, the words of the Biblical authors were, in fact, the very words of God.

“His outlook was very clearly this: what Scripture says is true, and everything that contradicts it is false. How could it be otherwise?”

Warfield is careful to emphasize another detail of the passage. In verse 18 Peter is referring to his experience on the mount of transfiguration, referring to things he himself saw and heard. But valuable as eye-witness testimony is, he says, Scripture is “more sure,” for it is the product not of man but of God.

Finally, in John 10:35 Jesus himself insists on the complete reliability of Scripture, asserting plainly that “Scripture cannot be broken.” No word of Scripture can ever fail, he says. It’s claims and assertions are true at every point and can never be otherwise.

Here is Warfield’s doctrine of inerrancy in a nutshell. But he is careful to stress that these passages do not stand alone. Nor does our doctrine of inspiration rest on them alone. Because of their direct and comprehensive brevity these passages hold a prominent place in our learning and statement of the doctrine. But we could establish the doctrine of inspiration as well without them, Warfield insists. These are but culminating statements that gather together in brief statement the claim Scripture everywhere makes.

Warfield demonstrates this endlessly. A few samples will have to do for now. First, there is the oft-repeated declaration of the prophets, “Thus says the Lord” (Isa. 7:7, *et al*) perhaps best described by David: “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). Then there is the telling observation that New Testament writers regularly cite Old Testament Scripture with the introductory formula, “God says.” Or the New Testament writers can just as easily cite sayings of God in the Old Testament with the introductory words, “Scripture says.” They can say “Scripture says,” “Moses says,” “Isaiah says,” “God says,” “the Holy Spirit says,” or “he [God] says” interchangeably. These examples are seemingly endless, and Warfield makes much of them. The conclusion is inescapable: “What Scripture says, God says.”

Moreover, the New Testament writers do not always cite Scripture in the past tense as having “spoken.” Over and over again they cite Scripture with the words “the Holy Spirit says” (Heb. 3:7) and “he [God] says” (Heb. 1:8). This language reflects the conviction on the part of the New Testament writers that Scripture is “the ever-speaking Word of God.”

This conviction is seen further in the reverential titles Scripture bears: “Scripture,” “holy Scripture,” “the sacred writings,” “the oracles of God,” “law,” even “Prophets,” and so on. Speaking from this conviction Jesus insists that Scripture “*must* be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44-45). He settles all debate with the all-authoritative, “It is written.” He shames those who are in error with the simple rebuke, “Have you not read?” Likewise when he says “You are wrong, because you do not know the Scriptures” (Matt. 22:29), he reveals his settled understanding that Scripture speaks with indefectible authority — as Warfield summarizes it, “he who rightly knows the Scriptures cannot err.”

This conviction of our Lord was shared, of course, by his apostles, and this same kind of evidence permeates their writings. “What Scripture says, God says” and

therefore simply cannot “speak in vain” (James 4:5). It is the very Word of God and, therefore, is altogether reliable at every point.

Finally, the apostles consider their own writings as an addition to those of the Old Testament and on par with it. Space does not allow us to trace out Warfield’s arguments here. But the evidence is again seemingly endless. The apostles are Jesus’ chosen and appointed spokesmen, promised and given the Holy Spirit for



exactly this task (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15; 17:8, 18, 20-21). And their claim that their message is in fact the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13) and that they speak for Christ (1 Tim. 6:3) by the Spirit of God (1 Pet. 1:11) marks their writings everywhere. Hence, they designate each other’s writings as “Scripture” (2 Pet. 3:16-17).

Why Do We Believe in Inspiration?

After all this, still Warfield is not done. He has not yet reached the bottom of his argument. All this exegetical defense is necessary and valuable, and so he provides it at great length. However, on one level all this work is but an exhibition of the obvious, for anyone who reads the Bible even casually recognizes immediately that it claims inspiration for itself. No one can read the Bible and miss this. And Warfield loves to point out that even his opponents, the critics, acknowledge this. (But he finds great humor in those few who attempt to use the Bible to prove that it teaches otherwise — an appeal to the authority of Scripture to prove that it is not authoritative!) The Bible’s claim to be an inspired book is a self-evident fact.

And so on one level we believe the Bible to be inspired because it claims to be inspired. But here Warfield stresses a very important point; indeed, this is for him the most basic consideration in the entire discussion, what he insists is *the* deciding factor in the debate. Opponents in Warfield’s day and since have often charged that his view is established on circular reasoning — we believe the Bible is inspired because it claims to be inspired. Warfield’s answer is not the answer commonly given today. Perhaps the most common answer offered today to this conundrum is that this kind of “circular” reasoning is necessary in any argument for ultimate authority. That is, if we claim, for example, that reason is the ultimate authority we must by the nature of the case appeal to reason in order to establish our argument. If we claim that history is the ultimate authority, we must appeal to history to prove it. And so on. And so any claim to ultimate authority necessarily attempts to build an argument that seems to assume the conclusion it is attempting to prove.

There is something to all this, of course. But Warfield makes no use of this line of reasoning at all. He reaches back one step further. We do not believe the Bible is inspired merely because the Bible teaches that it is inspired. That does not state our thinking quite precisely enough. Ultimately, we believe that the Bible is inspired

of God because Jesus taught us so. We believe in the inspiration of Scripture on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who could doubt that Jesus and his appointed spokesmen the apostles taught this doctrine? On any view of the Bible's origin and on any reading of history it is self-evident that the inspiration and divine origin of Scripture is a doctrine given to the church — as Warfield would often say it, a doctrine authoritatively “imposed” on the church — by the Lord Jesus and his apostles, whom he endorsed.

We cannot reject the historic doctrine of inspiration, then, without also rejecting Christ. It is all or nothing. This, for Warfield, is “The Real Problem of Inspiration.” He pressed this point often. We cannot have the Jesus of the Bible while rejecting the Bible of Jesus. It is all or nothing. The ultimate ground of our doctrine of inspiration, our supreme authority, is no less than the Lord from heaven.

This is the ground on which the church doctrine of inspiration rests: the Lord Jesus and his appointed apostles taught it and gave it to the church. And so rejecting the doctrine is simply not a Christian option.

This is important for us to understand in order to appreciate Warfield's persistent insistence that this doctrine of inspiration is “the church doctrine.” That is, it is the doctrine the church has universally held from the beginning. This is important, first, to counter the attack of Briggs and company that Warfield's teaching was a novelty. It was no novelty at all, and Warfield traces it back to the church's earliest days.¹¹

But this point is important to Warfield for another reason. If this doctrine of inspiration is, in fact, the doctrine held universally by the church and — most importantly — by the primitive or infant church, how can we account for this fact? There is only one explanation, and it is inescapable: it has always been the church doctrine, simply, because it was the doctrine given to the church from its founders. And so Warfield returns to his point of ultimate authority. We hold this

doctrine because Christ and his apostles, commissioned by him, gave it to us.

Warfield's Posture

From the beginning to the end of his career Warfield's confidence in the truthfulness of Scripture was absolute. It does not seem ever seriously to have entered his mind that Scripture could ever be proven wrong at any point. He believed deeply that as “God's Word written” (as he was wont to put it) it is entirely reliable in every detail.

His outlook was very clearly this: what Scripture says is true, and everything that contradicts it is false. How could it be otherwise? Warfield does not deny that there may be “difficulties” that the Christian may face when holding this doctrine. But he insists that such difficulties will inevitably prove to stem from our own ignorance. Yes, there will be difficult questions and “problems.” Every doctrine has its “problems.” But we may be sure that to side with Scripture “will always be safe.”

It is a mark of the Christian man that the Word is his source and norm of truth, and wherever it has spoken he asks no further evidence, nor can he admit any modification whatever its deliverances, no matter from what quarter they may be drawn.

And so Warfield was not merely unafraid of the modern criticism. He welcomed criticism, always confident that in the end the Bible would still stand unmarred. Confidently he asserted that no “problem” or criticism will ever put the church doctrine of inspiration in jeopardy.

Warfield is recognized as the most widely learned theologian ever to teach at Old Princeton. Indeed, many have argued that he is America's greatest theologian. The breadth and depth of his scholarship and learning is virtually unparalleled. But he himself assumed no position of authority when he approached Scripture. He approached the Bible humbly, not as a master of it but as

one to be mastered by it. Not as a talker but as a listener, always confident in its every assertion. For when the Bible speaks, God speaks.

Let us bless God, then, for his inspired word! And may he grant that we may always cherish, love and venerate it, and conform all our life and thinking to it! So may we find safety for our feet, and peaceful security for our souls.

Endnotes

1 More recently John D. Woodbridge has taken up this question and answered decisively. See his *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Zondervan, 1982).

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Who Was *B.B. Warfield* By Chris Cooper

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921) was born into a Presbyterian family near Lexington, Kentucky. Grandson of a prominent Presbyterian pastor-theologian and professor, Warfield followed the path of Presbyterian ministry, serving as an assistant minister, professor, and seminary president. However, through his defense of orthodox Christian teachings against the onslaught of Protestant Liberalism, Warfield's legacy shaped and continues to shape Christians both within and outside of the Presbyterian fold.

With the passing of A. A. Hodge in 1887, Warfield returned to Princeton Theological Seminary where he had studied under Charles Hodge a decade prior. On this occasion, Warfield had come as the professor of didactic and polemical theology. He served in this capacity until his death in 1921. Warfield proved as the correct choice to replace A. A. Hodge. He spent the rest of his life as an articulate scholar, defending confessional Calvinism and a view of objective truth rooted in Scripture and Scottish Common-Sense Realism. Perhaps his most lasting contribution to conservative Christians, from confessional Presbyterians to Fundamentalists and Evangelicals, is his work defending the

inerrancy of Scripture.

Through his writings on inspiration, Warfield argued that the original manuscripts of Scripture are without error and that this perfection extends past the mere thoughts of the biblical writers to their verbal expressions. Although he believed the very words used by biblical authors were perfectly inspired, he did not hold that God dictated them. Rather, connecting his Reformed view of divine providence to his view of inspiration, Warfield wrote that God's superintendence over the thoughts and expression of the human writers guaranteed that the outcome in the original manuscripts was expressed exactly as God intended. Warfield also argued that the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture was demonstrable through various evidences. He pointed to the unity of Scripture, the historical and scientific accuracy of Scripture, the moral and spiritual superiority of Scripture, and the antiquity of the inerrancy position in the Church as evidences of Scripture's divine authenticity. Through these teachings, Warfield equipped future conservative Christians with tools to combat liberalism when the battle over the Bible and other classic Christian doctrines heated up in the years to follow.



Zeal to Promote the Common Good

The Story behind the King James Bible

By Michael A. G. Haykin

Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water...
Miles Smith

The sixteenth century was one of the great eras of English Bible translation. Between 1526, when William Tyndale’s superlative rendition of the New Testament was printed, and 1611, when the King James Bible (KJB), or Authorized Bible, appeared, no less than ten English-language Bible versions were published. The translators of the KJB were quite conscious of their deep indebtedness to this beehive of translation activity that preceded their work. As they noted in the “Preface” of the KJB, drawn up by the Puritan Miles Smith (1554–1624), who had been among those responsible for the translation of the Old Testament prophets and who had also taken part in the final revision of the entirety of the Old Testament, they had not sought to “make a new translation.” Rather, it had been their “endeavour” or “mark” to “make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one.” And of those many good versions that preceded

the KJB, two especially deserve mention in any sketch of the history of the KJB: Tyndale’s New Testament and the Geneva Bible.

William Tyndale and His Duty

“Widely acknowledged as the most formative influence on the text of the King James Bible,” says Alister McGrath, the New Testament of William Tyndale (c.1494–1536) comprises some four-fifths of the KJB New Testament. Tyndale’s deep-rooted conviction, formed by the early 1520s, that the Scriptures were essential to the reformation of the Church in England had led him ultimately to Germany, where he found a competent die-cutter and printer, Peter Schöffer the younger, to publish his newly-translated New Testament in 1526 at his print-shop in Worms. Schöffer initially ran off a print-run of either three or six thousand copies. The seven hundred or so pages of text of this New Testament was in a black-letter or Gothic font and printed in a compact octavo format, clearly designed to be carried with ease. There were no verse divisions, which did not come into vogue until the Geneva New Testament of 1557, but only simple chapter breaks. It was devoid of prologue and marginal notes, both of which would be found in later editions of the Tyndale New Testament and other later Tudor Bibles. Only three copies survive today: an imperfect one in the library

of St. Paul's Cathedral that is lacking the first seventy-one leaves; a copy that was owned by Bristol Baptist College, the oldest Baptist seminary in the world, since the mid-eighteenth century and that was sold in 1994 to the British Library for over a million pounds to be the centre-piece of an celebratory exhibit on the life of Tyndale; and a third copy recently discovered in the Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart, Germany.

He [Tyndale] knew how to render the Scriptures into the English vernacular so that they spoke with verve and power.

As Henry Wansbrough has noted, Tyndale's translation is "a staggering achievement," for he translated the entirety of the Greek New Testament into English, without any access to other similar English-language translations, for there were none. However, when Tyndale's version appeared in England, it received vitriolic criticism by such literary and ecclesial figures as Thomas More (1478–1535) and Cuthbert Tunstall (1474–1559), the Bishop of London, who said that it was "naughtily translated." More, for example, criticized Tyndale for translating *presbyteros* by the term "elder" or "senior" instead of "priest" and for rendering *ekklēsia* as "congregation" and not "church." The English term "priest" actually derives from the Greek *presbyteros* and is therefore not at all a translation of the Greek word. Moreover, embedded in it is the idea of one who performs sacrifice, which is hardly an associated idea of *presbyteros*. As for the use of congregation instead of church as a translation of *ekklēsia*, the latter had become solely a technical term in ecclesiastical jargon, which was hardly the case with regard to *ekklēsia* in the New Testament era. Moreover, Tyndale was also following the example of Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), a friend of both Tunstall and More, who sometimes rendered *ekklēsia* as *congregatio* in his own Latin rendition of the Greek New Testament he prepared to accompany his editions of the Greek text from 1516 onwards.

Today it is clear that Tyndale had a solid handle on the

Greek language, its grammar and idioms, shades of meaning and idiosyncrasies. A further example of his knowledge of Greek is found in Philemon 7, which Tyndale rightly translates, "For by thee (brother) the saints' hearts are comforted." The KJB translators later rendered this verse as "the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother," taking the Greek word *splanchna* literally as "bowels." But Tyndale rightly recognized that *splanchna* is a metaphor for "heart" and thus should not be translated literally.

Equally important was Tyndale's impressive grasp of the words and rhythms of the spoken English of his day. He knew how to render the Scriptures into the English vernacular so that they spoke with verve and power. In fact, as David Daniell notes, what strikes a present-day reader is how modern Tyndale's translation seems. For instance, in contrast to the KJB rendering of Romans 5:2—"we have access by faith"—Tyndale has the much more modern sounding "we have a way in through faith." "It is a sure thing" (Philippians 3:1) is far more contemporary an expression than "it is safe" (KJB). Or consider his punchy version of 2 Kings 4:28—he began to work on the Old Testament in early 1530s—"thou shouldest not bring me in a fool's paradise." The KJB version is quite sedate in comparison, "do not deceive me."

In 1528 Tyndale allowed his name to appear in print for the first time with the publication in Antwerp of his exposition of Luke 16:1–12, The Parable of the Wicked Mammon. In his prologue "To the Reader" Tyndale noted that some people asked him why he had bothered writing the book since his Roman Catholic opponents would burn it, "seeing they burnt the gospel [that is, the New Testament]," a reference to the burning of a significant quantity of the 1526 Worms New Testament at Cuthbert Tunstall's behest. Tyndale's response takes us to the very heart of his understanding of his calling to be a translator: "In burning the new Testament they did none other thing than that I looked for: no more shall they do, if they burn me also, if it be God's will it shall so be. Nevertheless, in translating the New Testament I did my duty^{1/4}"

The impact of Tyndale's doing his duty is well seen in an event that took place nearly thirty years after he wrote these words. One of his friends, John Rogers (1500–1555), who played the central role in the 1537 publication of "Matthew's Bible" that included much of Tyndale's translation work, was on trial for heresy. It was during the reign of Mary I (1516–1558), known to history as "bloody Mary" because of her brutal execution of nearly three hundred Protestants in a misguided attempt to take the evangelical Church of England back to Rome. Rogers' case was being heard by Stephen Gardiner (d.1555), Mary I's Lord Chancellor. At one point, Gardiner told Rogers: "thou canst prove nothing by the Scripture, the Scripture is dead: it must have a lively [i.e. living] expositor." "No," Rogers replied, "the Scripture is alive." Undoubtedly Rogers is thinking of Hebrews 4:12, but his conviction is also rooted in the fact that Tyndale's rendering of the Scriptures in "English plain style" had played a key role, by God's grace, in the Scriptures becoming a vehicle of life-changing power among the English people.

The Geneva Bible

During the Marian reign of terror, about a thousand English and Scottish Protestants fled to the European continent, and found places of refuge in Reformed locales like Zurich and Geneva. At this time Geneva was a major centre of biblical scholarship with more than thirty publishing houses. In the 1550s alone these publishers printed new editions of both the Hebrew and Greek scriptures, supervised at least eight printings of the French Bible and translations of the Scriptures into Italian and Spanish. It is not at all surprising that in such a climate the English and Scottish exiles began to plan a new translation of the Bible in 1556 that would eventually be published four years later and that would come to be known as the Geneva Bible. Like all of the English Bibles of this era, except for that of Tyndale, it was the joint product of a group of scholars.

The main translator and editor appears to have been William Whittingham (c.1524–1579), a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, who was one of the most

competent Greek linguists of the day and also fluent in both French and German. Among the sources that Whittingham used was the 1553 edition of the French Bible of Pierre Olivétain (1506–1538), whose New Testament had been corrected by Olivétain's cousin, the great Reformer John Calvin (1509–1564). It is not clear whether Whittingham was responsible for the translation of the Old Testament. What is certain, according to David Daniell, is that the Geneva Bible's Old Testament has a "wonderful richness" and "Britain was truly blessed in the men who made it."

Along with its superb translation of the Old and New Testaments, the Geneva Bible contained a running commentary on the whole Bible in the form of marginal notes, what Patrick Collinson has called a "portable library of divinity." As shall be seen, some of these marginal notes would infuriate King James I and bias him against this version. The majority of the notes contain helpful explanations of the text. Occasionally there is exhortation and application. For example, with regard to Genesis 24:58 ("And they called Rebekah and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man?"), the marginal note commented: "This sheweth that parents have not authoritie to marry their children without consent of the parties." Contrary to an impression transmitted among some historians of the English Bible, no more than ten of the original marginal notes, outside of the Book of Revelation, were barbed attacks on other religious perspectives of that era, notably that of the Roman Catholic Church. The marginal notes to the book of Revelation, however, do contain a significant amount of apocalyptic speculation some of which explicitly targets the Roman Church and the Papacy. For example, the sternest marginal note in this regard is an explanation of the judgment of painful sores in Revelation 16:2. The note likens this judgment to that of the sixth plague of Egypt and that which "reigneth commonly among canons, monks, friars, nuns, priests, and such filthy vermin which bear the mark of the beast." This is strong stuff, but, as Daniell comments, its tone is not the norm even among the apocalyptic notes on Revelation.

With the death of Queen Mary in 1558 and the accession of her half-sister Elizabeth to the throne—“our Deborah” and “our Judith,” as Edwin Sandys (1519–1588), one of the Marian exiles and a translator of the Bishops’ Bible, called her—there was no longer any doubt that England and Wales were firmly in the Protestant orbit. The question that now came to the fore, though, was to what extent the Elizabethan church would be reformed. By the 1560s it was evident that Elizabeth was content with a church that was something of a hybrid: committed to Reformation truth but tolerating a variety of things in its worship that were left over from the Middle Ages for which there was no biblical sanction.

It was as a response to this situation that the Puritans, many of them Marian exiles, emerged in the 1560s. Their expressed goal was to reform the Elizabethan church after the model of the churches in Protestant Switzerland, in particular those in Geneva and Zürich. And their Bible was the Geneva Bible. It was, in part, because of this identification of the Geneva Bible with the Puritan party that the episcopal establishment promoted a new translation, the Bishops’ Bible, which saw the light of day in 1568. Though accurate in much of its rendering of the Hebrew and Greek, the Bible was a massive disappointment. Derek Wilson explains: the Bible was “rendered in stiff, cold English. It lacked the fluidity, the warmth of the version which the close-knit group of exiles had infused into the Geneva Bible.”

The failure of the Bishops’ Bible to replace the popularity of the Geneva Bible is well seen by comparing the number of editions of these two Bibles. Between 1560 and 1611, there were over 120 editions of the Geneva Bible, with an edition every year from 1575 to 1618 (seven years after the appearance of the King James Bible). By comparison there were only twenty-two editions of the Bishops’ Bible between 1568 and 1611. It is noteworthy that it was the Geneva Bible that was the Bible of that premier Elizabethan and Jacobean word-smith, William Shakespeare (1564–1616), not the Bishops’ Bible.

A Puritan Proposal of a New Translation

The accession of James VI (1566–1625) of Scotland to the English throne as James I was greeted by the Puritans with a deep measure of joyful expectation, for James had been raised within the bosom of the Church of Scotland, one of the most Reformed bodies in Europe. They wrongly assumed that a man with such a pedigree would be amenable to their theological and liturgical concerns, which were quite similar to those of their Scottish brethren. They were wrong. James was imbued with a deeply-rooted conviction of the divine right of kings, namely, that the monarch derives his political legitimacy from God alone and therefore cannot be held accountable by any earthly authority. As such he found the fundamental hierarchical arrangement of the episcopal Church of England much more to his liking than the more egalitarian presbyterianism of Scotland, which was far more difficult for a monarch with James’ convictions to control. As James said early on in his reign in England, presbyterianism “agreeth as well with a monarchy as God and the devil”! Nevertheless, when James was presented with a list of Puritan grievances in what has come to be called the *Millenary Petition* (1603) at the very outset of his reign, he agreed to listen to them at a duly-called conference at Hampton Court near London in January, 1604.

Four moderate Puritans were invited to present the concerns of their fellows to the king: John Rainolds (1549–1607), president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, who acted as the spokesman; Laurence Chaderton (1537–1640), master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, a distinguished Hebraist and Greek scholar and also one of the great preachers of that era; John Knewstubs (1544–1624), a Suffolk rector and Thomas Sparke (1548–1616), a minister from Lincolnshire. Also invited to the conference, which stretched over five days, from Saturday, January 14 to Wednesday, January 18, were nine bishops of the Church of England, including Richard Bancroft (1544–1610), the Bishop of London who became the Archbishop of Canterbury a couple of months later, and seven deans, one of whom



Illustration by George E. Kruger/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

was the famous Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), whose mastery of fifteen languages and a wealth of theological and ecclesiastical knowledge rightly earned him the reputation of being one of the most learned men in England. Andrewes would be among the KJB translators.

It needs noting that some of the bishops were actually good friends of their Puritan counterparts. Rainolds' oldest friend was there the first day of the conference, Henry Robinson (c. 1553–1616), the Bishop of Carlisle, an evangelical Calvinist like Rainolds and the other Puritans. As Adam Nicolson has rightly noted, "there was more uniting these [two] men than dividing them." Chaderton and Knewstubs used to regularly spend time with Andrewes when the three of them were students at Cambridge, and Chaderton was actually at one time Bancroft's best friend, though the latter was now rabidly opposed to the Puritanism represented by Chaderton. In total, there were eighteen adversaries of the Puritan party at the conference. The odds were clearly stacked

in favour of the episcopal opposition to the Puritans and, in the final analysis, none of the Puritans' concerns were really addressed. Although the king's dealings with the bishops could hardly be called mild, he was sternness itself with the Puritans. He later said that he had "peppered them" and forced them so to flee "from argument to argument" that none of them could answer him directly. The total failure of the conference from the point of view of the Puritans led to the radicalization of certain figures in the movement, who became committed to congregationalism, despairing of any hope of further magisterial reform.

It was on the second day of the conference, Monday, January 16, as the mid-winter sun was going down in the afternoon, that Rainolds proposed that there be "one only translation of the Bible to be authentic and read in the churches." This seems a surprising proposal, coming as it did from a Puritan who would have been expected to have been content with the Geneva Bible, so beloved of the Puritan party. Adam Nicolson plausibly suggests

Rainolds might have had in mind a revision of the Bishops' Bible, which Elizabeth I, had promoted as the official bible of the English church, and which, despite the sumptuousness of its printed appearance, had never been popular with either the people or the Puritans. Moreover, it was undoubtedly the poorest translation overall of the Tudor Bibles. On the other hand, David Daniell, followed by Derek Wilson, believes that Rainolds was thinking of the advances that had been made in Hebrew and Greek scholarship over the fifty years that lay between his proposal and the publication of the Geneva Bible and that this alone necessitated a new work.

Whatever Rainolds' motivation, James leapt upon the new proposal with zest, for he despised the Puritans' Geneva Bible. This had been the version that his redoubtable tutor, George Buchanan (1506–1582), had drilled into him when he was a young boy. It was also this version that was favoured by the Scottish presbytery, of whom James was not enamoured. At a number of places this translation challenged his concept of an absolute monarchy. The word “tyrant,” for instance, appeared around thirty times in the 1599 edition of the Geneva Bible. It will not be found even once in the version that carries James's name. Then, in the notes accompanying the text of Exodus 1, the midwives are commended for their disobedience of Pharaoh's command to kill the newborn Hebrew males at birth. “Their disobedience herein was lawful,” the note to verse 19 read, though their lying to Pharaoh to cover up their disobedience was plainly designated as “evil.” It should occasion no surprise that, in the list of guidelines for the new translation James would specify that “no marginal notes at all [were] to be affixed” to the text except those that were absolutely necessary for the explanation of the underlying Hebrew or Greek.

Translating for King James

In the days following the Hampton Court Conference, six panels of translators were appointed: two to work at Westminster on Genesis through to 2 Kings and on the letters of the New Testament; two at Cambridge University on 1 Chronicles to the Song of Songs and

on the Apocrypha; and two at Oxford University translating the prophets as well as the Gospels, Acts and Revelation. There is no scholarly consensus about the total number of those involved first in translating and then in editing and revising. Of scholars writing recently on the history of the KJB, Alister McGrath lists forty-seven actual translators, while Gordon Campbell's list, which includes those involved in the later stages of revision, comes in at fifty-seven. Of these, there were only half a dozen or so, including Rainolds and Chaderton, who were clearly Puritan in their sympathies. Moreover, they were, for the most part, seasoned scholars. In the words of Gordon Campbell, “the learning embodied in the men of these six companies is daunting.”

James actually wanted the Bishops' Bible retained as the standard, and the new translation more of a revision than actual translation. The royal printer, Robert Barker (d.1645), thus provided forty copies of the 1602 printing of the Bishops' Bible for the use of the translators. As it turned out, though, the KJB was very much a fresh translation with the major literary influence, as has been observed, being that of Tyndale and not the Bishops' Bible.

Each of the six companies worked separately at first on the portion of the Bible assigned to it. Historians have only the sparsest of details about exactly how the translators carried out their work—it is still quite “mysterious,” is the way that David Norton puts it. Part of the evidence about the work of translation is a list of fifteen instructions drawn up by Bancroft as essential guidelines for the six companies. The close use of the Bishops' Bible as an exemplar was the first of these instructions, although the fourteenth directive allowed the translators to look at other earlier translations, including Tyndale's and the Geneva Bible. There is every indication that the other instructions were also carefully observed. For instance, Bancroft had instructed the translators to keep “the old ecclesiastical words,” so that “the word *church*” was “not to be translated *congregation*.” This is obviously a rejection of Tyndale's preferred way of translating *ekklēsia*. As a result,

although the word congregation is frequently used for the people of God in the Old Testament, it is never used for the church in the New Testament. But observance of this instruction was also a way of rejecting some elements of Puritan theology, as Miles Smith’s “Preface” noted: “we have...avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old ecclesiastical words, and betake them to other, as when they put *washing* for *baptism* and *congregation* instead of *church*.”

Work on the translation had definitely begun by August 1604, and all of the companies seemed to have completed their assignments by 1608. These initial drafts were then vetted in 1610 over a period of nine months by a special review committee of between six and twelve men that met in London. We know the names of only three, possibly four, of the individuals on this review committee. One of them was John Bois (1560–1643), a former fellow of St. John’s College, Cambridge, whose notes from the discussions of the committee of revisers are the only ones extant and which will be discussed in more detail below. The work of this committee then went through the hands of two more men, one of whom was Miles Smith, who wrote the “Preface” to the KJB. Finally it was looked over by Archbishop Bancroft. So, towards the close of 1610, the manuscript was given to the royal printer, Robert Barker, to print.

John Bois’ Notebooks

A fascinating glimpse into the mechanics of the revision committee is provided by the notes of John Bois, which were long thought lost, but two copies of which have been discovered by Ward Allen and David Norton in 1969 and 1996 respectively. Bois had been reading Greek and Hebrew from the age of at least six, having been tutored by his father. Not surprisingly, by the time that he studied at Cambridge his knowledge of the biblical languages was extensive. After he married in 1596, he resigned his fellowship and took a small country parsonage in the village of Boxworth, eight miles north-west of Cambridge. He would ride over to Cambridge each week to work with the committee assigned the translation of the Apocrypha. And later,

when the revision committee was assembled in 1610, Bois was asked to serve on it. Up to this point neither he nor any of his fellow translators had received any financial remuneration for their labours, but during the course of the nine months that Bois was in London, he, along with the other members of the revision committee, was given thirty shillings per week.

In the due course of providence, it [the KJV] became *the* version of the English Bible that made the English-speaking peoples a people of the Book.

Bois’ notes, taken down during the course of daily meetings, reveal the revisers discussing the various shades of meaning a word can have, making grammatical points and debating them, sometimes with great vehemence, but always striving to find translations acceptable to the majority of the committee. Few of the suggested translations in the notes appear to have made it into the 1611 KJB. One that did was Bois’ suggestion at 2 Corinthians 7:1 that the Greek *epitelountes hagiōsynēn* should be translated as “perfecting holynesse.” Another of Bois’ suggestions that was adopted at this revision stage was the phrase “being knit together in love” from Colossians 2:2. Often, though, Bois’ wordings were passed up in favour of another, better rendering. When, at Titus 2:10, Bois wanted “no filchers,” an Elizabethan slang term for a petty thief, the committee stuck with “not purloining”—both equally obscure words for today’s reader.

On occasion Bois included the suggestions of the other revisers. For example, Bois notes that Andrew Downes (*c.* 1549–1628), who had been his Greek tutor at Cambridge and who had been quite reluctant to spend nine months in the English capital, remarked that if the words about Christ in Hebrews 13:8 were arranged in this manner “yesterday, and today the same, and for ever,” then “the statement will seem more majestic.” His fellow committee members, though, went with “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Adam

Nicolson rightly observes that Downes' remark about the phrase appearing more "majestic" reveals a key aspect of the translation that the revisers wanted it to have beyond fidelity to the original and clarity, and that is majesty and grandeur of style.

The Initial Reception of the KJB

The early printings of the KJB, David Norton observes, were challenging for the printer Robert Barker since he was under considerable pressure "to produce as much as possible as fast as possible." Thus, early print-runs were marred by a variety of typographical errors, of which the most famous was probably the "Wicked Bible" (1631), so named because the word "not" was omitted from the seventh commandment of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:14), turning it into a positive admonition: "Thou shalt commit adultery." A close runner-up to this typo has to be the one that occurred in a 1612 printing, the first octavo edition. Where the Psalmist says, "Princes have persecuted me without a cause" (119:161), this edition reads, "Printers have persecuted me without a cause." Norton thinks this must have been an "error" deliberately introduced into the text by a disgruntled employee in Barker's workshop!

Despite such typos as these the episcopal establishment enthusiastically supported the new translation. They hoped it would help stem the tide of radical Puritanism and promote ecclesial unity. The Puritan wing of the Church of England were not so enthusiastic, and they continued to support the printing of the Geneva Bible, the last edition of which rolled off the press as late as 1644. It would not be until the early pastoral ministry of the Puritan John Bunyan (1628–1688) in the late 1650s that the KJB would begin to shake the hold of the Geneva Bible over the English Puritan community. In fact, it is fascinating to find a spiritual descendant of these Puritans, a London Baptist by the name of Richard Hall (1729–1801), using a 1578 edition of the Geneva Bible as the family bible in the mid-eighteenth century. The Geneva Bible long retained its hold on the mindset of those committed to religious radicalism.

The severest critic of the KJB, though, has to have

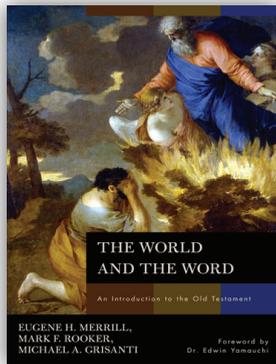
been Hugh Broughton (1549–1612), possibly the most distinguished Hebraist in Europe and who expected to have been among the translators of the KJB but was passed over, probably because of his combative spirit and violent temper. In the 1590s Broughton had tried without success to convince the Archbishop of Canterbury, then John Whitgift (c. 1530–1604), to establish a committee of six scholars, including himself, to revise the English Bible. He was sent a copy of the KJB almost as soon as it came off the press with the hope that he would give it a positive commendation. Vain hope! His response was a blistering eight-page pamphlet, which pointed out some of the faults of the new translation and which began thus:

The late Bible... was sent to me to censure: which bred in me a sadness that will grieve me while I breathe. It is so ill done. ... I had rather be rent in pieces with wild horses, than any such translation by my consent should be urged upon poor churches. ... The new edition crosseth me, I require it be burnt.

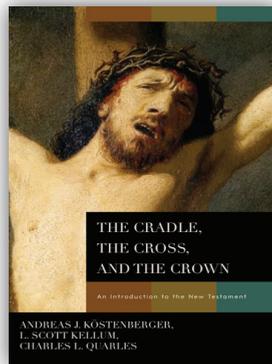
In the "Preface" attached to the KJB when it was first published, the author of this prefatory text, Miles Smith, commented about the ultimate reason for the translation of the KJB and what it would undoubtedly engender. It was "zeal to promote the common good" that had led the translators to labour on the KJB. Such a zeal "deserveth certainly much respect and esteem," but if truth be told, Smith went on, it "findeth but cold entertainment in the world." Broughton's diatribe therefore would not have surprised Smith and his fellow translators. But thankfully no one listened to Broughton; the KJB was not burnt; and, in the due course of providence, it became *the* version of the English Bible that made the English-speaking peoples a people of the Book.

Michael A.G. Haykin is Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

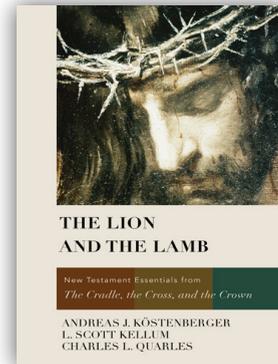
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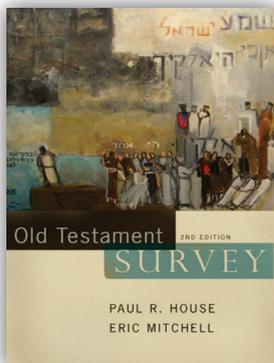


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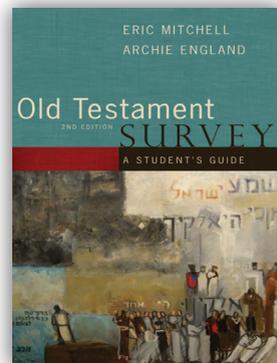


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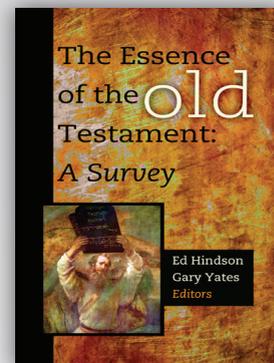
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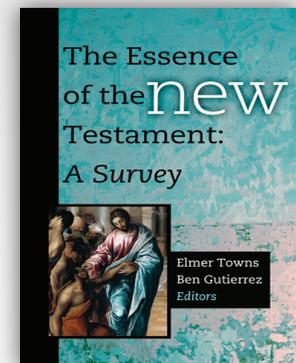


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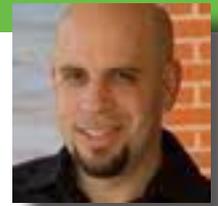
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Plant the Gospel; Plant Churches

by **Tony Merida**



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As I write this article, our core team for our new church plant has been gathering for a grand total of three weeks. We currently have about twenty people on the team, and several children. We are filled with excitement, joy, anticipation, and nervousness. I have served as an itinerant evangelist, a camp pastor, a succession pastor, and (still am) a seminary professor. But I have never planted a church. Where should I begin? The answer is, of course, the Bible.

But does the Bible actually say anything about church planting? I often hear people, even my friends, say things like, “Church planting is not in the Bible” or, “Jesus never told us to plant churches.” To which I say, “Are you sure about that?”

Standing on the shoulders of wise missiologists¹, let me point out two New Testament convictions and one New Testament example that provide a basic biblical understanding of church planting. The biblical foundations for church planting are not limited to these, but these two particular items are both essential and memorable.

Two New Testament Convictions

First, The Great Commission points to church planting. This doesn't mean that Jesus gave us a command to “plant churches” explicitly.

Admittedly, you will look in vain to find such a command. However, Jesus told us to “make disciples of all nations” by “baptizing them” and “teaching them.” What does it mean to make disciples by *baptizing* and *teaching* them? It means incorporating them into the life of a church.

In my view, baptism is an ordinance of the church, which serves as a public profession of faith for believers. It identifies them with the body of Christ. Therefore, Christ's orders in the Great Commission seem to have the church in view.

After Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, about three thousand were converted, and then baptized. Immediately following this, we read about these believers gathering in Acts 2:42-47 for worship in this new church. These baptized believers gathered for worship to, among other things, *teach* all that Jesus commanded. I would argue, then, that the Great Commission points

to the idea of church planting – not church planting with a building, a budget, and a website – but church planting in terms of identifying new believers in baptism and equipping new believers through sound teaching.

Another way to say this is that we are called to “plant the Gospel” and then see that healthy churches are developed. This is our goal at Imago Dei Church. We want to plant the Gospel in Raleigh, North Carolina. Even though Raleigh is in the South, it is, at best, 16% evangelical, and is currently the fastest growing metro area in the nation. There are people studying in the Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina metropolitan area from all over the world. It is an area that boasts of the “most Ph.D.'s per capita” than anywhere in the nation. We want to plant the Gospel in this influential city, and then make disciples through the local church.

Second, Paul's basic ministry methodology was urban church planting. Again, it was a “plant the Gospel first, then help the church get established,” but nevertheless, it was a church planting movement. In Acts we find Paul preaching the Gospel in major cities, then establishing

the church in which elders were appointed for the purpose of spiritual growth and health. Many of these new congregations are described for us in the New Testament letters. In fact, the New Testament is basically a collection of new church plants.

Certainly, there are also practical reasons to plant churches in today's world. Around the world, more people are moving to urban centers, filled with throngs of people and few churches. The ethnic diversity of America is growing, which also calls for new churches. In some unreached places, various people groups have little or no biblical church. These are all important notes to consider, which add weight to these two New Testament principles. Not only do we have biblical reasons for planting new congregations, but we also have a context in which we need to apply them urgently. People need the Gospel and a church in which to belong.

A New Testament Example: The Church in Philippi

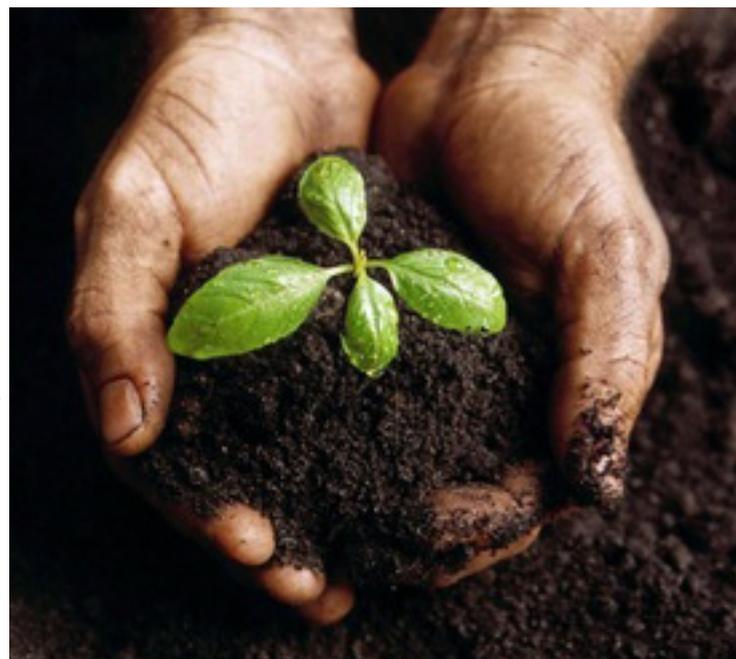
Consider the church in Philippi (Acts 16:6-40). Paul, in response to the Spirit's call, plants the first church on European soil! How did it happen? Again, the same pattern: *plant the Gospel; plant the church*. In joyful sacrifice, Paul reaches three different types of people.

He first goes to a place of prayer where a lady named Lydia is converted and baptized. She then invites Paul and the missionaries

to her home. Later, she apparently allowed her home to become the gathering place (new church) for the entire group of believers in Philippi (Acts 16:40). Next, Paul encounters a fortune telling "slave girl" who is delivered from an evil spirit. Finally, there is a jailer who is present when Paul and Silas are put into prison.

Here we have three different classes of people: Lydia (wealthy), the slave girl (poor), and a jailer (middle class?). We have three different avenues for reaching them: Lydia (with teaching at a religious gathering), Slave Girl (through deeds of mercy), and a Jailer (through example). They also represent three different nationalities: Lydia (Asian); Slave-Girl (Native Greek); Jailer (Roman). Moreover, each had different spiritual backgrounds: Lydia (Religious); Slave-Girl (spiritual turmoil), and a Jailer (indifferent?). Paul faithfully ministers the good news in the city, to various types of people, and as a result the first church in Europe, probably meeting in Lydia's house, is formed (Acts 16:40).

About ten years later, Paul writes to the Philippian church from a Roman prison and his epistle to the Philippians radiates with joy. They were his partners, his brothers and sisters. The apostle



continued to labor for "their progress and joy in the faith" (Phil. 1:25).

In response to the Great Commission, and in light of the missionary methods of Paul, may we plant the Gospel all over the world; creating healthy churches for the glory of Christ and the progress and joy of all peoples.

Endnotes

1 I'm indebted to Tim Keller's *Church Planter Manual* for the outline of this article. Other helpful resources include Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H, 2006).

Tony Merida is the Lead Pastor of Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, NC. He also serves as Associate Professor of Preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Revelation, Inspiration, and Illumination

by **Tim Challies**



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blog at
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While most believers are at least vaguely familiar with the concepts surrounding revelation and inspiration, it seems far fewer understand illumination. Yet the three of them function together and, while distinct, rely on each other to form an important set of doctrines. It is important that we keep these concepts apart in our minds. We must not confuse them, for they are in no way synonymous. We will look at revelation and inspiration briefly and then turn to illumination.

Revelation

Scripture tells us that God has revealed Himself to humans in two ways. The first of these is known as Natural Revelation. The word “natural” speaks about nature, so the first way God has revealed himself is through nature - through all that He has created. Since we cannot see God, to learn about Him we must see Him indirectly in what He has made. For example, if I am a being that God created, I can learn something about God by looking at myself. Similarly I can learn about God from nature. I see that the universe

is orderly and not chaotic and this teaches me about God's character. If God created the universe, I can deduce that He is a God of order and not chaos. Similarly, I can learn from nature that God loves beauty and variety. There is much that nature reveals to us, but also much that it cannot reveal. The Bible tells us that nature is sufficient to teach us that God exists. It also speaks to us about our fallenness and sin but cannot tell us all we need to know to be saved from our sin.

The second way God has revealed Himself is through “Special Revelation.” This includes direct verbal communication such as Adam and Eve enjoyed before the fall, words of prophecy, the times when God became man through Jesus Christ and finally, the Bible. There is some disagreement among Christians about whether direct revelation and prophecy have ceased since the “closing of the canon” (which is to say since the completion of the Bible). Christians who believe in the continuation of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit believe that prophecy and direct revelation continue today but are somewhat less than infallible. Christians

who do not believe in the continuing miraculous gifts believe that these forms of revelation have largely ceased and that we are to rely exclusively on Scripture. Regardless of a person's perspective on the continuing gifts, the majority of what we learn about God is contained in the Bible. The Bible tells us much about God that natural revelation does not - who He is, what He has done and how He interacts with humans. While we may know of God's existence through natural revelation, we can only be saved by what we learn through special revelation.

Inspiration

The Bible teaches that it was written by humans under the direct inspiration of God. To understand inspiration it is helpful to examine what this does not mean. First, it does not mean that it was written in a clever way or by a brilliant person. We may say that Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is an inspired story, but this is not what we mean when speak of the Bible being inspired. The Bible may be inspired in such a way, but this is not what the doctrine of inspiration teaches. Second, this does not mean that God gave people thoughts and

ideas that they then expanded upon and wrote down. Rather, God was involved in both the thoughts and the actual words so that the words of the Bible truly are God's words. Third, this does not mean the words are the words of men and only become God's words as we read them and as He helps us understand them, for this makes Scripture far too subjective. Fourth, it does not mean that the people acted like robots or automatons, writing down God's words in a trance-like state without thought or feeling, for if that had been the case we would not be able to explain the different styles and personalities that are evident in the various authors.

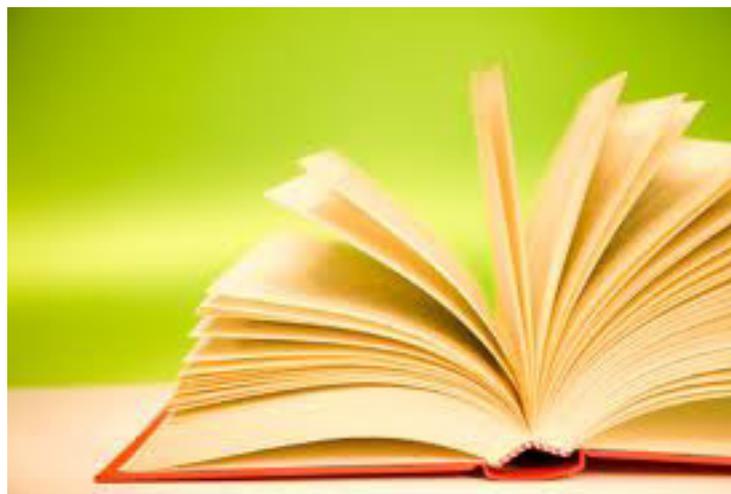
So what does it mean, then, that God inspired men to write the Bible? To understand this, we must understand that God is eternal and all powerful. God arranged and formed the lives of the people who wrote the Bible so that he was in control of their backgrounds and their personalities. It means that God used people - their thoughts, experiences, backgrounds and personalities - to write His words. If they spoke in simple words it was because God had decided in eternity past that they would not be highly educated. If they spoke in complex words and argued their points with great clarity, it was because God had dictated that they would be highly educated and have brilliant minds. The words they chose were the words God had determined from eternity that they would

use. The author's words were their own, yet at the same time, because God had so directed their lives, they were His words too.

Inspiration, then, is what God used to transmit to us the special revelation contained in the Bible.

Illumination

These concepts lead to one further concept that seems to receive far less attention than the other two. Illumination refers to God's work in the lives of believers to make us able to believe and understand the words



of the Bible. This does not mean the Spirit gives us new revelation - rather He applies to our lives the truths contained in His existing revelation. This doctrine depends on an understanding of human sin. Because we are polluted by sin we are not able to fully comprehend God's revelation. Thus we are dependent on Him to illumine our hearts to see and understand it.

While illumination depends on prior revelation, it must be differentiated from it. As I mentioned earlier, most

Christians do not expect God's direct special revelation in our lives. None should expect *infallible* direct revelation in our lives. Instead we have the privilege of looking to his full and final infallible revelation in the Scripture and having assurance that the Spirit will illumine those words for us. Many Christians confuse these. When they suddenly come to understand a deep truth in Scripture, they may believe that God has spoken to them, seemingly indicating a type of revelation. What has happened, though, is that God has illumined their hearts to understand a truth from His word.

We see many examples of God's illumination in the Bible. King David, in writing Psalm 119 asked the Lord "Give me understanding, that I may keep your law." In the twenty fourth chapter of Luke Jesus, when appearing to the disciples after His resurrection, "he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," Following His ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit to be our guide and to illumine the Scriptures for us. Paul referred to this many times, often praying that his readers would experience it. Perhaps the clearest example is in Ephesians 1:17-18 where we read "...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he

Following His ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit to be our guide and to illumine the Scriptures for us. Paul referred to this many times, often praying that his readers would experience it. Perhaps the clearest example is in Ephesians 1:17-18 where we read "...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he

has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...” Today we continue to experience the privilege of having the Holy Spirit work through us to bring light to the Scriptures.

Illumination is what separates believers from unbelievers when we read the Bible. An unbeliever may read the Bible and view it merely as a religious or historical document, much like I would read the Koran or the Book of Mormon. But when a Christian reads the Bible, the Spirit guides him to see not merely history and religion, but the very words of God. And even more important, He allows the person to apply the great truths of the Bible to his life. He initiates change through the words of the Scripture. Being a Christian, then, is a necessary prerequisite for the Spirit’s illumination.

It would be easy to think that with the Spirit’s help we can understand *everything* the Bible contains, but this is not necessarily so. We know there are some concepts that are too great for us and that God has chosen to remain hidden to us. For example, with the Spirit’s illumination we can see the Trinity in the Bible and even understand aspects of how the Trinity works, but we can never truly understand the inner workings of the godhead and comprehend how three can be one. Similarly we may not ever know why God allows certain events to happen while keeping other ones from ever taking place. God gives us knowledge of the Bible that

is true, but not exhaustive.

We might also like to think that the illumination of the Spirit precludes us from doing thorough, carefully study of the Bible, but again, this is not so. While we trust the Holy Spirit to guide us as we study His word, we must still labor to fulfill the Bible’s commands to “cut it straight” - to accurately handle the word. In this way we can have assurance that the Spirit has, indeed, helped us to see truth and not error. As with most other things in life, God still commands us to work hard and to dedicate ourselves to the task. Just as we would not sit back and expect God to provide for us financially when we refuse to do useful labor, in the same way we should not expect Him to illuminate the Word for us when we are not diligent in seeking the truth.

Application

In Revelation, God takes His words and thoughts and conveys them to a man. In Inspiration the man, under the power of the Holy Spirit, takes these thoughts and puts them on paper. And in Illumination, these words go from paper into the hearts of men, aided by the Spirit. In brief, then, revelation is from God to man, inspiration is man to paper and illumination is paper to man. The entire process is governed by the Holy Spirit.

So let’s make this practical. What does the concept of illumination really mean to me and to you?

First, it gives me assurance that God can and will speak to me through His word. I do not need to rely on my own intellect and ability, but can have confidence that God Himself is working in and through me to bring light to the words of the Scripture. Neither do I need an expert to mediate God’s Word to me. Rather, I can rely on God Himself to reveal the meaning of Scripture.

Second, I must seek the Spirit’s illumination when I study the Scripture. I should invite Him to guide me as I read and continually turn to Him, asking Him to help me when I am stuck or perplexed. I should not be tempted to rely on my own efforts.

Third, I must be diligent in my studies. The Spirit works through my efforts, not apart from them. If I am not properly engaged in studying the word, I can not expect Him to help me. It is one of God’s mysteries that our study becomes more rewarding, more meaningful, as we dedicate greater effort to it. While we must rely on the Spirit, He expects us to be diligent.

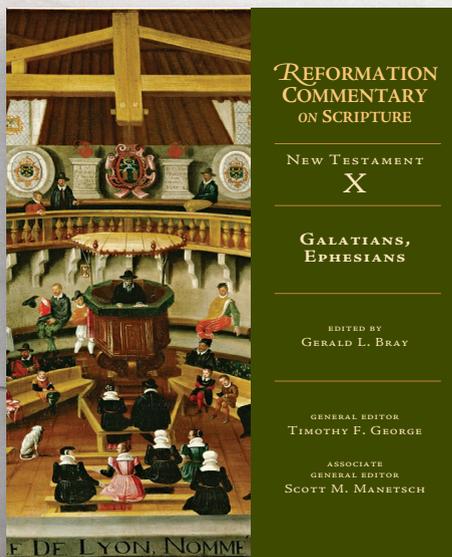
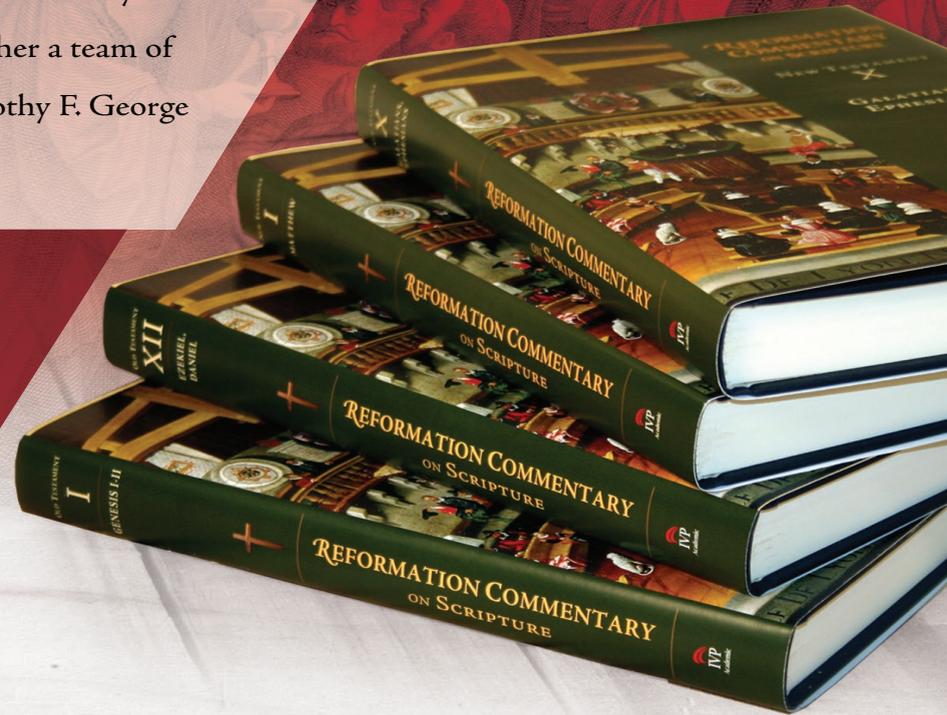
Tim Challies is the pastor of Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto, Ontario. He is also the co-founder of Cruciform Press and the author of The Next Story (Zondervan, 2011).

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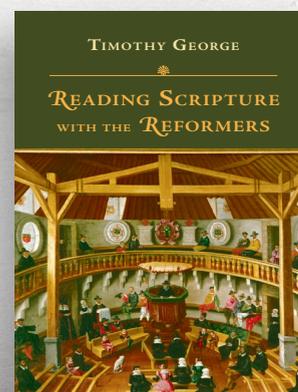
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Reading Scripture with the Reformers

An Interview with Timothy George

By Matthew Barrett

How did you personally first become interested in the Reformation and the reformers? Why are they so important in your own teaching and pastoral ministry?

I grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee and was baptized by Dr. Lee Roberson, a wonderful independent Baptist pastor. I imbibed the best of that tradition along with a kind of raw, rural, no-holds-barred Southern Baptist fundamentalism. I am grateful for those dear saints who introduced me to Jesus Christ, taught me to love God's Word and to take seriously the evangelistic mission of the church. However, there were some significant gaps in my spiritual upbringing including any appreciation for the Word of God across the ages. We sort of had the idea that we had received our faith from grandma, or Uncle Robert, and that they had received theirs directly from Jesus. We were not much aware of anything in between.

I first began to take the Reformation seriously through my study of history. I majored in history as an undergraduate at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga where I had some superb teachers, including Dr. William J. Wright, a student

of Harold Grimm. Bill Wright and other teachers at UTC made history, and especially the era of the Reformation, come alive for me. Then at Harvard I was privileged to study with other great scholars of the Reformation including David Steinmetz, Heiko Oberman, and George Huntston Williams. They all inspired me to dig deeply into Reformation theology.

Why should Christians read the reformers today?

In a way, this is like asking why scientists should engage the work of Copernicus, Newton, or Einstein, or why philosophers should know something about Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and Kant. The simple answer is: it would be the height of irresponsibility not to do so. The Reformation is one of the epochal moments in the history of God's people and believers today ignore it at their peril. Many of the struggles in the sixteenth century are with us still and we do well to attend to the reformers' recovery of the Gospel in their day for it will help us to be faithful in our own.

What does the expression "Ad Fontes!" mean and why did this expression bring the Reformers into conflict with the Roman

Catholic Church?

Ad Fontes is a Latin expression which means "Back to the sources!" It was not invented by the Protestant reformers but rather something they inherited from the recovery of letters and ancient learning that characterized the Renaissance. Erasmus and others applied it to the Scriptures and writings of the early church fathers and it thus came to assume a programmatic course in the reform of the church. There is both continuity and discontinuity between the Protestant reformers and the medieval Catholic Church. It cannot be said too strongly that none of the mainline reformers desired to start a brand new church from scratch. They deplored innovation as the first cousin of heresy. But they did believe that the church needed a thorough housecleaning, not only in respect to the many abuses that cried out for reform but also theologically. Luther said of the reformers who had preceded him: "They attacked the life; I the doctrine!"

Why did the reformers want to translate Scripture into the vernacular? Why was this so revolutionary?

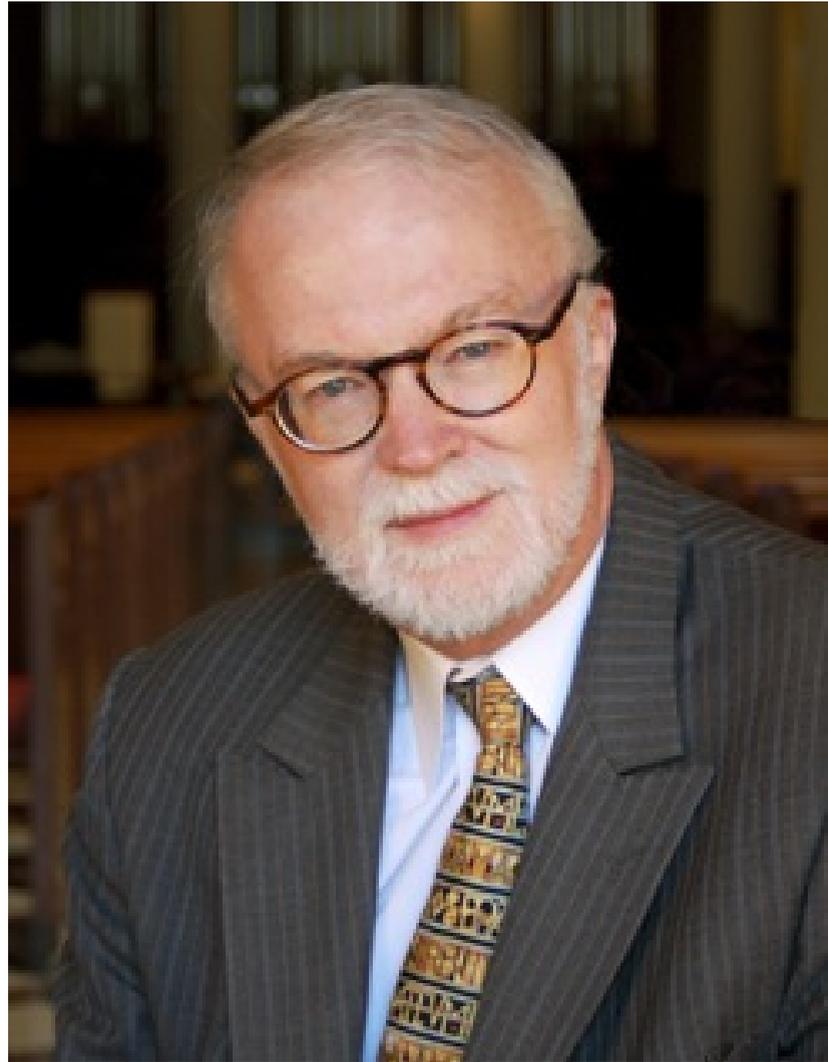
The reformers believed that everyone

should be able to hold the Scriptures in their hands and read it with their own eyes. The Bible should no longer remain the private preserve of scholars and clerics who had access to the learned language of Latin. The call for a vernacular Bible was not invented by the reformers. The Waldensians and Lollards and others had begun the process of rendering the Bible in the language of the people. But two developments made this emphasis explosive in the sixteenth century: the advent of printing, and the rise of literacy.

What were the main differences in how the medievals read the Scriptures and how the reformers read the Scriptures?

Beginning with Thomas Aquinas and Nicholas of Lyra in the Middle Ages, there was a renewed emphasis on the literal sense of Scripture as a corrective to the excessive allegorizing and spiritualizing of the text. Reformation hermeneutics continued and accelerated this development. However, many of the spiritual readings found in the medieval paradigm were enfolded into the literal sense understood by the reformers in an enriched, expanded sense. The reformers know that both allegory and

typology were biblical concepts, (Gal. 4:24; 1 Cor. 10:11), but they wanted to use them in a chastened and more contextually responsible way.



When we think of the Reformation the first person that comes to our mind is Martin Luther. How did Luther view the authority of God’s Word and did he go to any great length to see the Scriptures translated into German?

To ask whether there would have been a Reformation without Martin Luther is like asking whether there would have been an early church

without the Apostle Paul. Luther was not only the catalyst for the Reformation in his own personal quest to find a gracious God, but he was also the pioneer and pacesetter for the reform that followed.

Luther’s own spiritual breakthrough occurred as he poured over the text of Scripture, especially Paul’s letter to the Romans. He knew the transformative, life-giving capacity of biblical faith. His own translation of the Bible into German was perhaps his single greatest contribution to the Reformation. His German New Testament, completed in 1523, was the world’s first best seller. It was completed while Luther was confined to the Wartburg where he worked directly from the critical edition of Erasmus’s Greek New Testament. Working on the Old Testament was more difficult for Luther and he gathered about

him a team of scholars he called his “Sanhedrin.” In 1534 the complete Luther Bible was published. Its impact on German language and culture as well as on the Protestant Reformation is incalculable.

What other significant reformers besides Luther should we be aware of and why?

I shall limit my answer to five.
(1) Philip Melancthon. Luther’s

close associate and successor as leader of the German Lutheran movement. Melancthon was a brilliant scholar and linguist and something of a bridging figure between Luther and the Reformed tradition.

(2) Huldrych Zwingli. Together with his successor, Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli established a beachhead for the Reformation in German-speaking Switzerland. Zwingli pioneered distinctively Reformed patterns of preaching and education. An Erasmian by training, he incorporated more fully than Luther the insights of Renaissance philosophy.

(3) Martin Bucer. A Dominican from Alsace, Bucer was converted to the Protestant cause when he heard Luther's presentation at the Heidelberg Disputation in 1518. He soon became reformer of the church in Strasbourg. He was a prolific commentator on Scripture and had a great influence on the Swiss reformers, especially Calvin.

(4) John Calvin. The great historian Karl Holl once described Calvin as "Luther's best disciple." Calvin wrote commentaries on nearly every book in the Bible and they remain one of the great exegetical masterpieces of the Reformation.

(5) Menno Simons. Regrettably,

we have few commentaries from the Anabaptists largely due to the fact that they were constantly on the run from persecution. Menno was the leader of Dutch-speaking Anabaptists and his writings reveal a deep love for the Bible and a desire to follow Jesus in the way of discipleship.

How did the reformers view the preaching of God's Word and how did this differ from the Roman Catholic Church?

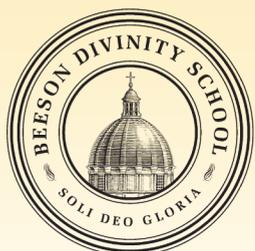
There are three points to be made here. First, in the Middle Ages preaching was frequently done out of doors and in special seasons such

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Carl Beckwith on the Sacraments
Gisela Kreglinger on Hymnody
Timothy George on Scripture
Gerald Bray on Prayer
Herman Selderhuis on Dying
and the **Samford University A Cappella Choir**

"My heart I offer
to you, Lord,
eagerly and earnestly."

- John Calvin

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as Advent and Lent, notably by the mendicant friars. The reformers brought the sermon back into the church and made it a centerpiece of worship. Second, prior to the Reformation, topical preaching was the order of the day. The reformers largely favored systematic exposition, preaching week by week through chapters and books of the Bible. Zwingli introduced this method of preaching on January 1, 1519, when he entered the pulpit of the Great Minster in Zurich and began a series of expositional sermons from Matthew 1. Calvin and others followed this tradition of *lectio continua* as well. Third, what the doctrine of transubstantiation was in medieval Catholicism, preaching became for the Protestant Reformation: the real presence of Christ in the midst of his people. Bullinger expressed this point in the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566: “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.” This was a high doctrine of preaching and required a robust theology of the Holy Spirit.

What kind of impact have the reformers had on how we read, translate, and preach the Bible today?

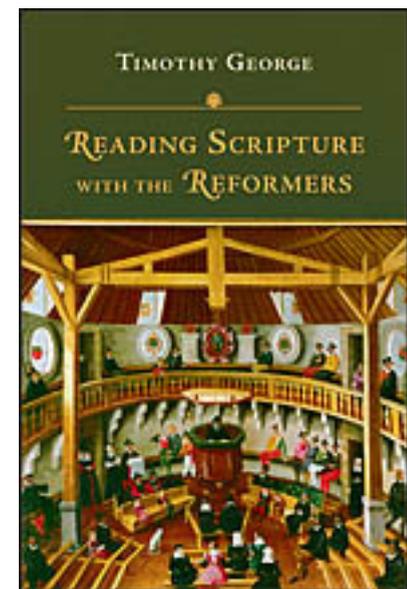
One of the purposes of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* is to make available a treasury of exegetical wisdom from the writings of the reformers. It is not enough to study the Scriptures with simply the Bible in one hand and the most recent commentary

in the other, even if it is written by an evangelical scholar! In my commentary on Galatians (*The New American Commentary* series) I said this about the importance of Reformation exegesis: “We cannot simply deracinate the reformers from the sixteenth century and bring them without remainder into our own. In any event, that kind of repriming would only be of antiquarian interest and would not serve the reformers’ overriding concern that the living voice of the Gospel—*viva vox evangelii*—be heard afresh in every generation. However, when the writings of the reformers are compared with the attenuated, transcendence-starved theologies which dominate the current scene, they yet speak with surprising vitality and spiritual depth.” That is still true today.

For those readers who are inspired by your book and eager to read the reformers themselves, what reformers should they begin with and why?

My book, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, is an introduction to the place of the Bible in the thought of the reformers. The first volume of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*, to be released by InterVarsity Press this Fall, is *Galatians/Ephesians*, edited by Dr. Gerald Bray. These two Pauline letters bring together two of the most important doctrinal themes of the Reformation: justification by faith alone and union with Christ.

Dr. Bray has done a wonderful job of culling and presenting select passages from the reformers on these two great New Testament letters. Early in 2012, we shall release the second volume, this one covering Ezekiel and Daniel and edited by my Beeson colleague, Dr. Carl Beckwith. The *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* is intended as a sequel to the great series edited by Tom Oden, the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, and I pray that it will have a similar impact on the quality of preaching and teaching in the Lord’s church today.



Timothy George is the founding dean of Beeson Divinity School and general editor of the Reformation Commentary on Scripture, a 28-volume series of sixteenth-century exegetical comment.

Word *and* Spirit

in *Andrew Fuller*

Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), whom William Wilberforce once graphically described as “the very picture of a blacksmith,” had no formal theological training. By God’s grace and arduous study, however, he became one of the soundest theologians in the history of the English Calvinistic Baptists. That soundness is nowhere more evident than in *The Gospel Its Own Witness* (1799), the definitive eighteenth-century Baptist response to Deism, in particular, the teaching of Thomas Paine. This work turned out to be one of the most popular of Fuller’s books. It went through three editions by 1802, and was reprinted a number of times in the next thirty years. Wilberforce regarded this work as the most important of all Fuller’s writings, while a more recent student of Fuller’s works, E.F. Clipsham, has described it as the most outstanding of Fuller’s apologetical works. Much of the book is given over to an examination of the nature and inspiration of Scripture, since this was one of the leading points in question between Deists like Paine and their Christian opponents. As such, Fuller’s book occupies a key place in what Tom J. Nettles has rightly described as “the bibliological evolution of the English Baptists.”

Paine had argued that the Bible is marred by deep inconsistencies. In response, Fuller maintained that the Bible is indeed consistent with itself, but that consistency is not always readily apparent. Fuller was well aware of some of “the sticky problems of biblical phenomena,” but the way in which these problems were approached was critical. There had to be a willingness to spend time in seeking a resolution for each of the apparent inconsistencies of Scripture. Moreover, Fuller emphasized, the Scriptures had to be read from the right perspective, namely, that of a humble dependence on the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Fuller never disparaged the importance of scholarship in the study of the Scriptures, but he regularly stressed its insufficiency if it were not coupled with an openness to the Holy Spirit as the illuminator of his Word. For instance, at the ordination of a Robert Fawcner in 1787, Fuller addressed the newly ordained pastor thus:

*The apostle exhorts that we “be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but **filled** with the Spirit” [see Ephesians 5:18]. The word “filled” here is very expressive; it denotes, I*

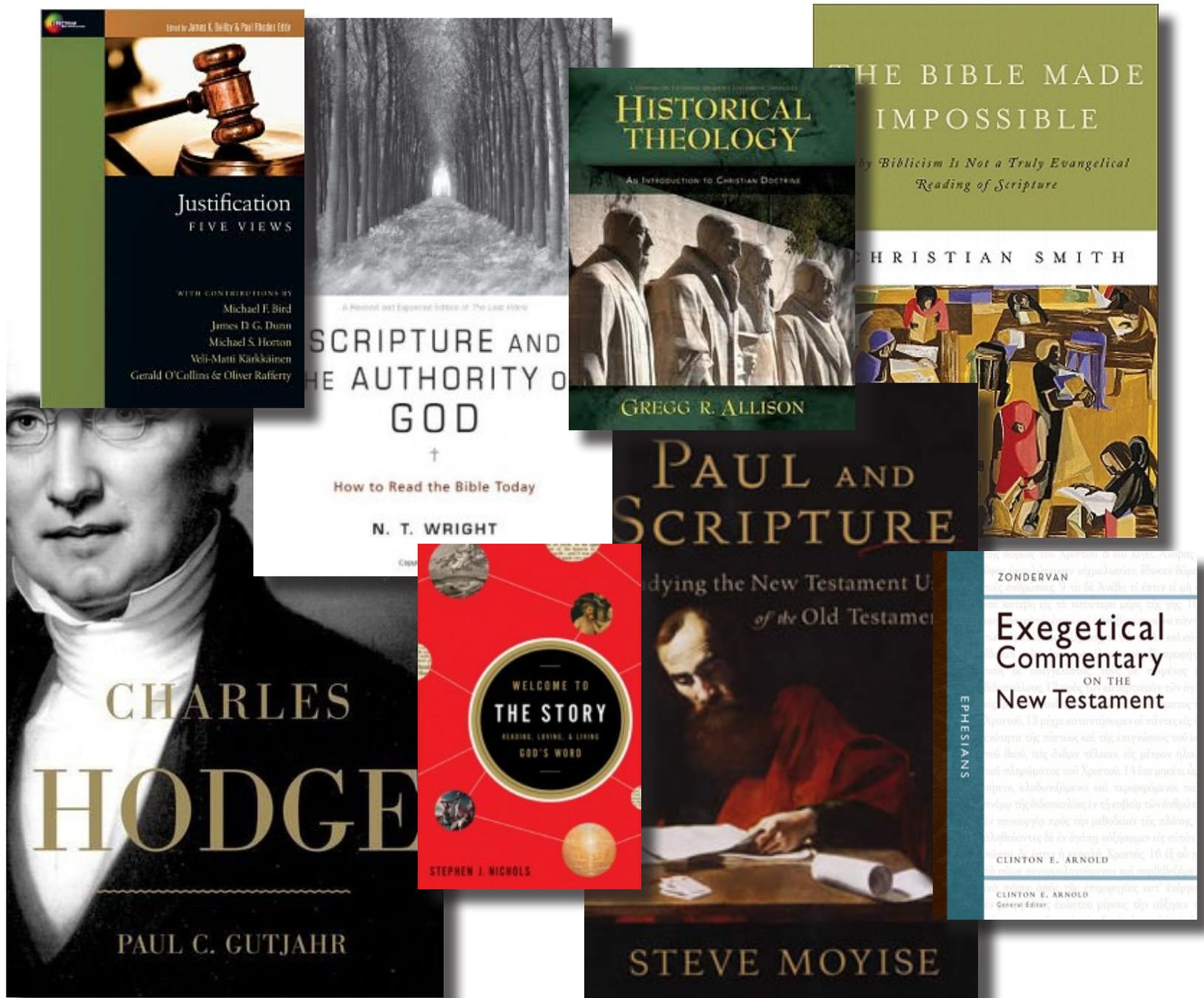


apprehend, being overcome, as it were, with the holy influences and fruits of the blessed Spirit. How necessary is all this, my brother, in your work! Oh how necessary is “an unction from the Holy One!” [1 John 2:20]. It is this that will enable you to enter into the spirit of the gospel, and preserve you from destructive errors concerning it. ... We shall naturally fall in with the dictates of that spirit of which we are full. It is for want of this, in a great measure, that the Scriptures appear strange, and foreign, and difficult to be understood.

These are the words of a man wholly committed to the Bible as an infallible product of the Holy Spirit. And this commitment explains something of Fuller’s usefulness as a Christian theologian in his own generation, and down to the present day.

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Credo Book Reviews



74 The Bible Made Impossible / 77 Welcome to the Story / 78 Justification: Five Views / 80 Scripture and the Authority of God / 83 Historical Theology / 85 Charles Hodge / 86 Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians / 89 Paul and Scripture

The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture

by Christian Smith (Brazos Press).

Many Christians have puzzled over the fact that interpretations of Scripture differ so widely among equally devoted Christians, but few have pursued the question with the tenacity of Christian Smith in his *The Bible Made Impossible*. Relentlessly he presses us with just how diverse our disagreements are, even among us who confess the perspicuity (clarity) and authority of Scripture. And he insists that this wide-scale disagreement among us “biblicists” puts the lie to our professed biblicism. The Bible is not clear, he insists, and it is not consistent or always relevant. It does not speak with one voice, and we should be honest enough to admit it.

Smith defines “biblicism” in terms of a variety of assumptions and beliefs with regard to Scripture ranging from verbal inspiration, sufficiency, and perspicuity, to the “handbook” approach to Scripture that treats it as a mere manual for everything from dating to cooking. All of this, he argues, is mistaken, potentially idolatrous, and harmful to the cause of the gospel and the Bible’s true intent. Perceiving biblicism as a malicious evil, throughout the book he wastes no words, even sometimes with mocking tone, expressing how deeply opposed (might I say resentful?) he is of it.

Within the space constraints of this review I cannot develop his point at length, but his central charge is that “pervasive interpretive pluralism” — the wide theological disagreements among Bible believers — renders biblicism untenable. Other reviews have addressed many of the attending issues Smith raises; I

will try to stay close to this central complaint.

My disagreement with Smith runs deep and wide, as my remarks below will indicate. But in fairness it should be said that the question he raises is a real one. And he presses this question with such vigor that it merits a well thought out and popular level “biblicist” response, which would be a service to Christians everywhere.

Reading the book raised seemingly endless questions in my mind. First, on the face of it does Smith’s conclusion necessarily follow his argument? Must we give up all attempts at harmonizing Scripture, as he insists? Does the fact of so many incorrect interpretations demand that there is no correct interpretation? It would not seem so. Just because I believe the Bible is both clear and authoritative does not mean that I myself interpret it with perfect consistency. Add to this the number of other fallible interpreters and we have “pervasive interpretive pluralism.” Every last one of us may well hold that the Bible is sufficiently clear and authoritative and yet differ widely on specifics. Does this, ipso facto, render our high view of Scripture impossible?

Certainly this fact of wide disagreement among biblicists ought to give us pause before dogmatically pronouncing on this or that doctrine, and Smith is right to tell us so. And it ought to make us more careful to handle the Scriptures responsibly, understanding that there is a “right” and a wrong way to do so (2 Tim. 2:15). But the mere fact of wide interpretive differences in no way diminishes my own understanding of or commitment to biblical infallibility or clarity. Nor did it trouble Augustine, Calvin, or countless other well-informed and respected “biblicists.” If, for example, you ask a biblicist-paedobaptist and me why we disagree, we will both answer first in terms of the fallenness of the human heart and mind, the remaining imperfections of Christians (including Christian theologians), and so on. We agree and are convinced that we do get much right, and we can demonstrate this convincingly. But we also confess that by reason of our finiteness and our sinfulness we lack perfect objectivity and that this often

affects our premises as well as our conclusions. Thus, often (but not always, thankfully) the “hermeneutical spiral” is askew from the start. In this case (baptism) the paedobaptist will think the problem is with me, and of course I will remain convinced that I know better. But in either case we both recognize the problem. For Smith all this reflects a problem with Scripture. For us, however, it reflects a problem with us. We are content to acknowledge this, and we see no necessary contradiction in doing so. Now we “see dimly” and “know in part” (1 Cor. 13:12), there are indeed parts of Scripture “hard to understand” (2 Pet. 3:16), and in fact there are some who “twist” Scripture “to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). Yet this Word remains a “lamp to our feet and a light to our path” (Ps. 119:105) by which we test all things (Is. 8:20).

Next, what doctrine of perspicuity is Smith attributing to us? Is he assuming that we “biblicists” hold that all of Scripture is equally understandable? I don’t know anyone who believes that. And if Smith knows that no one believes that, as he surely does, then what is the objection? We all recognize both our ignorance and our depravity and that we must therefore work all the harder to interpret Scripture responsibly, consistently, objectively, contextually, historically, and so on. Martin Luther, the Westminster Confession, and virtually all of Protestantism has understood perspicuity in these terms. It would be a fringe biblicist indeed who held that the Bible is equally clear throughout. Again, Scripture itself tells us that there is a “right” as well as a wrong way to handle it (2 Tim. 2:15). Indeed, on Smith’s own reading of Scripture there are doctrines that he considers essential — “dogmas” to which every Christian must adhere. Well then, it would seem that Smith himself believes that Scripture is clear on essentials after all! Is this not the evangelical doctrine of perspicuity exactly? This is what evangelicals have always held — that God has spoken with greater and lesser clarity on various matters yet with sufficient clarity to accomplish his purpose in revelation. And if Smith gives us this much, then, again, what is his objection?

We must also question Smith’s definition of biblicism.

His job is made easier by the inclusion of “the Bible as a handbook on cooking” kinds of illustrations, but this just cannot be taken seriously. He himself acknowledges that not all biblicists are of this weaker variety. But then I have to ask why he includes such things at all? These are not essential to any informed evangelical biblicism. I don’t want to accuse him of straw man arguments, but I’m not sure what else to say of this. To include the mere “handbook” kind of approach to the Bible as part of his description of evangelical biblicism only confuses matters. We simply must ask why he includes such things? Is he merely loading the dice in his favor? If not, then just what was his purpose?

Smith insists that he is not talking about the biblicism of a “looney” fringe evangelicalism but the biblicism of evangelicalism itself in the mainstream as represented by the recognized standard bearers. But it is difficult to take him seriously when he includes assumptions in his definitions that no informed evangelical would affirm. Moreover, even though including items such as this he in fact seems to recognize that he is not describing the likes of Greg Beale, Don Carson, Vern Poythress, and so on. But if not, then is he not acknowledging that there is a sane kind of biblicism after all? And when he acknowledges “essential” doctrines of the faith on which Scripture is clear and which all Christians must hold, has he not himself become a biblicist of this saner sort? Or is he alone the one to decide for us which matters are clear and essential and which are not? Is this really a better alternative to the biblicism he abhors? Or, good Catholic that he is, is he saying that it belongs to the magisterium to pronounce on these matters for us? And if so, then what of the “interpretive pluralism” within the papacy itself? Why would not this pluralism, on Smith’s ground, render the magisterial office impossible also?

Further, I have to ask why Smith “blames” even this sane biblicism on the old Princetonians and their alleged commitment to Scottish Common Sense Realism (SCSR). One scarcely knows where to begin with this. Were the old Princetonians committed to SCSR? This common charge is ill-informed, as David Smith (B.B. Warfield’s Scientifically Constructive Theological

Scholarship) and Paul Helseth (Right Reason and the Princeton Mind) have documented. Moreover, even if we grant that Hodge, Warfield, and Co., were committed to SCSR, how are we to understand that this is what led them inevitably to the doctrine of inerrancy? Is it not at least a little curious that the SCSR of the theologians at Yale and Harvard (in the day) led them to opposite views of Scripture? And still more to the point, does Smith genuinely believe that this high view of Scripture originated at old Princeton? Can anyone say this today without blushing? If it were not already obvious, certainly after John Woodbridge's Biblical Authority this idea must be pronounced dead. Simply put, it has been demonstrated over and over again that this high ("evangelical") view of Scripture has been the common property of Christians since the very beginning of Christianity itself.

Which raises still another question: How is it we can account for the fact that Christians have held such a high view of Scripture since the beginning? Surely there is no way to account for this apart from the obvious fact that this is the doctrine of Scripture given the church by Christ and his appointed apostles.

At some point we simply must ask what doctrine of Scripture was taught by the author and founders of our faith and adjust our answer to Smith's question accordingly. But this consideration does not play any significant role in Smith's argument. He mentions such verses as John 10:35, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 2 Peter 1:21, but only once in passing, and he makes no attempt to consider their implications. Jesus' assertion that "Scripture cannot be broken" is bursting with implications relevant to Smith's discussion. Jesus' whole point is that it is impossible for Scripture to be annulled in any of even its smallest statements. Peter's point in stressing that the God-giveness of Scripture renders it completely reliable at every point — more reliable even than eye-witness testimony. When Paul says that because Scripture is God-breathed it is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work," he is affirming the

complete sufficiency of Scripture for all that God requires of us. And when Peter declares that "the word of the Lord remains forever" (1 Pet. 1:25), is he not affirming a doctrine of the enduring relevance and sufficiency of Scripture (cf. Ps. 119:89, 160)? Jesus and the Biblical writers claim that Scripture in its every jot and tittle is the Word of God himself and is therefore true and reliable in all its details. That is to say, the (sane) biblicism that Smith opposes is a biblicism given us by Jesus and his appointed apostles.

Moreover, our Lord treated the Bible as authoritative and sufficiently clear to render men responsible, and he regularly chided men of his own day for their failures to understand. He faulted them — and not gently! — for not studying Scripture earnestly or carefully enough and for not believing its every declaration. "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25) presumes a doctrine of perspicuity, that Scripture is clear enough to render us responsible for understanding, faith, and obedience. Likewise Jesus' familiar "Have you not read the Scripture?" (Mark 12:10; cf. Matt. 21:42) and "Have you never read?" (Matt. 21:16) reflect his conviction that where the Bible speaks it speaks with both clarity and divine authority. Warfield was right to point out that Jesus' clear intimation in these expressions is that the source of error is simply ignorance of Scripture and failure to believe it. "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures" (Matt. 22:29; cf. Mk. 12:24). That is to say, if we know the Scriptures and believe them, we will not err. Sufficiency, clarity, authority. Is this not the biblicism Smith despises?

And this, in turn, raises a final question: If this was the doctrine of Jesus and his appointed apostles, how can we hold to anything less and still claim that our position is "Christian"? Or, more pointedly, as Warfield loved to pose the question, Can we have the Jesus of the Bible while refusing the Bible of Jesus?

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Welcome to the Story: Reading, Loving, and Living God's Word

by Stephen Nichols (Crossway).

The goal of Stephen Nichols latest book is to teach new and young believers not only how to study the Bible, but how to study the Bible in such a way that it transforms their lives. In 176 well-written, clear, humorously-illustrated pages, this volume admirably accomplishes its purpose.

The book is comprised of ten chapters addressing three major topics. After an introductory chapter setting the scene, the first group of chapters (two through five) provide the reader with a basic course in biblical theology, summarizing the storyline of the Bible under the headings of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. The second group of chapters (six through nine) address how we should read the Bible for proper understanding and, as importantly, for life-changing application. The final chapter explains basic mechanics of Bible study: how to establish a consistent Bible reading plan, how to use Bible study resources, helpful Bible study resources, and so forth. *Welcome to the Story* concludes with a “Cheat Sheet for Reading the Bible,” a five-page bullet-point summary of the contents of the entire book.

The strengths of Nichol's book are many. First, the content is superb, exactly the sort of thing I wish I had been taught as a young believer. If new Christians carefully work through this volume, they will be set upon a solid biblical, theological, and hermeneutical trajectory, potentially saving them from many pitfalls often characterizing the early Christian life. Second, the material in the book is very clearly communicated in contemporary language and uses illustrations from pop culture. I imagine you could hand this volume to a young, postmodern, un-churched high school student

and he or she would have no problem understanding it. Third, I found chapter six particularly helpful and thought-provoking. This chapter, entitled “The Story within a Story: Peter, Paul, and Mary,” provides a framework for deriving lessons and applications from the lives of major Bible characters (e.g., Peter, Paul, and Mary). Nichol's approach to drawing applications from the examples of Bible characters while maintaining a rigorous biblical theology is worth a careful look. Last, *Welcome to the Story* is filled with what I can only describe as “sanctified common sense.” Nichols' insights and observations on life, culture, and the church may remind the reader of C.S. Lewis. The reading is all the more reflective and enjoyable because the author is able to eloquently point out the artistry of God everywhere.

While I have no major criticisms, there are a couple comments readers might find helpful. First the book is written in the currently-popular postmodern literary style reminiscent of Donald Miller's *Blue Like Jazz*. The prose is characterized by very short informal sentences and innumerable stories. This style may be particularly effective since the book is directed toward young, postmodern Americans, but pastors and ministry leaders might want to note that the book reads more like a magazine than a textbook. This brings me to my second comment. The book includes a story for nearly every point made. Again, there is obviously nothing wrong with this and some may find the approach helpful. But I confess there were occasions when I found the stories a bit tiring.

These comments aside, I heartily recommend *Welcome to the Story* to new Christians, to older believers who are seeking a more solid grounding in the faith, or to anyone looking for a basic, user-friendly guide to Bible study and biblical theology. The book is ideal for incorporating into a discipleship course or for use with a high school youth group. I intend to purchase a number of copies and distribute them to individuals in my congregation. I know they will find it helpful.

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Justification: Five Views

Edited by James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy.

With contributions by Michael S. Horton, Michael F. Bird, James D. G. Dunn, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Gerald O'Collins S.J. and Oliver P. Rafferty. (Intervarsity Press).

With the rise of the ecumenical movement and the new perspective on Paul the meaning of justification continues to be debated intensely. Books representing multiple views on controversial subjects are quite popular, and hence it is quite fitting to add one on justification. It is difficult to review multi-perspective books in which the authors interact with one another, for many issues are broached briefly and compactly. Readers who are not familiar with a topic must also beware, for they may fall into the error of thinking they know more than is warranted about the subject debated after reading one book on the issue at hand. On the other hand, books like these are a good entrée into the discussion and prime the pump for further work.

What I found most helpful in this book was not the presentation of the five different views (though that was interesting as well), but the historical survey on justification in the first two chapters composed by the editors along with Steven Enderlein. Naturally, a brief appraisal can't include all that needs to be said about justification, and yet the survey nicely fills in for readers the historical landscape on justification from the earliest fathers to the present day. The editors sketch in the contribution of luminaries like Origen, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and many others. Readers are informed about both the Council of Trent and the new perspective. The survey was clear, fair, and a helpful prelude to the various views presented. In my mind the historical sketch of justification alone makes the book worth buying.

One has to be happy with the contributors as well. Michael Horton represents well the traditional Lutheran and Reformed view of justification. One can hardly think

of a better choice to represent the new perspective than James Dunn. Similarly, Michael Bird occupies a space between the new perspective and traditional Protestant perspective, and has contributed often to the discussion. The new Finnish view of Luther has generated much discussion, and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen explains how such a perspective fits well with the Eastern doctrine of deification, suggesting that the East and West are not as far apart as many think. Gerald O'Collins and Oliver Rafferty represent the Roman Catholic view well, and it is surely helpful for Protestants to hear the Catholic perspective directly from Roman Catholics.

Perhaps it will be helpful to share a general comment about the book. It is both enriching and frustrating to have both biblical scholars and systematicians dialogue in the same book. On the one hand, it is enriching to have scholars from different disciplines interact with one another. Too often biblical studies scholars work in one corner and systematics professors in another and never does the twain meet! It is helpful, therefore, to see them interact with one another. On the other hand, since they are in different disciplines, it occasionally feels as if they are talking past one another. For instance, Kärkkäinen presents his view via the lens of the new Finnish view of Luther and in conversation with the Joint Declaration on justification (a Lutheran and Roman Catholic declaration from 1999), and hence his view is not grounded exegetically. Horton engages in more exegesis than Kärkkäinen, but he emphasizes the Reformation tradition and confessions both in his presentation and in his responses to others. The Catholic view is unfolded in a historical sketch by Rafferty and in an interesting autobiographical narrative by O'Collins. Dunn and Bird, on the other hand, set forth their views exegetically. All the authors are not attempting to do the same thing, and hence assessing how well they succeeded is not simple. For instance, Protestants and Roman Catholics even appeal to different authorities, since tradition plays a central role for Roman Catholics, and thus the debate on justification cannot be restricted to scriptural interpretation.

Kärkkäinen articulates the Finnish view of Luther, showing how it provides leverage for a rapprochement between the East and West. Both Dunn and Bird rightly question, however, whether Kärkkäinen's view is biblically feasible. For instance, his definition of justification is quite broad and amorphous, and the respondents convincingly call into question the definition offered. It is difficult to know how Kärkkäinen would respond to such criticisms since he doesn't present an exegetical basis for his view in the first place.

One understands why Kärkkäinen is fascinated with Luther, for if the Finnish view of Luther is correct, then Eastern and Western Christendom may draw closer together. Remarkably, the Joint Declaration (1999) finds common ground in terms of the definition of justification. Both Lutherans and Catholics agree that the term is both forensic and transformative. Agreement on the definition must not be overlooked. And yet the devil is in the details. A number of Lutherans in Germany objected to the Joint Declaration, and many Lutherans in the United States do not concur as well. Horton rightly remarks that the definition buys into the Catholic view since it says that justification is not only forensic but also means to make righteous. I am not a scholar in all things Luther, but I also suspect Rafferty is correct in suggesting that the Finnish view is mistaken. As Rafferty notes, it seems unlikely that Luther's view would have caused such tumult if he agreed with the Finnish interpretation.

James Dunn is famous, of course, for his work on the new perspective over the years. Certainly Dunn is right in emphasizing the inclusion of Gentiles in Pauline theology and in calling attention to the role that the boundary markers (circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath), played in the first century. Dunn has moderated his language regarding the old perspective, so that his reading now seems to be "both-and" instead of "either-or." The polemical language against the old perspective, which was quite common with the inauguration of the new perspective, is largely gone. Dunn seems to say that the old perspective is not so much wrong as incomplete,

claiming that the new perspective supplements issues that were ignored by the old perspective. I still think Dunn puts the emphasis in the wrong place, but we do see a movement where old perspective interpreters see virtues in the new perspective and vice-versa. Bird rightly responds that there would not have been as much fuss when the new perspective first came out if the issues are framed as they are by Dunn here.

Dunn's moderation of his view means that he and Bird are not very far apart. There is still a difference between them. Bird is closer to the Reformed view than Dunn, but it is telling that Dunn says that his disagreements with Bird are minor. And Bird's response to Dunn breathes the same spirit. They do part ways on some matters. Bird rightly notes that Dunn underemphasizes the nomistic stream in Judaism, though I think Dunn has it right on "faith in Jesus Christ" over against Bird. Dunn argues that the call for good works and perseverance indicates that salvation can be lost, but Bird takes such texts seriously without endorsing such a conclusion.

I am a Reformation Protestant and thus it is not surprising that I am most sympathetic with Michael Horton's read of the evidence, though I wish he would explain in more detail the role of good works in the final judgment. Horton doesn't do much exegesis here, and there are more texts on the matter than Romans 2. Even if Romans 2 is "an empty set" (with which I disagree), many other texts must be accounted for in Paul, and Horton doesn't comment on these texts. When it comes to imputation, it seems that Bird and Horton aren't that far apart. They use different terminology, but both of them see imputation in terms of union with or incorporation into Christ. Bird worries about scholasticism and crude accounting. Horton counters that Bird misunderstands the tradition. In any case, this is a place where further conversations between systematic and biblical scholars could be most fruitful. There is no virtue in talking past one another, and it seems to me that Horton and Bird concur that the believer's righteousness is theirs in Jesus

Christ.

Including the Roman Catholic view in the book is quite helpful, but at the end of the day it seems that the divide between Roman Catholics and those who are traditional Protestants persists, at least for those who are in the Reformed tradition. It is quite clear that the Roman Catholic position is premised upon human cooperation and the freedom of the will. Such a view stands at variance with the Reformers (Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin). They rightly saw that such a perspective undermined the grace of God in Jesus Christ, seeing a close link between divine election and justification by grace.

I would judge this book as a success, though most, I imagine, will leave the book still finding their own view most convincing. Still, thanks to the fine work of the editors and the contributors, readers will be challenged to rethink justification biblically and theologically.

Thomas R. Schreiner

James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation; Associate Dean, Scripture and Interpretation. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

What book must every Christian read?

One book that stands out above all others is Augustine's *Confessions*. Its uniqueness derives from its unique blend of personal spirituality and struggle with acute observations on the divine nature, on God and time and on the Creation narrative and on human memory, on friendship and much else. It is one of the few books in which, whenever one takes it up, one finds something new and often unexpected.

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Scripture and the Authority of God

by N. T. Wright (InterVarsity).

The former bishop of Durham and renowned New Testament scholar N.T. Wright now serves as the chair of New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews' School of Divinity. His latest in a long line of books is titled *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, which is a revised and expanded edition of his earlier work titled *The Last Word*. Most notably, this latest edition includes two appendices in which Wright applies his view of scriptural authority to the specific issues of the Sabbath and monogamy. Wright's central claim is this: "...that the phrase 'authority of scripture' can make Christian sense only if it is a shorthand for 'the authority of the triune God, exercised somehow through Scripture'" (21, emphasis original). The remainder of the book is spent unpacking what is meant by this notion of Scripture's authority and how it should affect the way we understand God's Word.

Wright's main goal is to help readers understand and apply Scripture as the medium of God's authority. The book is not written with scholars in mind, as is evidenced by the lack of footnotes and endnotes; however, I suspect that readers with no formal scriptural training will need more background on the relevant hermeneutical and philosophical issues. Among the many topics covered are: Jesus' view of Scripture, the "Word of God" in the Apostolic Church, the first 1600 years of the church's use of Scripture, the challenge of the Enlightenment, and a critical look at postmodern views of scriptural authority. These wide-ranging issues form the backdrop for Wright's exhortation concerning how to "get back on track" in our reading of God's Word.

Strengths

As usual, Wright's style is engaging and his thoughts on this crucial subject are thought-provoking. Though he

is a bit repetitive and at times unnecessarily abrasive, he is never boring. Before listing several strengths regarding the book's central arguments, it is worth noting that the very treatment of Scripture's authority is a welcome contribution from a New Testament scholar. Though there are some wonderful exceptions, scholars who focus primarily on "biblical studies" too often treat the issue of scriptural authority as being foreign to their discipline, as if the nature of the biblical documents did not affect their interpretation. However, the issue of scriptural authority cannot be relegated solely to the domain of systematic theology or church history, for Scripture's own self-testimony forces us to either submit to the text or go our own way. Wright correctly laments the modern distinction between theology and biblical studies (2).

At least three strengths of Wright's work deserve mention. First, Wright reminds us that interpretation is never done in a vacuum. Both modern and postmodern philosophical influences affect the way we understand Scripture and the very questions we ask as we approach the text. Wright insightfully critiques the Enlightenment's challenge to God's authority. On the other hand, concerning the irony of postmodernism's appeal to tolerance, Wright memorably refers to it [postmodernism] as "an ideology which declares that all ideologies are power plays, yet which sustains its own position by ruling out all challenges a priori" (99). Wright's inclusion of the church's view of Scripture throughout history is also a good reminder in this discussion, even if one has some disagreements with his brief summary. More than a few biblical scholars have been guilty of "chronological snobbery," to borrow a phrase from C.S. Lewis, acting as if they were the first to approach the text in a thoughtful manner.

Third, Wright encourages the reader to interpret Scripture with contextual and canonical awareness. That is, in order to understand and apply the various commands, warnings, etc. contained in God's Word the reader must consider such issues as genre, literary style, and the place of a particular episode in the context of the overall

movement of Scripture. A helpful example can be found in the first appendix dealing with the Sabbath (143-173). Not all readers will be convinced by Wright's views, as the issue is admittedly complex and often fraught with personal attachment. Nevertheless, Wright gives us a helpful interpretive model by considering the issue of the Sabbath in the context of God's covenantal dealings with his people and in light of Christ's fulfillment of God's purposes.

Weaknesses

Given the wide range of historical, hermeneutical, and theological issues touched on in this book, many readers will have at least some minor quibbles with this or that point. Wright admits the rather abbreviated nature of the book, noting its lack of interaction with other authors and viewpoints (xii-xiii). With this in mind, I will note two closely related critiques that are more integral to Wright's main arguments.

First, Wright has not adequately defined what is meant by "the authority of Scripture." He concludes that "when unpacked" this shorthand phrase "offers a picture of God's sovereign and saving plan for the entire cosmos, dramatically inaugurated by Jesus himself, and now to be implemented through the Spirit-led life of the church precisely as the scripture-reading community" (115-16, emphasis original). What Wright has given us here is not so much a definition or explanation of Scripture's authority, but rather his own perspective on Scripture's role in God's plan of redemption. Since there are a number of Christian and non-Christian narratives on offer, the question still remains: why is this account of God's plan for his creation authoritative? The authority of Scripture doesn't merely "offer a picture" of God's plan, it explains why, among other things, God's plan is binding on all humanity.

To be fair, Wright notes that Scripture derives its authority from God and Jesus (21-22), so that it exercises authority in a "mediated" fashion (23). This is helpful insofar as it connects Scripture's authority to God and

keeps us from equating Scripture with God. However, to say that Scripture is the medium through which God exercises his authority does not adequately characterize that medium. For instance, can this medium ever err? Does God's authority extend to the entire text of Scripture? Some of Wright's comments seem to point to an affirmative answer to this question, but his definition of inspiration is hardly satisfying (35-36). Wright's discussion runs the danger of distancing the authority of God from his Word. We need more specificity with regard to the relationship between God's authority and the actual words of the text.

A second critique of Wright's work is related to the first critique above and concerns his emphasis on the narrative or "story" aspect of Scripture. Whether or not one agrees with this emphasis on "story" over against Scripture's propositional character, Scripture's "story" aspect cannot shoulder the load as far as defining its authority. While it may be unintentional, Wright ends up locating authority in a meta-narrative constructed from his own reading of the text. After explicating this meta-narrative and God's over-arching purposes for creation, Wright then interprets various texts based on whether or not they fit the narrative he has constructed. This approach works in the wrong direction, for Scripture's authority means that any narrative or grand purpose we discern in the text are authoritative only to the extent that they are derived from and faithful to the inspired text. Wright's question concerning how a narrative can be authoritative is certainly worth reflecting on, but his emphasis on the "story" aspect of Scripture over its propositional character only pushes the question of authority back further. Why should anyone accept as authoritative this particular story?

Readers will benefit from several aspects of Wright's book mentioned above, and surely more could be added. Nevertheless, this book has not adequately answered what Wright himself has identified as one of the three key underlying questions in interpretation: "In what sense is the Bible authoritative in the first place?" (16)

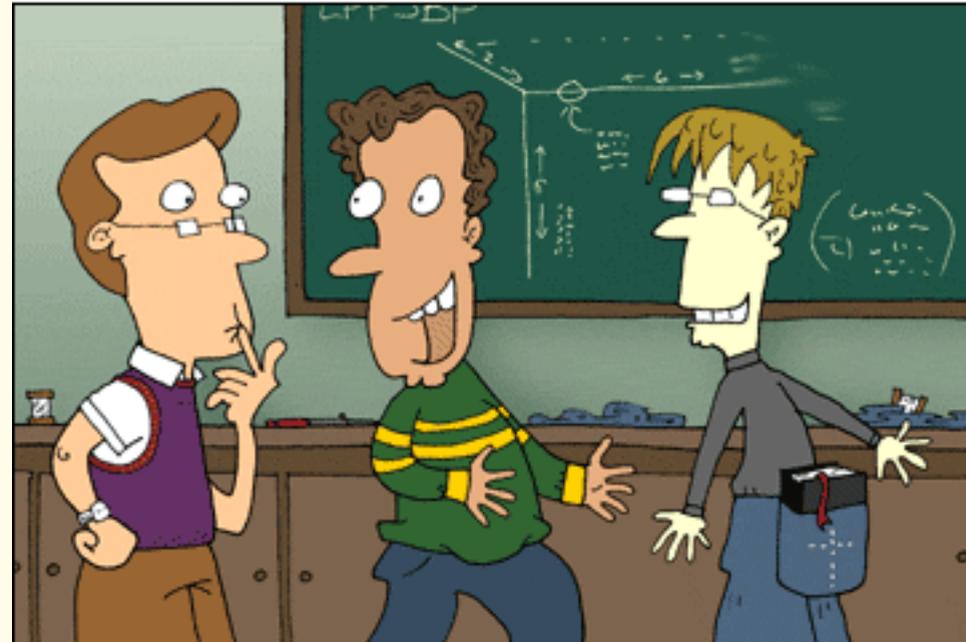
One wonders whether this question can really be answered without some recourse to terms such as "inerrancy" and "infallibility," Wright's disappointment with traditional "battles for the Bible" notwithstanding (1). This book's purpose and target audience may rule out an extensive dialogue with Warfield, Rogers/McKim, and Woodbridge, but we would expect a more lengthy discussion of the nature of the God-inspired text. In keeping with Wright's very practical purpose, readers should be motivated to listen carefully to Scripture when they believe that in its very words the God of all creation is speaking to them. A more lengthy discussion of verses like 2 Timothy 3:16 might also be helpful in which Scripture testifies to its own authority. In any case, Wright's work reminds us that the age-old task of defining and submitting to the authority of Scripture will continue to be crucial for God's people. This "battle for the Bible" is at least as old as Genesis 3.

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Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine

by Gregg R. Allison (Zondervan).

Is evangelical theology an historical theology simultaneously rooted in two thousand years of Christian history and the sacred writings of the Old and New Testaments? Or, does evangelical theology represent a significant shift away from an older Christian heritage? In *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, Gregg R. Allison places an entire body of evangelical doctrine directly under the tutelage of historical and biblical Christianity, arguing for the former rather than the latter. Allison serves as Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, received his PhD from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and, with this volume, proves that he was the right choice to write a companion text to Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. The fruit of many years of labor, Allison's *Historical Theology* will serve as more than a companion to Grudem's text, equipping pastors, students, and theologically conscience laypeople with an invaluable resource to encourage them along in their historical faith for many years to come.

A unique, beneficial feature of the book is its topical-chronological layout. Rather than highlight important doctrines while treading through the ever-lengthening and complicated timeline of Christian history, Allison structures the book according to specific doctrines then traces the development of those doctrines as they evolved in the course of the church's history. In fact, when looking at the table of contents, the work purposively bears a striking resemblance to Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. Both works breakdown into the following seven parts: the Doctrine of the Word of God, the Doctrine of God, the Doctrine of Humanity,

the Doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit, the Doctrine of the Application of Redemption, the Doctrine of the Church, and the Doctrine of the Future. This topical-chronological feature makes it a useful companion to Grudem's work, but, more than that, it serves as the books most practical attribute for pastors, students, and laypeople. Because each chapter highlights specific doctrines and then traces them through important periods of Christian history from the New Testament to the present day, each chapter stands alone, making the book an important resource that does not have to be read from cover to cover and that is probably most useful when it is not. Although this approach led Allison to repeat himself a number of times in various chapters concerning important movements and their significance for similar doctrines (e.g. Allison addresses Arianism when discussing the Trinity and again when addressing the Person of Christ), repetition is a worthy sacrifice in a book that should serve as a handy, oft-used resource for pastors teaching or preaching upon specific doctrines.

Allison's *Historical Theology* also serves as an excellent starting point for students hoping to take a deeper look at a particular doctrine. Although the book does not conclude with a bibliography, each chapter serves as an invaluable research tool for theological students, providing footnotes rich with critical primary sources essential for an understanding of a doctrine's development through varying stages in Christian history. For instance, if a student hoped to discover the key figures and works important for the development of a particular doctrine during the reformation and post-reformation period, all he would have to do is go to the chapter covering the doctrine and look at the section on the reformation and post-reformation. There, the student would find not only an outline of the important persons and works during this period, but also footnotes referencing the critical editions of those works and many explanatory notes providing further information concerning context.

Another helpful characteristic of Allison's book, making

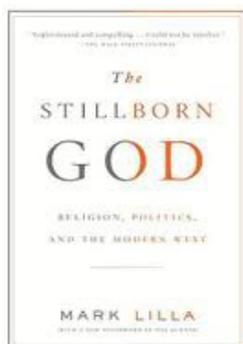
it an important resource for theologically conscience laypeople, is its brief and easy to read chapters. At first glance, the size of the book will make it appear like a rather daunting read to the average layperson, student, and even pastor, but when one considers the fact that Allison covers thirty-three different topics in seven sections it becomes clear that Allison packs a great deal of useful information into rather small, easy-to-handle packages. Along with brief chapters, Allison's book is clear to the serious layperson, because Allison does not assume that all of his readers have a knowledge of difficult theological terms and because Allison provides a glossary at the conclusion of his work covering church leaders, writings, and movements mentioned in the book.

If Allison hoped that *Historical Theology* would be a worthy companion to Grudem's *Systematic Theology* that would benefit students and all Christians desirous to learn the history of Christian doctrine, then he has achieved this goal and more. *Historical Theology* stands as an important resource with a unique structure that will aid pastors, students, and laypeople time and again as they begin or continue their exciting journey into the history of the Christian faith.

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Brandishings

Chad Brand's Picks

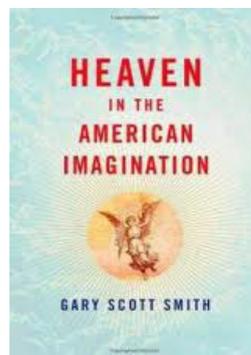


The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West.

By Mark Lilla.

One of my recent favorite reads

demonstrates my broad and eccentric interests. *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West* by Mark Lilla is a fascinating analysis of political theology and its history in the West. Lilla shows the confluence between one's view of God, politics, and economics in a fresh manner that illustrates the importance of the relatively new discipline of political economy. It is a must read for anyone wanting to understand the history of that discipline.

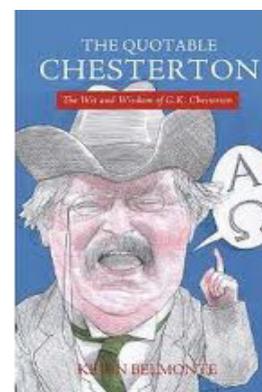


Heaven in the American Imagination.

By Gary Scott Smith.

Gary Scott Smith in his new book, *Heaven in the*

American Imagination, demonstrates that the corporate understanding of heaven in the American experience has generally followed cultural trends in American society, so that for the Victorians heaven was a warm and familial environment, whereas for modern Americans it is a place of cultural entertainment. It is a reminder that our theology often is determined by culture more than by Scripture.



The Quotable Chesterton.

By Kevin Belmonte

The Quotable

Chesterton, by Kevin Belmonte, is a wonderful resource for those who find this affable Roman Catholic writer more to their taste than they may want to admit. Anyone who could write, "The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man" is good enough for this Protestant. And I disagree with those students of mine who claim that in ten years I will look just like the aged bard.

Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy

by Paul C. Gutjahr (Oxford University Press).

One of the best ways to understand important historical movements is through the lives of those most directly involved. Charles Hodge (1797-1878) lived through the turbulent years of the mid 19th century and became, arguably, evangelical Christianity's most important theological voice and defender. An "Old School" Presbyterian committed unflinchingly to the Westminster Confession, Hodge became the single most influential defender of conservative Presbyterianism in the years before Presbyterian orthodoxy felt the dissipating effects of theological liberalism at the end of the century. A great tragedy of historiography is that no significant biography of Hodge's life and thought had been available since his son's reminiscences, written within a few years of the great theologian's death. This dearth has long puzzled historians of American Christianity. Happily this want has now been supplied with Paul C. Gutjahr very helpful and highly readable treatment of the grand theologian.

Gutjahr takes the reader through fifty-seven concise but insightful chapters to chronicle major events and accomplishments in Hodge's long and prodigious career. Few seminary professors of any day have exerted the far-reaching and long-lasting influence that Charles Hodge had, as he trained more than three thousand students over his fifty-six year tenure at Princeton Seminary. Beyond his classroom influence on such theological successors as his own son Archibald Alexander Hodge and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, both of whom succeeded the grand old man in the chair of systematic theology at Princeton; and James Petigru Boyce, Baptist theologian and one of the founders of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Hodge also engaged the

theological conflicts of his day through his writings. As the editor of the *Repository*, Hodge articulated and defined a narrow Princetonian, "Old School" orthodoxy. He wielded his pen against such widely controversial figures as Charles Finney, Horace Bushnell, Nathaniel W. Taylor and even his conservative Presbyterian colleague James Henley Thornwell, with whom Hodge debated the contentious issue of slavery. It is in Gutjahr's treatment of the slavery issue and the subsequent turmoil within a divided American Presbyterianism that Gutjahr renders some of his most valuable service. While Hodge himself never really rejected slavery, he also never went as far in defending the institution as had the Southern Presbyterians like Thornwell; however, Hodge does stand as a vigorous Christian supporter of a most unfortunate human institution. But Gutjahr, in an unvarnished way, allows the reader to feel Hodge's own conflicts and inconsistencies with slavery, including the angst caused by disruptions in the Union and within his beloved Presbyterianism. For Hodge, slavery was treated in the same forthright way as other pernicious questions—What does the Bible say? Herein was his conflict: because the Bible appears to sanction slavery, if not commending it outright, Hodge thought it ill-advised to reject it out of hand. It is this kind of theological tension that makes for an interesting read. Charles Hodge is an important historical figure to be considered. Gutjahr is to be thanked for his attention to these details.

Gutjahr's selection and arrangement of historical materials is helpful. He incorporates a substantial amount of collateral details on significant persons and events that intersect with Hodge's life, fleshing out the larger storyline in which Hodge found himself. This telling of the larger story makes this book a significant contribution to the study of 19th century American religious history in general and Presbyterianism in particular. In bringing Charles Hodge to life in vivid detail, Gutjahr unavoidably also chronicles the major theological controversies of 19th century Presbyterianism. Hodge contented for a strict Westminster view of Presbyterianism that conflicted

with revivalism, the New School, New Haven theology, and theological liberalism. As the “guardian of American orthodoxy,” Hodge boasted that no new theological ideas were conceived at Princeton during his watch. It became the bastion of historic Augustinian Calvinism. Whether or not one agrees with Hodge’s unflinching Calvinism, there can be no doubt that he remains an important, if under-appreciated theological powerhouse of the 19th century. Gutjahr’s work also demonstrates why Charles Hodge is important beyond Presbyterianism as his theological influence reached into other denominations, especially among the Southern Baptists and later into transdenominational fundamentalism through another theological successor, J. Gresham Machen. This is a book that deserves a careful reading by evangelicals across the theological landscape as the shadow of Charles Hodge continues to hang over the movement through a new generation of younger Calvinists who stand as the heirs of Hodge’s orthodoxy. Finally, Gutjahr shows through Hodge’s life both the necessity and manner of defending Christian orthodoxy. Theological debate is not something the Hodge sought out but it was a duty thrust upon him by both the times in which he lived and the circumstances which he faced. He was no mere Don Quixote tilting at specious theological windmills. He faced real doctrinal adversaries who views undermined the essentials of both Presbyterianism and Christian orthodoxy. The issues were too important to leave Hodge sitting on the sidelines as a spectator. He entered the conflict and drew his sword, unafraid of the consequences. In this effort, he serves as a grand example of a “defender” of orthodoxy.

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Ephesians

by Clinton E. Arnold (Zondervan).

Clinton Arnold has provided the church with an excellent commentary on Ephesians. In keeping with the quality of the commentaries in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series, this volume is full of insights into the meaning and application of Ephesians.

The strengths of this volume are numerous. First, Arnold is a scholar who takes the text of Ephesians seriously. Against the mainstream view, he rightly holds to Pauline authorship of the letter (cf. 1:1), and he contends that it was written directly to the church in Ephesus but was intended for a more general and geographically widespread audience. The similarities between Ephesians and Colossians are due to the same author expounding similar themes within a brief time period (52-54). Furthermore, Arnold listens to the text well when he asserts regarding 1:4, “It is difficult to find within this text any notion of God foreseeing those who would exercise faith” (95). Also, he rightly holds that Paul thought leadership to be intrinsic to the notion of headship (405), a notion that is hotly debated today. Though one may disagree with Arnold on his interpretations at various points, he is to be commended for listening to the text. In an era in which hermeneutical inquiry often deteriorates into an exposition of one’s own presuppositions, Arnold provides an exemplary hermeneutical approach that seeks to take Paul on his own terms.

Another helpful aspect to Ephesians is its suitability to scholars and pastors alike. It is a technical commentary inasmuch as it constantly is explaining grammatical and syntactical features from the Greek text. As he explains each verse and clause, Arnold provides his own translation followed by the non-transliterated Greek text. Thus, in keeping with the goal of the series (11), those who will benefit most from this volume are those who

have a working knowledge of Hellenistic Greek. Also, those more academically inclined will find useful the “In Depth” sections sprinkled throughout the commentary. These sections cover such topics as how Psalm 68 functions as the background to Ephesians 4:8 (247-50), the continuing role of apostles and prophets (257-59), the role of wives in Roman-era Ephesus and Western Asia Minor (372-79), why Ephesians 5:22-33 still applies to husbands and wives today (407-10), and why Paul did not advocate slavery (430-31). Nevertheless, even those who have no working knowledge of Greek or very little academic interest will still find this commentary to be extremely useful. Each pericope is introduced by a brief discussion of the literary context, a one or two sentence explanation of its main idea, a discussion of its literary structure, and an exegetical outline. For those preaching or teaching through Ephesians, these introductory matters alone are helpful in providing the basic idea and flow of Paul’s thought. Further, at the end of each pericope’s discussion is a section for application of the text. Here Arnold teases out the implications of the text for a 21st century Western audience. For example, Arnold thinks practically about issues such as how Paul’s prayers should influence the way one prays (221-25), how one may “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3; 238), how husbands should lead and sacrifice for their wives and how the latter should submit to their husbands (401-07), and how a Christian should think about the relationship between the modern world of science and Paul’s teaching of the reality of unseen spirits (470-72). Thus, this volume should be relevant to both scholars and pastors alike.

A final major strength of the commentary is Arnold’s insights regarding the Ephesian background of magic and pagan religion. Arnold’s expertise is in this area, having authored several monographs on related topics. His best insights come in the passages in which Paul contrasts the power and status of God in Christ with that of demonic forces (cf. 1:15-23; 3:14-21; 4:8-10; 6:10-20). In the commentary on these texts Arnold explains how knowing that Christ is exalted above every ruler and

authority would have encouraged the Ephesian believers to trust in him rather than return to the cult of Artemis and its magical practices. In fact, Arnold persuasively argues that the reason why Paul devotes so much attention to spiritual warfare in Ephesians (cf. 6:10-20) is precisely because virtually every believer would have been converted out of the Artemis cult (469). To take up the shield of faith in 6:16, through which believers can access the power of a personal God, would have meant a striking contrast to the magical practices of the cult in which rituals and incantations were needed to conjure up a god’s power (457). These and other examples demonstrate the significance of understanding the magical background of Ephesus for the interpretation of this letter.

Although Ephesians has numerous strengths, it also has a few shortcomings. With regard to the background of magic in Ephesus, at times Arnold overplays its significance, attempting to read such a cultural background into the text in questionable ways. For instance, in 4:24 Paul urges the Ephesians to put on as the image of God true righteousness and holiness. At this point in the commentary Arnold suggests that Paul may be playing on the fact that there were two local deities named “Dikaios” (“Righteous”) and “Hosios” (“Holy,” 290). This may be so, but the main reason for Paul’s use of these words is because they form a word pair to describe a person totally devoted to God (cf. Deut 9:5; Luke 1:75). Also, in his description of the “works of darkness” in 5:11, Arnold contends that it is likely that Paul is condemning magical practices of the occult (331-33). Again, this is possible, but the near context suggests that the main referents to these “works” are sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness (cf. 5:3, 5). These vices included but were not limited to the Ephesian cult. In these places Arnold reads too much into the magical background of Ephesus.

Another weakness of the commentary is that Arnold interprets those who do such “works of darkness” (cf. 5:11-14) as backslidden Christians and thus misses

the main contrastive force of 5:3-14. He provides three reasons for his interpretation: 1) the overall context suggests Paul is giving moral exhortation to believers, not unbelievers; 2) Paul uses the verb ἐλέγχω (“I expose”) in other texts to refer to the need to reprove a sinning member of the community (cf. 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9, 13); and 3) the focus of the passage is not evangelistic but focuses on the edification of the church (331-32). But these reasons do not convince. Part of Paul’s giving moral instruction includes his contrast between the unbelieving Gentiles and the Ephesian believers (cf. 4:17-5:21). Paul instructs them not to walk like unbelievers, who perform these works of darkness. Moreover, the fact that Paul uses in other texts with reference to sin in the community does not mean that such is happening here. The context determines the meaning of the word, and the context of Ephesians suggests that Paul is contrasting the way of the fool and the way of the wise. (Note that the verb ἐλέγχω [“I expose”] occurs often in the LXX of Proverbs and thus finds a natural home in the wisdom literature genre. Such is Paul’s language in this section of the letter). Finally, the fact that Paul focuses often on the edification of the church in Ephesians does not preclude him from urging the believers to share the gospel with their unbelieving neighbors. In fact, part of being mature in Christ means being bold to call unbelievers to repentance and thus come to the light (5:14). Arnold’s view blurs the distinction between believer and unbeliever and thus forces him into the unlikely interpretation of seeing some believers as in “a functional state of being dead” (335), a state from which Paul says believers have been freed (2:1-6).

Finally, Arnold downplays the effectiveness of God’s call in a believer’s life. In the application section of 4:1-6, he says that God’s call to a believer is “God’s invitation to each of us to respond in faith to his offer of salvation... [T]his calling is our opportunity to experience God’s grace, mercy, and love...” (239). But Paul’s normal use of the καλέω (“I call”) word group describes God’s effectual drawing of a person to himself by creating faith in that

person. This call is more than simply an “invitation” or an “opportunity to experience God’s grace.” The basis for the believer’s current lifestyle (4:1) and future hope (4:4; cf. 1:18) is that God has effectually drawn him to himself. This interpretation actually fits better Arnold’s emphasis on the magical background of Ephesus. The Ephesians have good reason to walk worthy of their calling and to cling to the one hope of their calling because the God who called them showed he was more powerful than the local deities by effectively calling the believers from the realm of darkness to become children of light (cf. 5:8). Such downplaying of God’s effectual call lessens his power and the believer’s encouragement.

In conclusion, Clinton Arnold has provided scholars and pastors alike a useful resource for their study of Ephesians. In taking seriously the text, Arnold has set a good standard for evangelical commentaries; in providing keen insights from the magical background of Ephesus, he has brought to bear his expertise in a number of passages. Even though I have disagreed with him on a few interpretive issues, I rejoice that his commentary on the whole will prove to be useful and influential for years to come.

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Paul and Scripture: Studying the New Testament Use of the Old Testament

by Steve Moyise (Baker Academic).

The area of study collectively known as the use of the Old Testament in the New is vast and multi-faceted, intersecting with various other disciplines, even within biblical studies. Here Steve Moyise, professor of New Testament at the University of Chichester, seeks to provide an introduction to how the Old Testament is used in the Pauline corpus. The primary focus of this work is on the explicit quotations of the Old Testament in the Pauline letters. The vast majority of which are found in the “undisputed letters,” specifically in Galatians, Romans and Corinthians. Rather than taking the approach of surveying how the OT is used in each letter, Moyise starts with an OT concept or portion of Scripture and then shows how Paul’s teaching grows out of and interacts with the Hebrew Scriptures.

The greatest strength of the book is how much material Moyise covers in such a short span. For that reason it will prove to be a helpful guide to those entering into the study of Paul’s use of Scripture. However, precisely because this book is pitched as a resource for beginning theological students, various statements by Moyise give me grounds for concern.

First, Moyise singles out the topic of original sin, focusing particularly on the translation of Romans 5:12. He seemingly ignores the detailed arguments in favor of a consecutive reading by Fitzmyer, Schreiner, and Vickers when he writes, “It is now commonly agreed that the Greek words *eph ho* mean ‘because’ and not ‘in him’ as Origen took it” (26). But much more troublesome is Moyise’s summary conclusion on the relevance of this passage to original sin: “Whether such a doctrine can be constructed on other grounds is debated, but

it is not what Paul is saying in Romans 5:12.” And to further make his point he goes on to write, “Neither does he (nor any New Testament writing) ever suggest that Jesus had to be born of a virgin in order to break this connection with Adam’s sin” (26). Perhaps Moyise has a fuller argument to make, but in the present work he seems to indicate that by taking a causal reading of *eph ho* against the Latin Vulgate, he has therefore demonstrated the illegitimacy of the doctrine of original sin. To that issue I simply refer both Moyise and the reader to John Murray’s detailed exegetical arguments in favor of both a causal reading in Romans 5:12 and the imputation of the original sin of Adam to all of humanity.

A second concerning statement by Moyise revolves around the historicity of Adam. He writes, “The advantage of the ‘solution to plight’ for modern readers is that Paul’s arguments might still have value now that the theory of evolution makes it impossible – for most people – to believe in a literal Adam and Eve. If Paul is making deductions about Christ and salvation based on the facticity of the Adam and Eve story, it is hard to see how they can continue to command support. But if Paul is using the Adam and Eve story to illustrate what he believed about Christ, then he has given us an interesting example of ‘cultural communication’” (29). According to Moyise, if we think Paul argued for the universal fallenness of creation based on Adam’s sin, it would not be tenable in today’s intellectual climate. This may indeed be true, but that is not reason to abandon it if that is indeed what the Scriptures teach. I understand the desire to salvage some theological payoff of these creation stories for apologetic purposes, while feeling the need to cast aside the ‘facticity.’ But it simply does not work, and I suspect most unbelievers would not find it compelling either. Elsewhere Paul demonstrates that even in the midst of a philosophically hostile audience, he still maintains the reality and relevance of Adam as the progenitor of the human race (i.e. Acts 17:26).

Third, Moyise’s assumptions about the reliability of the biblical authors are also distressing. I could not agree

more with Moyise when he writes, “It is of course true that one’s overall view of Scripture is bound to have an effect on how one analyses Paul’s use of it” (124). For this reason I find myself at odds with some of the Moyise’s solutions to various apparent ‘discrepancies’ in Paul’s use of the OT. For instance, in Moyise’s discussion of the classic case of the ‘missing thousand’ in 1 Corinthians 10:8, he writes, “Since there seems to be no particular reason why Paul would change the number, it is possible that he knew a different form of the text – **or his memory let him down**” (53, emphasis added). Whether one prefers to understand it as a deliberate change on Paul’s part or a transmissional discrepancy of some kind, it is not an option to chalk it up to memory failure on Paul’s end. That’s not because I think the apostle never forgot anything, but because a larger doctrine of Scripture recognizes that these words by Paul are the inscripturated words of a God who is incapable of error and always speaks the truth.

Additionally, there are several occasions where Moyise indicates that Paul’s theology and use of the OT were developed in light of current circumstances, even though it was not the original meaning in the Hebrew Scriptures. In reference to Paul not following the original meaning of Hosea in Romans 9:25-26, Moyise comments, “The (surprising) success of the Gentile mission has given Paul a unique insight into how the scriptural promises are to be fulfilled, and hence a reconfiguration of their meaning” (78, emphasis added). He similarly writes that post-Christ, Paul looked “at the Scriptures with new eyes, sometimes clarifying what was written and sometimes reinterpreting it” (1). I confess even after reading the book, I’m not exactly sure what Moyise means by these statements. A sympathetic reading would understand him to be saying something like, in light of the new revelation following the Christ-event, Paul now draws out applications and extensions of meaning that were previously hidden but now revealed. But in other cases Moyise seems to be communicating something more, such as in his discussion of Galatians 4:29 that I just referenced. Moyise suggests, “Perhaps the seriousness of the dispute – in Paul’s eyes – has led him

to deliberately exaggerate the implications of the Genesis story” (43, emphasis added). I would want to argue that Paul held the same ‘high view’ of the Bible that I appealed to above, so I question whether or not he felt the freedom to “deliberately exaggerate” points he made from the OT.

The lack of clarity on these sorts of issues could have been curtailed if Moyise included a more developed discussion on Paul’s overall hermeneutic as demonstrated by how he used the OT (which is the stated theme of this book). Other than a few unclear statements throughout the book, the only time Moyise directly raises the question of whether or not Paul is taking the OT out of context in his quotations is very briefly on the last page concluding the whole book! I know he has written about such matters elsewhere, but a condensed discussion in this book would prove eminently relevant.

Finally, the book could be improved by two further additions. First, a more sustained discussion of the relevance and use of extrabiblical literature to Paul’s hermeneutical and conceptual approach to the OT would have enhanced the book. Many scholars have focused on this issue as key to understanding the NT use of the OT (Ellis, Fitzmyer, Longenecker, and Enns to name a few). Second, while the contributions of eight modern scholars to this field are introduced in the concluding chapter, a similar discussion with respect to scholars of previous generations is mostly absent. I suspect an awareness of the history of the discipline would prove useful to the beginning student as well as the more advanced scholar.

Though these problems are concerning, nevertheless, those in need of an introduction to Paul’s use of Scripture will undoubtedly find Moyise’s work supplementary. Moyise’s scholarship on the subject reminds us that even in the twenty-first century work remains to be done if we are to properly understand Paul’s use of the Old Testament.

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Scripture *in the* Family Room

By Matthew Barrett

Daddy, I want you to read me the Bible.” These are the words that I hear at about 8:30am when my three year old daughter Cassandra and I sit down for a bowl of our favorite cereal. I wish I could say that this breakfast tradition originated out of the depths of my heart where I felt a deep conviction to lead my family in worship every morning. It did not. In fact, it was not me, but Cassandra who recognized the obvious: “Dad is reading his Bible while he eats breakfast. Why doesn’t he read it aloud so I can hear too?” The entire situation was a blow to my perceived spiritual maturity. Yes, it took my three year old daughter to remind me that I should be taking time to lead my family in the reading of God’s Word.



Too often we *merely* view God’s Word as something we hear from the pulpit on a Sunday or read in our own personal quiet time with the Lord. However, if the infiltration of God’s Word stops there we have not gone far enough. God’s Word also must be feasted upon in the context of the family household.

The centrality of God’s Word in the family is not a new truth of the Christian faith. Scripture often teaches the necessity of God’s Word for the household. One of the most pressing passages in this regard is Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Speaking of the commandments of the Lord, Moses says, “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them

diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut 6:5-7). The law was to be taught to children, and diligently so. How often? All of the time. When you sit in your house, when you go for a walk, when you lay down to sleep, and when you get up for another day. Israel was to

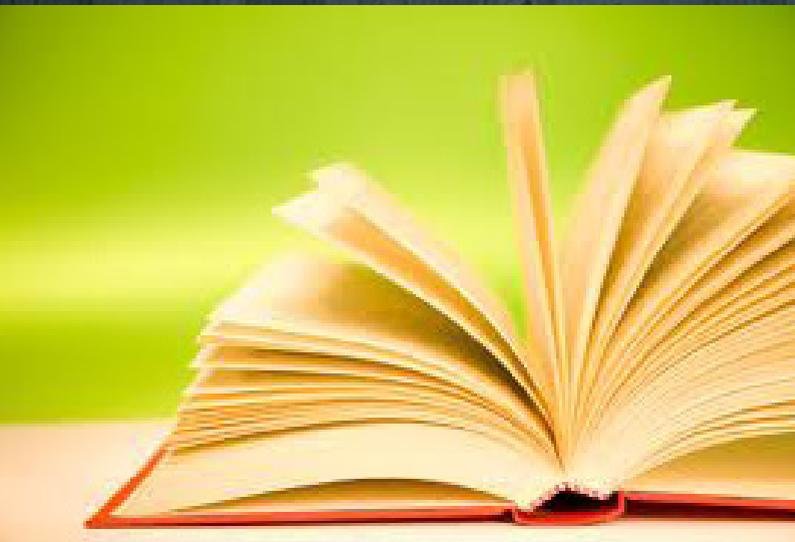
be a people whose households were characterized by, centered around, and consumed with God’s revelation to them. So too for us, the Word of God must be front and center in the family room, that the Spirit might work on a daily basis through the Word to change the hearts of children and parents.

Perhaps one of the best ways God’s Word can be dusted

off the family room bookshelf is through the practice of family worship, a practice the Puritans perfected. In family worship the Puritan father led his family in prayer, the singing of hymns, the reading of Scripture, and instruction in Scripture.

My daughter Cassandra has not yet trusted in Christ. However, taking her advice to read the Bible while we eat Fruit-Loops is a fundamental step in laying before her the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps one day, while we are indulging once again in our breakfast tradition, the Spirit will work in Cassandra’s heart by means of the Word of God, as he did with Lydia in Acts 16:14, to trust in Christ our Savior.

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