CHAPTER ONE

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

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The pattern of Christian thought that emerged from the Reformation is often summed up under the three phrases: *sola gratia, sola fides,* and *sola Scriptura*. When I was a boy, I sometimes wondered how logic could be preserved if there were *three* statements each claiming that something or other was "sola"; but in due course I learned that grace is the sole ground of salvation, faith is the sole means of salvation, and the Scriptures are the sole ultimate authority for faith and life—all set in the context of the polemics of the Reformation period.

Precisely because the Reformers' theological formulations were shaped by the controversies of their age, it is clear that the "faith and life" formula was meant to be an all-embracing rubric, not a limiting one. They claimed that the deposit of truth lies in the Bible, not in the church or in the magisterium of the church. Their concern, in other words, was to spell out the locus of authority in order to rebut their Roman Catholic opponents, not to restrict the range of the Bible's authority to religious life and thought, away from history and the natural world.[1] The modern disjunction would have seemed strange to them.

This side of the Enlightenment, debate over the Scriptures soon moved on to broader matters. Although the history of these debates has been chronicled many times,[2] a great deal of detailed work still needs to be done. But perhaps the most difficult period to comprehend, in some ways, is the most recent. We do not yet have the advantage of distance; and the twists in the debate are many and intricate. Not a few of the issues raised are so fresh or are so much a part of modern scholarly thought that evenhanded and disinterested evaluation is extraordinarily difficult.

The essays printed in this volume and in the companion volume[3] have been written in order to address the most important of these issues. We have written as Evangelicals; and so far as the doctrine of Scripture is concerned, we believe we stand within the central tradition of the church and in line with the teaching of the Scriptures themselves. This ancient tradition is worth defending, examining, and rearticulating as theological fashions raise new questions. The present essay attempts to scan rather rapidly some of these recent

developments, in the hope that a bird's-eye view will provide these volumes with breadth and unity that might otherwise be lacking. The aim is not to deal with denominational bodies (e.g., the Missouri Synod or the Southern Baptist Convention) or particular publications that have agonized over the issue (e.g., *Churchman*) but to focus on theological, philosophical, and historical matters that in the modern debate impinge directly on how we view the Bible.

The resurgence of interest in the doctrine of Scripture can be traced to many factors; but four deserve brief mention. The *first* is the growing strength of Evangelicals. It is no longer possible to ignore them. Their churches are growing, their seminaries are bulging, their books keep pouring off the presses. In any large movement, of course, much of the momentum is kept up at the purely popular level; but Evangelicalism can no longer be responsibly dismissed as an academic wasteland. While nonconservative seminaries are lowering academic standards, multiplying D.Min. tracks, and reducing Greek and Hebrew requirements in order to avoid disastrous collapse of student enrollment, seminaries within Evangelicalism continue to blossom. At some Ivy League seminaries, only thirty percent of the students take any Greek; most evangelical institutions require at least one year of Greek as a prerequisite for entrance and insist on a minimum of one year of Greek beyond that. One of the results is that a disproportionate number of current doctoral candidates both in America and in Britain spring from conservative backgrounds; they are more likely to have the linguistic competence for advanced training. The rising tide of interest in the doctrine of Scripture in nonconservative circles[4] is not a reaction against conservatives who are becoming even more conservative than the heritage from which they have emerged (as some have suggested).[5] Rather, it is at least partly a reaction to the increasing visibility of conservatives.

The *second* factor is scarcely less important: Evangelicalism is becoming somewhat fragmented. Never a truly monolithic movement, Evangelicalism long enjoyed a fair measure of agreement over certain central teachings; but in its contemporary guise it is pulling itself apart on several different doctrinal fronts—and one of these is the doctrine of Scripture. Some of this fragmentation is the predictable but tragic fruit of remarkable numerical growth. Whatever the reason, some of the strongest attacks on the Evangelicals' traditional understanding of Scripture—even some of the least temperate criticisms—have been penned by those who today are viewed as Evangelicals[6]—though it is by no means certain that the Evangelicals of forty years ago, were they somehow to reappear on the scene, would recognize them as fellow travellers. Perhaps it should be mentioned that this fragmentation of Evangelicals' views on Scripture is not restricted to North America—as, for instance, a comparison of the papers of the Keele and Nottingham conferences quickly proves with reference to England (with similar evidence available for other places).

It is astonishing how much of the literature written by mainline Evangelicals on the doctrine of Scripture has been penned in response to one or both of these first two trends. Conservatives have often been accused of fixating on Scripture; but careful perusal of the treatments of the last fifteen years shows that, if anything, the reverse is true: nonconservatives have taken up the theme, and conservatives have responded. That may not say much for the creativity of conservatives; but it does exonerate them from the charge of endlessly banging the drum. The creation of the ICBI (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy) was prompted by apologetic concerns; and only a few of the authors who have published under its aegis have attempted new and more profound analysis of the nature of Scripture. The majority have simply aimed to restate the traditional positions and delineate the weaknesses of their opponents. Like the works of the nonconservatives, the essays of those who have contributed to ICBI have varied from the average and the shallow to the acute and the insightful.[7] As an instance of the latter, it would be a great help to clarity of thought if no one would comment on the appropriateness or otherwise of the term "inerrancy" without reading the essay of Paul Feinberg that deals with this subject.[8]

ICBI is perhaps simultaneously too encompassing and too unrepresentative in its membership. Because it is too encompassing, it has sometimes published essays of doubtful worth along with far better pieces; but this policy, though it has encouraged the involvement of many, has set the organization up for caricature that is not itself entirely fair. Owing to the prominence of the organization, some have failed to recognize that many Evangelicals in America and abroad have contributed to the debate without any organizational connection to ICBI; in that sense, ICBI is somewhat unrepresentative.[9]

In any case, it would be quite mistaken to suppose that conservatives on the doctrine of Scripture are an embattled few who can manage nothing more credible than throwing a few defensive javelins into the crowd, hurled from the safety of a stony rampart called "orthodoxy." In addition to the *magnum opus* of Henry,[10] there is a plethora of studies prepared by Evangelicals—philosophical, exegetical, hermeneutical, historical, critical—that do not address directly the question of the truthfulness of Scripture, but operate within the framework of that "functional nonnegotiable"[11] and, by demonstrating a certain coherence and maturity, contribute to the same end.

The fragmentation of Evangelicalism, therefore, has produced mixed fruit. On one end of the spectrum, it has weakened its distinctiveness; on the other end, it has flirted with obscurantism. Yet there still remains a considerable strength; and part of the resurgence of interest in the doctrine of Scripture reflects the self-examination of

the movement as it struggles with its own identity. But of this I shall say more in a few moments.

The *third* factor that has helped to raise again the subject of Scripture is the crisis of authority that stamps so much of modern, Western Christianity—especially in academic circles. Children of the Enlightenment, like moths to a light we are drawn to the incandescence of the autonomy of reason. But having destroyed all the pretensions of external authority, we have discovered, somewhat aghast, that reason is corruptible, that one human mind does not often agree in great detail with another human mind, that reason by itself is a rather stumbling criterion of truth, beset as it is by a smorgasbord of values, theories, and predispositions shaped in remarkable independence of reason.

In the ensuing vacuum, there has arisen a muted hunger for authority. Finding all the gods dead, some people have manufactured their own: faddish gurus, unrestrained hedonism, and the pious pursuit of self-fulfillment are among the current contenders. But many wonder if the authority of Scripture should not be looked at again. Nor is this a concern of conservatives alone. The crisis of authority infects every stratum of our society; and, therefore, many people—unable to bear the sight of the epistemological abyss, yet unwilling to call in question the proposition that the human race is the final measure of all things—have come to affirm the authority of Scripture, though in some attenuated sense. The nature of such attenuation is a recurring theme in this essay; but for now it is enough to point out that the search for meaningful authority has contributed to the renascence of interest in the doctrine of Scripture.

The *fourth* factor contributing to this renascence is the theological revolution that has taken place and is taking place in the Roman Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII and Vatican II have had a profound influence on academic Roman Catholic theology, confirming and accelerating the more "liberal" wing of the church in its adoption of a position on Scripture that is almost indistinguishable from that of "liberal" Protestantism. By and large, this trend has not been as uncontrolled in Catholicism as in Protestantism, owing in part to the constraints of Catholicism's theology of tradition; but the changes are so far-reaching that to compare the academic publications of the Roman Catholic Church of forty or fifty years ago with those of the past two decades is to enter two entirely different worlds. The dramatic change is attested even by the successive drafts at Vatican II. The first draft schema, reflecting the longstanding tradition of the church, dealt with inerrancy as follows:

> Since divine inspiration extends to all things [in the Bible], it follows directly and necessarily that the entire Sacred Scripture is absolutely immune from error. By the ancient and constant faith of the Church we are taught that it is absolutely wrong to concede that a sacred writer has erred, since divine inspiration by its very nature excludes and rejects every error in every field, religious or profane. This necessarily follows because God, the supreme truth, can be the author of no error whatever.

However, it was the fifth draft that was actually adopted:

> Since everything which the inspired author or sacred writer asserted must be held to have been asserted by the Holy Spirit, it must equally be held that the books of Scripture teach firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God willed to be put down in the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation.[12]

The changes are dramatic. First, the Bible is now restricted to truth "for the sake of our salvation," and, second—and more importantly—the expression "that truth which God willed to be put down in the sacred writings" not only comes short of making God's truth at least as extensive as the writings but also thereby leaves it entirely open to each reader (or to the church) to decide which parts of the sacred writings embody God's truth. Everyone from a Fundamentalist to a "Christian atheist" could assent to this formulation—which is another way of saying that this final draft masks massive disagreement in the Roman Catholic Church. Creedally speaking, its fine phrases are worth less than the ink that enables us to read them.

This revolution is evident not only in the content of much Roman Catholic scholarship[13] but now also in the self-conscious defense of these developments.[14] Roman Catholic scholars who adopt a conservative stance on the Scriptures continue to publish their findings;[15] but by and large they have neither advanced a well-thought-out defense of their position nor devised a mature critique of their more liberal colleagues. The few explicit attempts to accomplish the latter are too personal and insufficiently knowledgeable to carry much weight in the academic marketplace.[16]

Whatever the factors that have contributed to bringing about renewed discussion of the nature of Scripture, this essay attempts to chart some of the most important of the recent developments. The eight sections in the rest of this paper do not attempt to be comprehensive; rather, the focus is on those issues that seem to have the greatest bearing on the traditional view of the authority and truthfulness of Scripture held by the church across the centuries.[17] Among other things, this means that a disproportionate amount of space is devoted to positions that are *nearest to but somewhat divergent from* the traditional view. Moreover, issues discussed at length in one of the other articles in these two volumes are usually accorded only brief discussion in this essay, along with a note drawing attention to the more extensive treatment.

I. REVISIONIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

A. SUMMARY OF RECENT HISTORIOGRAPHY

As late as 1975, Martin E. Marty, in an essay largely devoted to tracing the *differences* between Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism,[18] could nevertheless insist that so far as the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is concerned there was no difference between the two groups.[19] That may have been a slight exaggeration, for even in 1975 there were a few scholars who called themselves Evangelicals but who expressed their displeasure with any notion of "inerrancy" as traditionally understood. But Marty's assessment highlights a point of some importance: until fairly recently, the infallibility or inerrancy of Scripture was one of the self-identifying flags of Evangelicalism, recognized by friend and foe alike. In debates with nonconservatives, both sides agreed that the conservatives were in line with the historic tradition of the church. Nonconservatives simply argued that such a position was no longer tenable in any intellectually respectable climate; and conservatives sought to show that the position was not only defensible but one without which the heart of the gospel too easily slipped from one's grasp. Of course, there have been a few exceptions to this understanding. In his debates with Warfield, for instance, Charles Briggs[20] sought to show that the position he held was in line with Reformation teaching; but his argument was not taken up and developed by others. Karl Barth likewise insisted that his understanding of Scripture was but a modern restatement of historic and especially Reformation Christianity; but although in his strong defense of the Bible's authority there is considerable justification for his claim, nevertheless there are nuances in his position that remove him somewhat from the heritage to which he lays claim.[21] By and large, then, conservatives and nonconservatives alike have in the past agreed that the witness of history has favored the conservatives.

That consensus is rapidly dissipating. A new generation of historians is arguing that the modern conservative position on Scripture is something of an aberration that owes its impetus in part to scholastic theology of the post-Reformation period and in part to the Princetonians, especially Charles Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield. Probably the best known work to espouse this view is that of Jack Rogers and Donald McKim.[22] They seek to establish this thesis by a comprehensive outline of the way the Bible was described and treated throughout (largely Western) church history. Their conclusion is that the historic position of the church defends the Bible's authority in the areas of faith and practice (understood in a restrictive sense), not its reliable truthfulness in every area on which it chooses to speak.

Initial response was largely affirming; but it was not long before major weaknesses came to light. Owing not least to the detailed rebuttal by John D. Woodbridge,[23] rising numbers of scholars have pointed out the fatal flaws. While Rogers and McKim accuse conservatives of reading Warfield into Calvin and the Fathers, it soon becomes apparent that they read Barth and Berkouwer into Calvin and the Fathers. Misunderstanding some of their sources and quoting others with prejudicial selectivity, they finally succumb to a certain "ahistoricism" that neglects the church's sustained attempt to guard the form of the message as well as the message itself.[24]

The work of Rogers and McKim is based in one small part on an influential book by Ernest Sandeen,[25] who argues that belief in "the inerrancy of the Scriptures in the original documents" was innovatively raised to the level of creedal standard by Benjamin Warfield and Archibald Alexander in an 1881 essay on "Inspiration." This part of Sandeen's examination of Fundamentalism's roots was woven into the larger pattern spun by Rogers and McKim. One of the benefits of their work has been a renewed interest in this and related historical questions. As a result, major essays have been written to show, *inter alia*, that primary sources (letters, magazine articles, books, and manuscripts) of the nineteenth century amply attest that the view articulated by Warfield and Hodge was popular long before 1881,[26] that the magisterial reformers were consistent in their defense of an inerrant Scripture,[27] that Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck of the "Old Amsterdam" school cannot legitimately be taken as forerunners of Barth and Berkouwer,[28] and much more. We anticipate more of these careful historical treatments in the next few years.

B. RENNIE'S PROPOSAL

This much of recent revisionist historiography and the responses it has called forth is common knowledge. But subtler influences are at work. In a conference held in June 1981 at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ian Rennie delivered a paper written as a response to Rogers and McKim but containing several important and innovative proposals.[29] Rennie argues that the view expounded by Rogers and McKim has conceptual links with "plenary inspiration" as understood in Britain in the nineteenth century. Plenary inspiration, according to Rennie, was distinguished from verbal inspiration and was characterized by (1) a willingness to recognize several different modes of inspiration, (2) insistence nonetheless that all the Bible is inspired, (3) confidence that because all the Bible is authoritative it will not lead anyone aside from the truth on any subject (though it is peculiarly authoritative when it deals with the central Christian truths), and (4) greater openness to interpretative innovation than its competitor. Plenary inspiration could describe the Bible as infallible and without error. It is the view closest to the relatively unformed doctrine of Scripture held by the church until the Reformation.

By contrast, the Germanic lands in the sixteenth century began to

advance the verbal inspiration view—a view that held sway in countries heavily influenced by Germany but one that made almost no impact on the Anglo-American world until the nineteenth century, when it began to be defended by Alexander Carson, Robert Haldane, J.C. Ryle, and many others. The verbal inspiration theory is painfully literalistic in its approach, and it becomes characteristic of Christianity in decline and defensiveness. The plenary view reflects a Christianity that is both orthodox and robust, and it becomes one of the vehicles of the First and Second Evangelical Awakenings. Historically, it even enabled those who opposed the slave trade to "break through the literalism that sanctioned slavery, and affirm that in such issues it was the spirit of love and redemptive freedom that validly reinterpreted texts that otherwise possessed the death-disseminating quality of the culture-bound."[30]

There are two rather substantial weaknesses with Rennie's proposal. The first is the conceptual inappropriateness of the disjunction he draws. As Rennie characterizes plenary and verbal inspiration, it appears that the differences between the two viewpoints center around competing hermeneutical systems and have almost nothing to do with either inspiration or the Bible's truthfulness. Thus, he affirms that the verbal inspiration view is quick to say the Bible is without error and is fully authoritative; but, of course, the plenary inspiration viewpoint would not want to disagree. According to Rennie, the verbal inspiration view sees the locus of inspiration in the words themselves and tends to develop formulations in deductivist or Aristotelian fashion. By contrast, the plenary inspiration view sees the locus of inspiration in the human authors and tends to develop its formulations from the actual phenomena of Scripture. The irony in this disjunction is that the one passage where inspiration is overtly brought up in the Bible (surely, therefore, one of the "phenomena" to be embraced) tells the reader that it is the Scripture itself that is "inspired" ("God-breathed," 2Ti 3:16)—not the human authors. But apart from such distinctions, about which I'll say more in a later section, the primary disjunctions Rennie draws between the two viewpoints are hermeneutical and functional: plenary inspiration is open-minded, aware of the Enlightenment and able to come to terms with it, relevant, prophetic, against slavery, while verbal inspiration is defensive, incapable of relevantly addressing the age, strong on literalism and the defense of slavery.

These observations drive us to the second substantial weakness in Rennie's analysis.[31] His argument, of course, is essentially a historical one, based on his reading of certain texts; but it is not at all certain that he has understood those texts correctly. Certainly in the nineteenth century there were some who preferred to adopt the plenary inspiration viewpoint, and others were happier to label their view verbal inspiration. On the other hand, there is little evidence that

the two labels were set over against each other. Those who upheld verbal inspiration were also happy to affirm plenary inspiration;[32] and *both* sides adopted the plenary inspiration label over against the Unitarians, who opted for a much "lower" view of the Bible.[33] In other words, all Evangelicals labeled their view "plenary inspiration" when they were distinguishing their position from the "limited inspiration" of the Unitarians. More telling yet, at least some of those who disparaged verbal inspiration while affirming plenary inspiration did so because they mistakenly equated the former with a theory of mechanical dictation—a theory the ablest defenders of verbal inspiration disavowed—and with such things as verbatim reportage, which rendered Gospel harmonization principially impossible.[34] Similarly, even into the first third of the twentieth century, a few British Evangelicals so associated the term "inerrancy" with crude literalism, or with a failure to recognize the progressive nature of revelation, that they therefore avoided associating themselves with the term—even though, by modern usage, that is what they believed.[35] As for those who in the early part of the twentieth century adopted the view that the Scriptures contained many errors on all sorts of incidental matters (e.g., James Orr, James Denney, and Marcus Dods), not only was their view outside the classic formulations of Scriptural infallibility and plenary inspiration, but it was supported by surprisingly little exegesis.

It appears, then, that Rennie's assessment needs some major qualifications. It is true that the verbal inspiration viewpoint was prominent in Germanic lands, owing in part to the struggles Protestants found themselves engaged in with Roman Catholics and Socinians; but contra Rennie, it is not true that this viewpoint was first introduced into Britain through the hyper-Calvinist John Gill in his *Body of Practical Divinity* (1770). For instance, forty years earlier Ridgley had argued at some length "that the inspired writers have given us a true narration of things, and consequently that the words, as well as the matter, are truly divine."[36] Indeed, his argument is shaped by the assumption that his view is shared by the vast majority of his readers. In any case, it is not at all clear that those who held to verbal inspiration in the nineteenth century were reflections of Christianity in decline. To support this rather startling thesis, Rennie merely offers the judgment that the opposing view opened up interpretative possibilities that made antislavery and other social reform movements possible. But a staunch supporter of verbal inspiration like Edward Kirk (1802–74), the translator of Louis Gaussen's influential *Theopneustia*, was a leader in the American Anti-Slavery Society[37] and a champion of relief for the poor.[38] Rennie's underlying thesis is, on any reading, too generalizing: Christianity given to thoughtful doctrinal precision may not be in decline but in faithful consolidation and advance. Very frequently in the history of

the church the attacks of new philosophical and theological positions have proved to be the occasion for the orthodox to formulate their own positions more carefully. These are the historical circumstances that under God breed an Athanasius or a Calvin.

C. THE "FAITH AND PRACTICE" RESTRICTION

Another example of revisionist historiography merits mention. For some time it has been popular in many circles to speak of the Bible's authority, and even its inerrancy, in the realms of "faith and practice"—but not in such realms as history and science. All sides agree that the Bible is not a textbook on, say, high energy physics; but those who hold a high view of Scripture argue that wherever Scripture speaks, it speaks truthfully. As the essays in this pair of volumes show, appropriate allowance is made for the genre of any biblical text, generalizing language, phenomenological descriptions, the problem of the hermeneutical circle, and so forth; but there is still in this camp a reasoned defense of the view that *whatever* the Scripture says, properly interpreted, is true. The restriction offered by the opposing camp—namely, that the Bible is necessarily true *only* when it addresses questions of faith and practice—is sometimes now read back into the history of the church as if the restriction belonged to the mainstream of the church's understanding of the Bible. One of the more influential articulations of this perspective is the work of Bruce Vawter.[39] His argument depends in part on a certain understanding of "accommodation," about which I shall say more in a subsequent section; but more central yet to his position is his repeated insistence that the "inerrancy" or "infallibility" position he freely concedes to be in the Fathers, in the Middle Ages, and in the Reformers is restricted to matters of faith and practice.

This reconstruction of history does not appear to stand up very well to close scrutiny. In the third of his recent W. H. Griffith Thomas lectures, John Woodbridge[40] has carefully documented, in a preliminary way, some of the hurdles such a reconstruction must overcome. Vawter insists that the modern inerrantist who sees in the Bible a source of knowledge instead of a source of religious experience is hopelessly ensnared by modern scientific paradigms of "knowledge" illegitimately transferred to the Scripture. Too great a dependence on a "paradigmatic" view of the development of science is one of the weaknesses in Vawter's proposal;[41] but, more important, he fails to recognize that in the Middle Ages, for instance, the Bible held the supreme place of honor as the highest source of knowledge.

> Manuscript collections were organized under three rubrics: manuscripts of Scripture standing supremely by themselves, manuscripts which helped readers understand the Scriptures, and diverse manuscripts. Archivists know of few, if any, exceptions to this organizational division for medieval manuscript collections.[42]

Moreover, the heavy weather that the Copernican theory faced from Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist thinkers alike stemmed from the fact that they thought the Bible flatly contradicted a heliocentric view of the universe—which, of course, presupposes that they believed the Bible could address such scientific issues. When Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) sided with Copernicus, he tried to persuade his critics that the theory of Copernicus could be squared with the Bible, not that the Bible does not address such questions or that it may be in error over them.[43] In fact, Kepler went so far as to say that he would willingly abandon whatever parts of the Copernican hypotheses could be shown to be contrary to Scripture.[44] The conclusion Woodbridge documents is inescapable:

> Contrary to the interpretations found in the works of Vawter, Rogers and McKim, and Roland Mushat Frye, the choice that Christians faced until the middle of the seventeenth century was generally this: Should each passage of an infallible Bible which speaks of the natural world be interpreted literally or should some interpretive allowance be made for the fact that a number of passages are couched in the language of appearance? The choice was not between a belief in a completely infallible Bible and a Bible whose infallibility was limited to faith and practice. Parties from both sides of this debate included "science" and history within their definition of infallibility, but they interpreted passages which dealt with the natural world in differing ways. Those persons who did believe the Bible contained errors included, among others, Socinians, libertines, skeptics, deists, remonstrants like Grotius, and members of smaller radical rationalist sects.[45]

The Bible was well on its way to being uncoupled from science, at least in many intellectual circles, by the second half of the seventeenth century; but this uncoupling was normally accompanied by a shift to a theological position that no longer affirmed the infallibility of Scripture. Therefore, those who now wish to affirm the Bible's infallibility in the spheres of "faith and practice" but not in all areas on which it speaks are doubly removed from the mainstream of historical antecedents. Whatever the merits or demerits of their theological position, they cannot legitimately appeal to the sustained commitment of the church in order to bolster that position.

D. COMMON SENSE REALISM

Another sector of modern historiography has become extremely influential—namely, the reassessment of the role and influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism.[46] This offspring of Thomas Reid[47] is charged with so influencing American Evangelicalism that it introduced profound distortions. Common Sense traditions are said to have been influential in generating the Princetonians' doctrine of Scripture,[48] in pushing the "fundamentalist mentality" toward a commitment to "inductive rationalism,"[49] in focusing too much attention on biblical "facts" and "truths" at the expense of knowing

God, in developing certain approaches to systematic theology that resulted in dispensationalism, in engendering assorted Arminianisms, verbal inspiration, evidential apologetics, an overemphasis on individual conversion as over against group conversion, and much more.

The point of these essays, more frequently insinuated than enunciated, is that if Evangelicalism/Fundamentalism were to strip itself of the warping influence of Common Sense Realism, then these other unfortunate accretions, including the doctrine of inerrancy, would wither away, or at the very least lose a substantial part of their support. If we have taken deep draughts from the wells of Baconianism and Scottish Common Sense Realism, we are inescapably corrupted and, therefore, need to revise our views along several doctrinal fronts. In short, Common Sense is perilously close to becoming the whipping boy for certain features in the life of American Evangelicalism that some church historians do not like.

It is no doubt true that Common Sense traditions had a wide impact on nineteenth-century America; and some of this influence was doubtless pernicious. But it is not at all clear that an evenhanded analysis of the extent to which Common Sense actually shaped American Evangelicalism, and in particular its doctrine of Scripture, has yet been written. We have already surveyed some of the studies that show the doctrine of inerrancy not only antedates Thomas Reid but characterizes the church's view of Holy Scripture across the centuries until fairly recent times. Similar things could be said in some other doctrinal areas. For instance, it is not true to history to lay the blame for all evidentialism at the feet of Common Sense traditions (see further discussion in Section VI below).

More broadly, the popularity of certain doctrines is too commonly explained in monocausational terms, especially in Marsden's work; or, to put the matter in a broader framework, simple causal relationships are often affirmed without being demonstrated. Besides being *a priori* methodologically suspect,[50] the approach fails to weigh certain important evidence. If Hodge was so hopelessly ensnared by Common Sense traditions, how was he able to rigorously critique certain points in Reid's position, as well as the positions of such supporters of Common Sense as William Hamilton and Dugald Stewart?[51] If Scottish Common Sense was so determinative in the Princetonians and in subsequent Evangelicalism so far as their doctrine of Scripture was concerned, how was it that other groups equally under the spell of Common Sense did *not* generate such a doctrine of Scripture?[52] How many of these studies have adequately examined the book and journal trade both before and after the alleged impact of Common Sense Realism in order to determine what doctrines and concepts arose only after that impact, what ones were common both before and after that impact, and what ones were in some way modified or slightly reformulated as a result of that impact?[53] How many of the studies have adequately weighed competing explanations of the same historical phenomena?[54]

The Princetonians were extraordinarily widely read scholars. Warfield was as familiar with Augustine, Calvin, and the Westminster divines as he was with Thomas Reid. Such breadth of learning is likely to militate against a controlling dependence on any one tradition. Hodge was accused of being a slavish follower of Turretin—who had *no* connection with Common Sense. More positively, certain doctrines, including the doctrine of the Scripture's infallibility, are so widely distributed throughout the history of the church that one must conclude they are not paradigmatically determined by any single undergirding philosophy. After all, no one can write without reflecting the philosophical systems that have contributed to his or her thinking; but it does not necessarily follow that a reasonable knowledge of those systems will enable the historian to predict each doctrine the writer will hold. To the extent that the Princetonians used Common Sense categories to express themselves (a point still not adequately examined, in my view), they were thinkers of their time; but it does not necessarily follow that the categories of their time made their doctrine of Scripture innovative. Perhaps that is why one recent writer is able to argue that the Princetonians—and later Machen—used the Scottish Common Sense traditions in a self-critical way to defend and articulate the *historic* doctrine of Scripture.[55]

Frequently quoted as proof of his irremediable dependence on Scottish Common Sense are the following words from Charles Hodge:

> The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science. It is his storehouse of facts; and his method of ascertaining what the Bible teaches is the same as that which the natural philosopher adopts to ascertain what nature teaches.[56]

These words are commonly taken to reflect at least two unfortunate shifts: first, an uncritical dependence on induction in theology, a method taken over directly from Baconianism mediated through Scottish Common Sense; and, second, a novel view of the Bible that deemphasizes its role as a guide for life, a source for truths necessary for salvation, and a means of grace, while seeing it as a "storehouse of facts," the quarry from which systematic theology is hewn.

Probably too much is being made of this sentence. It is essential to recognize that Hodge makes his remark *in the context of his treatment of the inductive method as applied to theology*—and to nothing else. Hodge develops the thought further to show such principles as the importance of collecting, if possible, *all* that the Bible has to say on a subject before proceeding to inductive statements on the subject, undertaking the collection (like the collection of facts in science) with care, and constantly revising the induction in the light

of fresh information. He does not in this section of his work seek to establish the nature of the Bible's truthfulness; his subject is prolegomena, not bibliology. When Hodge does, in fact, turn to the doctrine of Scripture, he is immensely sophisticated and balanced; but here his focus is elsewhere. The most that could be deduced from this one passage about Hodge's doctrine of Scripture are his beliefs that all the Bible is true, that its content is the stuff of systematic theology, and that its material is sufficiently interrelated to belong to the same system. It is hard to see how anyone with a truly high view of Scripture could say much less, even though much more needs to be said (much of which Hodge himself says elsewhere). Like most analogies, this one between science and theology is not perfect; for instance, the nature of experimentation in science is rather different from the trial and error of formulating systematic theology. Certainly there is a place in theology for experience, a place rather different from anything in the empirical sciences;[57] and the role of the Holy Spirit must be incorporated into the discussion. These, however, are steps that Hodge himself undertakes in other sections of his *magnum opus*. But so far as the narrow subject of induction is concerned, the analogy is not all that bad.[58] I shall say more about induction in the next section; but granted what else Hodge writes on Scripture, truth, and method, there is little warrant for reading too much into this one sentence. For exactly the same reason, the admittedly positivistic nature of nineteenth-century science cannot legitimately be held to tarnish his sophisticated epistemology.

E. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECENT HISTORIOGRAPHY

This rather introductory survey of recent revisionist historiography is not an attempt to establish a certain doctrine of Scripture by simple appeal to the tradition of the church. The discipline of church history cannot by itself establish the rightness or wrongness of what ought to be believed. On the other hand, Evangelicals in particular, precisely because of their high view of Scripture, have often been content to know far too little about the history of the church; and efforts to overcome this common ignorance can only be commended. Thoughtful Christians who sincerely seek to base their beliefs on the Scriptures will be a little nervous if the beliefs they think are biblical form no part of the major streams of tradition throughout the history of the church; and, therefore, historical theology, though it cannot in itself justify a belief system, not only sharpens the categories and informs the debate but serves as a major checkpoint to help us prevent uncontrolled speculation, purely private theological articulation, and overly imaginative exegesis.

That is precisely why at least some of this recent historiography is rather important. If it is basically right, at the very least it shifts the burden of proof. In the past, inerrantists could comfort themselves

that their position was in line with the historical position of most thoughtful Christians in most generations since the first century, even if in the modern environment their position needs fresh defense and articulation; but if now (as they are told) they must admit to being the innovators, they must contend not only with the larger part of modern biblical scholarship arrayed against them but also with the weighty witness of the history of the church. If, on the other hand, the recent historiography has embraced some fundamental misjudgments on these matters, the *perception* that the burden of proof has shifted remains. That is why so many essays in this pair of volumes have dealt with essentially historical matters.

To put the matter another way, this recent historiography has necessarily set a certain agenda. Those convinced it is right must conclude that a major redefinition of Evangelicalism is called for. In one sense, this can only be applauded. There are, after all, so many theological aberrations, cultural hangups, and differences of opinion within Evangelicalism that the movement *ought* to go back to basics again and again to examine how much of its intellectual structure is based on the Bible, its putative authority. But the redefinition envisaged by some of Evangelicalism's recent historians frequently ignores, sidesteps, or downplays—on alleged historical grounds—one of the central planks that binds the diverse strands of Evangelicalism together and to church history.[59] The redefinition, in other words, is in danger of destroying what it seeks to define.

What cannot escape notice is that the driving figures in this movement are historians, not exegetes or theologians. That, of course, is as it should be; they are engaged in historical theology. But quite apart from whether or not this or that historical conclusion is valid, a larger question looms: at what point do the historians who are setting a theological agenda need to interact more directly with scriptural and theological data themselves?[60] The question grows in importance if it is claimed that the observable cultural forces can be identified without making theological judgments in the process:

> While [the historian] must keep in mind certain theological criteria, he may refrain from explicit judgments on what is properly Christian while he concentrates on observable cultural forces. By identifying these forces, he provides material which individuals of various theological persuasions may use to help distinguish God's genuine work from practices that have no greater authority than the customs or ways of thinking of a particular time and place. How one judges any religious phenomenon will, however, depend more on one's theological stance than on one's identification of the historical conditions in which it arose.[61]

The last sentence is surely largely true; but the rest of the quotation, by distancing the historian from the theological matrix where judgments are made, almost sounds as if the historian is able to

provide value-free data, grist for the theological mill turned by colleagues in another department.

In short, while some of the revisionist historians have been much concerned, and rightly so, to explain more adequately the intellectual roots of Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism, they have not always displayed a critical awareness of the direction from which they themselves are coming.

II. FOCUS ON THE PHENOMENA OF THE BIBLE

In the exchange of views on the doctrine of Scripture between James D. G. Dunn and Roger Nicole, to which reference has already been made, there was a final exchange of open letters that attempted to delineate the substantive issues that lie between the two viewpoints.[62] Dunn argues that such qualifications to their position as the inerrantists make (e.g., precision is not the issue, not all commandments in the Old Testament are equally binding today, and so forth) are generated and demonstrated by studying Scripture itself. In his words: "*It is the recognition of what Scripture actually consists of which makes such qualifications of the inerrancy position necessary.* But once you grant this methodological principle . . . you must surely also recognize that my position emerges from an application of that same principle."[63] The difficulties in, say, synoptic relationships are such that Dunn asks the question, "Do inerrantists *take with sufficient seriousness even the most basic exegetical findings,* particularly with regard to the synoptic gospels?"[64] Exactly the same charge appears in many recent discussions. Paul Achtemeier writes:

> Faced with the overwhelming evidence which critical scholarship has uncovered concerning the way in which Scriptures have been composed of traditions that are used and reused, reinterpreted and recombined, conservative scholarship has sought to defend its precritical view of Scripture by imposing that view on Scripture as a prior principle. Unless evidence can be turned or bent to show the inerrancy of Scripture, the evidence is denied (e.g., it did not appear in the errorless autographs). . . . Critical scholarship is therefore an attempt to allow Scripture itself to tell us what it is rather than to impose upon Scripture, for whatever worthy motives, a concept of its nature which is not derived from the materials, the "phenomena," found in Scripture itself.[65]

James Barr puts the matter even more forcefully:

> My argument is simply and squarely that fundamentalist interpretation, because it insists that the Bible cannot err, not even in historical regards, has been forced to interpret the Bible wrongly; conversely, it is the critical analysis, and not the fundamentalist approach, that has taken the Bible for what it is and interpreted it accordingly. The problem of fundamentalism is that, far from being a biblical religion, an interpretation of scripture in its own terms, it has evaded the natural and literal sense of the Bible in order to imprison it within a particular tradition of human interpretation. The fact that this tradition—one drawn from older Protestant orthodoxy—assigns an extremely high place to the nature and authority of the Bible in no way alters the situation described, namely that it functions as a human tradition which obscures and imprisons the meaning of Scripture.[66]

It is important to understand the nature of this charge. Inerrantists, we are told, do not shape their doctrine of Scripture by the Scripture itself; or, if they do, they—while constructing their doctrine of Scripture from a few passages that seem to justify the high view they espouse—ignore the actual *phenomena* of Scripture. Worse, once this doctrine is in place, it so distorts their approach to the text that they become the least "biblical" of all.

The issues involved turn out to be surprisingly complex: but at least the following observations are relevant:

A. EVANGELICALS' DISTORTION OF EXEGESIS

Certainly Evangelicals can be as guilty of distorting exegesis as non-Evangelicals. The real question is whether or not that distortion is primarily the result of a high view of Scripture. Clarity of thought is not gained when one particularly notorious example (e.g., the suggestion that the difficulties in reconciling the accounts of Peter's denials can be accomplished by an additive harmonization that postulates six cock crowings)[67] is paraded about as if it were typical of evangelical scholarship. It is most emphatically not, as a quick scan of recent commentaries on the Gospels testifies.[68] Such charges do not seem much fairer than those by conservatives who point out, with some glee, that nonconservatives have sometimes adopted preposterous positions as well (e.g., what really happened at the feeding of the five thousand was that the little boy's generosity shamed everybody else into sharing the lunches they had surreptitiously hidden).

In fact, it is somewhat frustrating to be told again and again that Evangelicals don't really understand the Bible, without being offered realistic test cases where responsible "scholarly consensus" is pitted against responsible consensus of Evangelicals. Without hard cases, the charge against conservatives is emotive (Who, after all, wants to be told he does not understand what he reads?) but not particularly compelling. The few cases that are brought up have usually been discussed at considerable length in the literature; and there we discover that the conservative position is often defended by many scholars who would not call themselves conservatives. One thinks of a John A. T. Robinson, for instance, certainly not an "Evangelical" but many of whose critical views are more conservative than those of the present writer. Even though not many scholars have agreed with him, few of his colleagues would charge him with fundamentally distorting the text. It appears, then, that it is not the individual exegetical

position that critics find distasteful or obscurantist; rather, it is a configuration of positions in line with a high view of Scripture. In other words, it is not so much the exegesis that is offensive after all, as the high view of Scripture itself.

Be that as it may, Evangelicals as well as others have needed for some time to articulate the exegetical procedures they follow and the reasons for choosing this or that option—and to do so in such a way that numerous hard cases are used as tests. That is part of the reasoning behind the essays by Silva and Blomberg in these two volumes.

B. "QUALIFICATIONS" OF INERRANCY

Dunn's estimate of the way "qualifications" to the doctrine of inerrancy have come about deserves further reflection. At various points, he raises three such "qualifications"—the contention that precision is not a determining factor in any estimate of the Scripture's truth content, the recognition that not all commandments in the Old Testament are perceived to be equally binding today, and the insistence that the considerable diversity of interpretations is not injurious to the doctrine—and argues that these "qualifications" have been wrung out of the conservatives by the phenomena of the Scriptures themselves. But although there is some merit in his assessment, it is injudiciously cast. Statements about the truthfulness of Scripture are not dependent upon the accuracy or uniformity with which the Scripture may be interpreted. There is an immense conceptual difference between the effort to interpret a certainly truthful text and the effort to interpret a doubtfully truthful text—regardless of the validity of the interpretative effort. Moreover, the lack of precision in many biblical statements is not the primary source of a qualification begrudgingly conceded by entrenched conservatives forced to face up to unavoidable phenomena. Far more important is the fact that the Scriptures themselves, though they lead the reader to expect the Scriptures to be true, do not lead the reader to expect the Scriptures to be *uniformly* precise. Signals as to degree of precision to be expected, like signals as to genre, are often subtle things; but a difficulty would arise only where all the signals point unambiguously to one degree of precision when a considerably lower one is present. This question has been discussed in the companion to this volume.[69] Also, no thoughtful conservative from Irenaeus or Augustine to the present has found the intricate question of the relationships between the covenants to be a threat to his doctrine of Scripture, precisely because the Scripture itself teaches that it covers salvation-historical development: there is before and after, prophecy and fulfillment, type and antitype, as well as mere command. The truthfulness of Scripture does not necessitate viewing all commands in Scripture on the same covenantal footing. What is somewhat astonishing is that this should have been perceived as a weakness in the conservative position.

C. SCRIPTURE'S PHENOMENA AND TRUTH CLAIMS

The central question being raised, I think, may be put like this: Granted for the moment that the Scriptures *claim* to be entirely truthful (a point some critics would concede and others deny), do the hard phenomena of the Scriptures allow the claim to stand? Do the conservatives who accept the authority of the Scripture's truth claims equally accept the authority of the phenomena that must be set in juxtaposition with and perhaps in antithesis to those truth claims?

The question is extremely important. Unfortunately it is often cast in such a way as to suggest that the Bible's claims in support of its own truthfulness are slight and indirect, while the difficulties cast up by larger categories—e.g., the use of the Old Testament in the New, logical or chronological contradictions, historical impossibilities, and the like—are so pervasive that there is only one possible conclusion for a fair-minded scholar. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Scripture's self-attesting truth-claims are extremely pervasive;[70] and the difficulties raised by the biblical phenomena are on the whole a good deal less intractable than is sometimes suggested.

Part of the problem is that many critics have come to accept as true a certain tradition of critical exegesis that not only highlights problems but sometimes discovers them where there are none. As a result, it is a certain interpretation of the phenomena of the text, not the phenomena themselves, that are being set over against the Scripture's truth claims. The careful reader does not need more than a couple of hours with, say, Bultmann's *magnum opus* on the Synoptics[71] before discovering dozens of alleged contradictions based on little more than assertion and disjunctive thinking.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that a substantial proportion of evangelical writing has avoided the difficulties or provided facile answers. This sad state of affairs came about in part because of the decimation of Evangelicalism's intellectual leadership in the wake of the Fundamentalist/Modernist controversies. In part (if only in part), this loss has been retrieved: now there are not only older works dealing with some of the difficult phenomena of Scripture[72] but also major commentaries[73] and technical essays on particular passages (e.g., Mt 27:3–10[74] or Eph 4:7–9[75]).

Behind this debate lurks an important methodological question: Granted that there are many statements about Scripture in the Bible, and granted that there are many biblical phenomena to consider when it comes to constructing a doctrine of Scripture, what should be the relation between the two kinds of data? Critics of the traditional view increasingly stress the primacy of induction from the phenomena; but this approach must be challenged. Twenty years ago Nicole, in a review of the first edition of Beegle's book on Scripture,[76] wrote the following:

> Dr. Beegle very vigorously contends that a proper approach to the doctrine of inspiration is to start with induction from what he calls "the phenomena of Scripture" rather than with deduction from certain Biblical statements about the Scripture. . . . This particular point needs to be controverted. If the Bible does make certain express statements about itself, these manifestly must have a priority in our attempts to formulate a doctrine of Scripture. Quite obviously, induction from Bible phenomena will also have its due place, for it may tend to correct certain inaccuracies which might take place in the deductive process. The statements of Scripture, however, are always primary. To apply the method advocated by Dr. Beegle in other areas would quite probably lead to seriously erroneous results. For instance, if we attempted to construct our view of the relation of Christ to sin merely in terms of the concrete data given us in the Gospels about His life, and without regard to certain express statements found in the New Testament about His sinlessness, we might mistakenly conclude that Christ was not sinless. . . . [This] is not meant to disallow induction as a legitimate factor, but it is meant to deny it the priority in religious matters. First must come the statements of revelation, and then induction may be introduced as a legitimate confirmation, and, in some cases, as a corrective in areas where our interpretation of these statements and their implications may be at fault.[77]

In other words, if particular texts, despite evenhanded exegetical coaxing, cannot fit into the theological theory (for that is what a doctrine is) that has emerged from explicit statements of Scripture on the subject, then the theory may have to be modified, recast, reformulated—or, alternatively, the exegesis may have to begin again. But because hard cases make not only bad law but bad theology, one should not give *priority* to them in the articulation of doctrine, even though each one must be thoughtfully considered.

D. THE RELATION OF DEDUCTION AND INDUCTION

Related to this debate is the broader question of the proper relation between deduction and induction in theological inquiry. This question has both historical and methodological foci. In the historical focus, Rogers and McKim, as we have seen, charge the scholastic Reformed theologians and the Princetonians after them with an innovative dependence on deduction; infected by Baconianism, it is alleged, they began with a central proposition (such as "God cannot lie") and deduced a sweeping doctrine of Scripture.[78] More recently, others (as we saw in the last section) have charged the Princetonians in particular with too heavy a reliance on induction. It is alleged that they treat the Bible as a mere sourcebook of facts from which, by the process of induction, they create their theological theories. It is doubtful if the charge of innovation is historically justifiable in either case; and, in any case, if the Princetonians are to be permitted neither induction nor deduction, it might be easier to dismiss them just because they think.

At the methodological level, the problem is much deeper. In the first place, Sproul has pointed out how distinct groups of inerrantists have defended the doctrine on quite different grounds—i.e., the doctrine is not entirely hostage to a particular form of reasoning.[79] More important, any complex theory in any field of human thought (some areas of mathematics possibly excluded) depends not only on intricate interplay between induction and deduction but on what is variously called adduction, abduction, or retroduction—which is not so much a category entirely distinct from induction and deduction as a label that incorporates these two processes while going beyond them to include the creative thought, sudden insight, and perception of links that are essential to all intellectual advance. These matters are commonplace among those who deal with theory formation and justification;[80] and it is, therefore, disconcerting to find them so consistently overlooked.

III. DEBATES OVER VARIOUS TERMS

Packer warns us of the dangers in oversimplifications:

> I am sure that my evangelical readers have all had abundant experience of this particular evil. I am sure we have all had cause in our time to complain of over-simplifications which others have forced on us in the debate about Scripture—the facile antithesis, for instance, between revelation as propositional or as personal, when it has to be the first in order to be the second; or the false question as to whether the Bible is or becomes the Word of God, when both alternatives, rightly understood, are true; or the choice between the theory of mechanical dictation and the presence of human error in the Bible, when in fact we are not shut up to either option. I am sure we have all found how hard it is to explain the evangelical view of Scripture to persons whose minds have once embraced these over-simplifications as controlling concepts.[81]

These oversimplifications are in no small measure the result of defective definitions. *Truth* is one such term frequently subjected to reductionism; but as it was discussed in the first of this pair of volumes,[82] I shall largely leave it aside and make brief mention of three other terms that have become important in recent discussion. But two remarks about *truth* seem in order. First, although it is sometimes suggested that conservatives reduce truth to words and propositions—and thereby ignore the centrality of Christ as truth incarnate—this failing is rare in conservatives of any stature. It is far more common for the reductionism to work the other way: the nonconservative of stature is more likely to affirm the centrality of Christ while ignoring the truth claims of the Scriptures themselves. Second, the diversity of meanings bound up in the word *true* and its cognates (and ably expounded by Nicole) does not itself jeopardize allegiance to a correspondence theory of truth, on which the doctrine

of a truthful Scripture is partly based. For instance, I might say, "My wife is my true friend"—even though I do hold to a correspondence theory of truth. My sample sentence merely demonstrates that the semantic range of "true" and its cognates cannot be reduced to usages congenial to the correspondence theory of truth. Opponents would have to show either that the Hebrew and Greek words for truth never take on the correspondence meaning, or at least that they never have such force when they refer to Scripture.

A. ACCOMMODATION

The *first* additional term to consider is *accommodation*. If the transcendent, personal God is to communicate with us, His finite and sinful creatures, He must in some measure *accommodate* Himself to and *condescend* to our capacity to receive that revelation. The point has been recognized from the earliest centuries of the church, and it received considerable attention during the Reformation. In recent discussion, however, this notion of accommodation as applied to the Scriptures is frequently assumed to entail error. Thus, Barth writes:

> If God was not ashamed of the fallibility of all the human words of the Bible, of their historical and scientific inaccuracies, their theological contradictions, the uncertainty of their tradition, and, above all, their Judaism, but adopted and made use of these expressions in all their fallibility, we do not need to be ashamed when He wills to renew it to us in all its fallibility as witness, and it is mere self-will and disobedience to try to find some infallible elements in the Bible.[83]

Less ambiguously, Vawter writes:

> We should think of inspiration as always a positive divine and human interaction in which the principle of condescension has been taken at face value. To conceive of an absolute inerrancy as the effect of the inspiration was not really to believe that God had condescended to the human sphere but rather that He had transmuted it into something else. A human literature containing no error would indeed be a contradiction in terms, since nothing is more human than to err.[84]

Similarly, in his latest book, Clark Pinnock attempts to relate the possibility of error to the principle of accommodation:

> What we all have to deal with is a Bible with apparent errors in it whose exact status we cannot precisely know. Whether in his inspiration or in his providence, God has permitted them to exist. . . . What God aims to do through inspiration is to stir up faith in the gospel through the word of Scripture, which remains a human text beset by normal weaknesses.[85]

There are numerous other examples of the same approach, often accompanied by the assumption that this is the view of accommodation that has prevailed throughout much of church history.

The first thing that must be said by way of response is that some of these treatments are not very consistent. In the same context as the last quotation, for instance, Pinnock writes: "The Bible does not attempt to give the impression that it is flawless in historical or scientific ways. God uses writers with weaknesses and still teaches the truth of revelation through them."[86] But here there is a shift from error in certain spheres of thought (history and science) to error caused by the humanity of Scripture. One begins to suspect that the latter argument is being used to restrict the Bible's authority to purely religious matters, not to whatever subject it chooses to address. But the argument is more dangerous than Pinnock seems to think; for if the potential for error is grounded in Scripture's humanity, by what argument should that error be restricted to the fields of history and science? Why does not human fallibility also entail error in the religious and theological spheres? Or conversely, if someone wishes to argue that God has preserved the human authors from error in religion and theology, what prevents God from doing so in other areas of thought?

Second, this approach to accommodation is certainly far removed from the understanding of accommodation worked out both in the early church and in the Reformation. The most recent authority rightly insists:

> The Reformers and their scholastic followers all recognized that God in some way must condescend or accommodate himself to human ways of knowing in order to reveal himself: this *accommodatio* occurs specifically in the use of human words and concepts for the communication of the law and the gospel, but it in no way implies the loss of truth or the lessening of scriptural authority. The *accommodatio* or *condescensio* refers to the manner or mode of revelation, the gift of wisdom of infinite God in finite form, not to the quality of the revelation or to the matter revealed. A parallel idea occurs in the scholastic protestant distinction between *theologia archetype* and *theologia ectype*. Note that the sense of *accommodatio* which implies not only a divine condescension but also a use of time-bound and even erroneous statements as a medium for revelation arose in the eighteenth century in the thought of Semler and his contemporaries and has no relation either to the position of the Reformers or to that of the protestant scholastics, either Lutheran or Reformed.[87]

Third, the argument that error is essentially human ("nothing is more human than to err," writes Vawter) is extremely problematic and cries out for further analysis. Error, of course, is distinguishable from sin and can be the result of nothing more than finitude; but much human error results from the play of sin on human finitude. The question is whether it is error that is essential to humanness, or finitude. If the latter, it is difficult to see why Scripture would be any less "human" if God so superintended its writing that no error was committed. Human beings are always finite; but it does not follow

they are always in error. Error does not seem to be essential to humanness. But if someone wishes to controvert the point, then to be consistent that person must also insist that between the Fall and the new heaven and the new earth, not only error but *sinfulness* is essential to humanness. No writer of Scripture escaped the sinfulness of his fallen nature while composing what came to be recognized as Holy Writ: does this mean that the humanness of Scripture entails not only error but sinfulness? And if not, why not? Who wishes to say Scripture is sinful? This is not mere *reductio ad absurdem*: rather, it is a way of showing that human beings who in the course of their lives inevitably err and sin do not necessarily err and sin in any particular circumstance. Their humanness is not compromised when they fail to err or sin. By the same token, a God who safeguards them from error in a particular circumstance—namely, the writing of Scripture—has not thereby vitiated their humanness.

Fourth, there is an unavoidable christological connection, raised (perhaps unwittingly) by Vawter himself:

> The Fathers and the Church have always been fond of the analogy by which the Scripture as word of God in words of men may be compared with Christ the incarnate Word, the divine in human flesh. But if the incarnate Word disclaimed omniscience (Mk 13.32, etc.), it must seem singularly inappropriate to exploit the analogy as an argument for an utterly inerrant Scripture.[88]

The logic, of course, is faulty: to be a valid argument, Vawter would have had to conclude with the words: " . . . it must seem singularly inappropriate to exploit the analogy as an argument for an utterly omniscient Scripture." I'm not sure what "omniscient Scripture" would mean: presumably a Scripture that "knows" or "tells" or "records" absolutely everything. But no one claims that. However, if the Scripture/Christ analogy holds, Vawter's argument can be made to stand on its head. If error is the *inevitable* result of lack of omniscience, and if lack of omniscience is characteristic of all humanness (including that of Jesus, according to the biblical passage to which Vawter refers), then there are errors not only in Scripture but in Jesus' teaching as well.

Calvin understood the problem and, therefore, appealed to accommodation not only in his treatment of Scripture but as a function of God's gracious self-disclosure to us in many forms: in the use of language, in the use of anthropomorphism, in the doctrine of Scripture—and in the Incarnation itself.[89] But it was precisely that breadth of view that enabled him to see that whatever accommodation entails it *cannot* entail sin or error: the costs are too high right across the spectrum of Christian theology.

B. INSPIRATION

A *second* term that is currently undergoing creative redefinition is *inspiration*. Most of the major proposals over the past fifty years or so for an appropriate meaning of the term are reasonably well known and need not be canvassed here. More recently, William J. Abraham has put forward another suggestion with some novel features.[90] He argues that during much of the church's history Christians believed the Bible was simply dictated by God. Advances in knowledge made so simple a view no longer tenable; and it was in that context that Warfield and others articulated their "concursive" theory of inspiration—i.e., that God in his sovereignty so supervised and controlled the human writers of Scripture that although what they wrote was genuinely their own, and in their own idiom, it was nevertheless the very word of God, right down to the individual words. The trouble with this view, Abraham argues, is that, for all intents and purposes, it remains indistinguishable from the older dictation theory. There are too many difficulties and contradictions in the Bible for the theory to be tenable (although he declines to enumerate any of these). What we must do is recognize that all talk about God is analogical talk; and, therefore, what we mean when we say "God inspires someone" must be determined by analogy to what we mean when we say something like "A teacher inspires his pupil." This does not mean that the pupil quotes the teacher verbatim, or even that the pupil remains entirely faithful to all that the teacher holds true. Some of what the pupil passes on will be accidental distortion of what the teacher taught; some may even be self-conscious revision of it; and some distortion may occur because of the pupil's limited capacity. But if the teacher is very "inspiring," the pupil will faithfully pass on the heart of what the teacher taught. So it is in the relationship between God and the writers of Scripture: He inspires them as a teacher does his pupils. But to claim "verbal inspiration" or inerrancy or infallibility in any strict sense would be a denial of the insights gained from an analogical approach to the way we talk about God.

Abraham's view has received adequate critique elsewhere;[91] but a few comments may be in order. First, one cannot help noting that while other historians accuse Warfield of tightening up the doctrine of Scripture (see the first section of this paper), Abraham charges him with loosening it—but not enough. The charge depends on the antecedent judgment that writers before Warfield, in particular Gaussen,[92] held to a dictation view of inspiration. Certainly such writers occasionally use the word "dictation," but it has been shown repeatedly that many older writers use "dictation" language to refer to the *results* of inspiration, not its *mode*—i.e., the *result* was nothing less than the very words of God. As for the mode, Gaussen himself forcefully insists that the human authors of Scripture are not merely

"the pens, hands, and secretaries of the Holy Ghost," for in much of Scripture we can easily discern "the individual character of the person who writes."[93] Warfield does not seem so innovative after all.

Second, Abraham attempts to formulate an entire doctrine of Scripture on the basis of his treatment of inspiration. What he never undertakes, however, is a close study of the wide-ranging ways in which Scripture speaks of itself, claims to be truthful, identifies the words of man with the words of God, and so forth—the kind of material that Grudem has put together.[94] More important yet, in the one passage in the New Testament that is closest to using our word "inspiration" (2Ti 3:16), it is not the human author who is "inspired" but the text: the Scripture itself is *theopneustos*. At a blow, the analogy of a teacher inspiring his pupils falls to the ground—a point the much-maligned Warfield treated with some rigor almost a century ago.[95]

What strikes the evangelical reader who contemplates Abraham's proposals is the degree of arbitrariness intrinsic to the selection of the model. The same is true about other recent proposals. The "biblical theology" movement, for instance, has often suggested that God has revealed Himself through a sequence of revelatory events, to which Scripture is added as the result of the Spirit's inspiring human minds to bear witness to the revelation. The revelatory pattern as a whole is the act of God; but because the human witness may be faulty, individual steps along the line of that revelatory pattern may have to be dismissed; and, in any case, there is certainly no identification of God's words with man's words. These and many other proposals, as insightful as they are at some points, are strikingly arbitrary in that they select some model or other without dealing effectively with the Bible's account of its own nature.

C. INERRANCY

A *third* term that has elicited some discussion is *inerrancy*. Besides the fact that it is essentially a negative term, many have charged that the use of the term in the modern debate is not only innovative (Why move from, say, "infallibility"?) but also logically inadequate. Marshall, for instance, comments that many propositions about alleged historical phenomena can be meaningfully judged to be inerrant (i.e., true); but many statements in Scripture cannot be so treated. If Jesus says, "Take away the stone" (Jn 11:39), His command is neither true nor false: the categories are inappropriate. What may be true or false is the biblical proposition that Jesus actually uttered this command, not the command itself. The same is true of much of the advice of Job's comforters, of fictional narratives like Jotham's fable or Jesus' parables, and of much more. As a result, Marshall prefers to adopt the language of "infallibility," understood to mean something like "entirely trustworthy for the purposes for which it is given."[96]

In one sense there is wisdom here: if Evangelicals use words as frequently misunderstood and as easily mocked as this one, they may be erecting unnecessary barriers to others who are trying to understand their position. Certainly it is easy enough to articulate a comprehensive doctrine of Scripture without using that particular word,[97] even though "inerrant" and especially the longer "without error" have a notable pedigree.

On the other hand, it rather misses the point to say that "inerrant" is a term inappropriate to commands and parables. Inerrancy does not mean that every conceivable sequence of linguistic data in the Bible must be susceptible to the term "inerrant," only that no errant assertion occurs. In any case, even if "inerrancy" were inappropriate at the merely lexical level, any one-word summary of a complex doctrine must be understood as a construct. This is true even of a word like "God": what a writer who uses this term means cannot be established from a lexicon. Once again, Feinberg's essay on the meaning of inerrancy comes to mind.[98] More important, it is arguable that those who today defend the use of the term "inerrancy" mean no more and no less than did most of those who used the term "infallibility" forty years ago. One of the factors that has prompted the switch has been the progressive qualification of "infallibility": Marshall wants it to mean "entirely trustworthy for the purposes for which it is given." That qualification may be entirely laudable, if the "purposes" are discovered inductively and not arbitrarily narrowed to salvific matters, as if to imply that the Bible is not trustworthy when it treats of history or the external world. After all, one might suggest that the purpose of Scripture is to bring glory to God, or to explain truthfully God's nature and plan of redemption to a fallen race in order to bring many sons to glory: under such definitions of "purpose" the comprehensiveness of Scripture's truth claims cannot be so easily circumvented. In short, conservatives may in some measure be innovative in stressing one word above another as that which most accurately characterizes their views; but it is not at all clear that by so doing they have succumbed to doctrinal innovation insensitive to normal linguistic usage.

IV. UNCRITICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD LITERARY AND OTHER TOOLS

It must be frankly admitted that evangelicals have on the whole been somewhat slow to make use of genuine advances in literary criticism. On the other hand, it must also be admitted that some scholars have deposited a naive confidence in these same tools that would be touching if it were not so harmful to accurate biblical exegesis and to profound humility before the Word of God. We are

already in some peril when we use our tools in Procrustean ways to make us masters of the Word, when it is far more important to be mastered by it.

In the first of these two volumes, one essay briefly discussed the limits and usefulness of redaction criticism and of its antecedents;[99] and for that reason this section may be kept short. Four observations, however, may be of value.

The first is that literary tools almost never bring with them the control of a mechanic's "tools." The label "literary tool" is, therefore, potentially deceptive. One need only read certain structuralist treatments of Jesus' parables,[100] for instance, to observe how often the interpretation turns out to be an invitation to authentic existence or an openness to world-view reversal or the like: Jesus would have been surprised. If, in days gone by, the "orthodox" Christians were the first to impose their theology on the text, they seem to have been displaced in recent scholarly discussion by a new generation so gifted in the use of their "tools" that they can find confirmation of their theology in every text they examine. This process has been speeded up by the impact of the new hermeneutic, about which I shall say more in the sixth section of this paper. For the moment it is enough to remark that although literary tools offer to interpreters of Scripture a variety of devices to bring out the meaning of the text, they have sometimes become ponderous ways of saying the obvious,[101] or (which is worse) refined ways of distorting the obvious.[102]

Second, new literary "tools" are being developed constantly; and frequently some time must elapse before profound understanding of the tool's nature and limits can be reached. This is true not only for something fairly simple, such as audience criticism, but also for the range of techniques and procedures covered by, say, "rhetorical criticism." There is no doubt, for instance, that Culpepper's recent book on John[103] breaks new ground; but, equally, there is no doubt that by appealing to the formal characteristics of a nineteenth- and twentieth-century novel as the grid by which the Fourth Gospel should be interpreted, there is a substantial loss both in accuracy of exegesis and in the book's real authority.[104] One common feature of rhetorical criticism is the removal of the external referent in the interpretative process *and* (in the hands of most interpreters) *in the final assessment of the text's relation to external reality*.[105] The result seems to be a two-tier approach to history and even to truth itself—one in the external world and one in the "story," with few obvious relations between the two. What that will do to the "scandal of particularity" inherent in the revelation of a self-incarnating God can only be imagined. It is probably still too early for deep assessments; but this "literary tool" clearly marks out an area where a great deal more work needs to be done.

The confusion extends well beyond conservative circles, of

course. At the 1983 meetings of *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* held in Canterbury, the section on John spent many hours debating the proper relationships between rhetorical criticism and the older, more established "tools." In that sense, there is some gain; for if the evidence that serves to justify, say, source-critical division of a text can with equal or better reason serve to justify the unity of the text when read with rhetorical-critical questions in mind, one wonders what justification is left for the source criticism of the passage. It will not do to suggest that a source-critical reading of the text justifies the initial partition theory, and the rhetorical reading of the text justifies the unity imposed by the final redactor; for it is *the same evidence* to which appeal is being made. If that evidence is satisfactorily explained by rhetorical considerations, then it *cannot* serve to ground partition. It would not, of course, be fair to give the converse argument ("If that evidence is satisfactorily explained by source-critical considerations, then it *cannot* serve to ground unity.") equal weight, because we have the text as a unified whole before us. The *onus probandi* in this sort of debate always rests with the source critic. Thus, when Ackerman[106] contends that the doubling in the Joseph story has a literary purpose, he is inevitably calling in question the view that the doubling betrays a conflation of disparate sources. At some point the student must opt for one line of argument or the other, presumably on the basis of which method offers the best "fit." But we may at least be grateful that some of the new literary tools are again opening up questions that have too often been illegitimately closed.

Third, one of the more influential of the new approaches to Scripture is the application of the principles of sociological analysis to the exegesis of the text. There is much to be gained by such an approach. Just as the contemporary church can be studied using sociological categories, there is no intrinsic reason why the same categories cannot be used for groupings of people in the Scripture. Certainly social forces have real impact on individuals and groups; and sometimes those (like theologians) who prefer to focus on abstract ideas at the expense of thinking about social forces may overlook important factors that bear on the historical events described in the sacred texts. For this reason, many of these studies have considerable value.[107]

Nevertheless, we must differentiate between the numerous sociological appeals being made. Sometimes the Scripture is studied by a historian or exegete who is sensitive to sociological issues; sometimes explicitly sociological categories intrude: "class," "millenarian cult," "charismatic authority figure," and so forth. Already there are two crucial issues lurking behind the surface: (1) Are the sociological appeals presented in a reductionistic fashion that ultimately sidesteps or even deprecates questions of ultimate truth

and authority? If sociology warns us against a too facile appeal to *deus ex machina,* does it also sometimes banish God altogether, or fail to see His sovereign hand over social forces? (2) Are the categories of modern sociology applied to ancient societies with requisite care? Are discontinuities as carefully observed as continuities?

But we may go further and note those studies that apply particular sociological theory to specific problems.[108] Here there are sometimes unrecognized difficulties, as Rodd[109] has pointed out. What begins as a heuristic device may end up as a reductionistic explanation. Moreover, sociology gains in accuracy when it can study at first hand large groups of people under carefully worked out controls; and, even then, different sociologists may interpret the data rather differently. How accurate then are sociological analyses and explanations of social forces to which we have only remote and indirect access through documents two thousand and more years old? In short, at what point does dependence upon the "tool" become not only exegetically distorting but thereby also destructive not only of biblical authority but even of elementary exegesis? Marshall's judgment is balanced:

> The scholar who studies religious history from a sociological point of view may well believe that sociological considerations are largely sufficient to explain it. He may be wrong in adopting such an absolute standpoint—a Christian believer would certainly want to claim this—but nevertheless the adoption of his standpoint will probably bring to light historical facts and explanations which would have eluded the historian who ignored the insights of sociology.[110]

Finally, although it is true that conservatives have often been the slowest to adopt what is useful and fair in the so-called "literary tools," in some cases the opposite is true: Evangelicals use certain "tools" with increasing skill, while their less conservative colleagues are engaged in depreciating the same tools. Precisely because they put such a high premium on the Word, conservatives have devoted large amounts of energy to the study of the biblical languages and to the principles of what is often called "grammatical-historical exegesis." To scan the abstracts of the 1984 meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature will convince most observers that such discipline is in decline in the larger community of biblical scholars, suspended by approaches and themes judged more current, not to say faddish. Or again, harmonization is so often presented as an unscholarly capitulation to conservatism that far too little thought has been given to its nature, proper use, and abuse. For that reason the essay by Blomberg[111] in this volume marks a step forward, even if—or indeed, precisely because—it cuts across the grain.

V. SENSITIVITY TO "PROPOSITIONS" AND "LITERARY GENRE"

By and large, conservatives during the past one hundred years have not been slow to focus on *words*. They have pointed out, rightly, that inspiration extends beyond revelation of mere concepts—concepts that the human authors are left to flesh out without any divine superintendence so far as the actual *words* are concerned—to the actual *words* of the sacred text. But they have been slower to deal at length with more substantial literary units. How are words related to propositions? How are propositions related to any particular literary genre? How are the truth questions related to words, propositions, and literary genres? What exactly does it mean to say that Acts 15, Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, and Jotham's fable are all *true?* What is to be made of the fact that the first four books of the New Testament are "Gospels"?

At a popular level, any reasonably conscientious and intelligent reader makes various literary distinctions as the various parts of the Bible are encountered. Parables may not be understood very well; but few readers take the narrative parables to be descriptive of historical events. All will make subtle, if inarticulate, adjustments as they pass from genealogy to discourse, from discourse to apocalyptic, from apocalyptic to psalm. Few will read Jeremiah's psalm of malediction as a literal curse on the man who brought his father the news of Jeremiah's birth or as a serious wish that his mother should have remained forever pregnant (Jer 20:14–18): thoughtful reading recognizes lament rather than vindictiveness. That intuitive "feel" for what a passage means, however, demands rigorous attention and analytical thought. For, otherwise, we may unhappily fall into one of two opposite errors: we may insist that Scripture is saying something it is not in fact saying; or, alternatively, we may appeal to literary genre in a vague and undisciplined way that enables us to escape what Scripture is saying.

The issue was thrust upon Evangelicals in North America in the painful debates occasioned by Gundry's commentary on Matthew.[112] This is not the place to offer a blow by blow account of the debate; but quite clearly a substantial part of the criticism leveled against him by conservatives was ill-conceived.[113] Gundry holds that whatever Matthew writes that is different from or in addition to Mark and Q (which he understands to be considerably longer than the 250 or so verses normally so labeled) has no historical referent: rather, it belongs to midrash, a genre of literature that happily expands on historical material in order to make theological (not historical) points. Moreover, Gundry holds this while also maintaining, with integrity, the full authority and inerrancy of Scripture. Entirely without merit is the charge that because Gundry denies that the referent in certain

passages is historical, therefore he runs into flat contradiction with other passages that treat the same referent as historical; for in each such case, Gundry has a ready-made answer. In some instances, such as the accounts in Matthew and Luke of the virginal conception of Jesus, he denies the historicity of Matthew's account (on the grounds that Matthew is writing midrash) while upholding the historicity of Luke's account (on the grounds that Luke is writing history, or theologically tinged history). In other instances he might simply argue that his opponent has not found any passage where the referent can be judged historical, *once it is agreed that the relevant passages all belong to the category of midrash*. Several of Gundry's critics fail to see that the problem lies solely at the interpretative level. A Calvinist might as easily argue that the Arminian who denies that certain texts teach the unqualified sovereignty of God is in reality denying the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. The only legitimate way to offer telling critique of Gundry's interpretation of Matthew is to combine careful assessment of some of his methods with demonstration that his handling of the literary genre "midrash" is fundamentally mistaken.[114]

To take another example, the "Gospels" have often been compared with better known and more widely distributed literary genres from the ancient world, in an attempt to define the manner in which a "Gospel" may be expected to convey truth.[115] Most such efforts result in some depreciation of the importance of "history" in a Gospel. Individual efforts to treat individual Gospels in a more conservative vein have not been entirely lacking;[116] but one of the best treatments of the problem is an essay by Aune,[117] whose work is immaculately researched and whose conclusions are nuanced. One of the more important of these is that "genre" is a category frequently without fixed boundaries; and an individual genre is often some amalgamation or reshaping of antecedent genres. The result is a telling critique of reductionist approaches to the Gospels. Similar studies are required to tell us just what the "Epistles" are (here the essay by Longenecker in the first of these two volumes will be of use[118]) and just what sort of "history" is recorded in the Book of Acts.[119] No less pressing is the need for further studies of such hellenistic categories as the diatribe and of such Jewish categories as pesher.

Comparable ambiguities surround the nature of propositions. The central questions may be introduced by quoting from a review of the first of these two volumes:

> While some of the authors distinguish between the message or truth of Scripture and the words (e.g., Bromiley), others (e.g., Gruden [*sic*]) tend to equate the human witness and the divine revelation. The latter are prone to ignore those passages that imply the discontinuity between human speech and understanding on the one hand and the Word of God on the other (cf. Ps. 71:15; 119:18, 19; 139:6; Isa. 55:8, 9; Job 42:3; Dan. 12:8; I Cor. 2:8, 9; I Pet. 1:10, 11). Instead, they concentrate on the character of Scripture itself as revelation.[120]

The criticism is in certain respects telling, as we shall see; but it also muddies the central issues a little. In the first place, the biblical passages to which references are made are not all of a piece, and in any case they do not prove what the reviewer thinks they do. For instance, Isaiah 55:8–9 does not affirm that because God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts they cannot be "reduced" to human language. The context shows that God's thoughts are "higher" than ours in the moral realm, and therefore our response must be repentance, not some kind of awareness of the ineffable. Psalm 71:15 and similar passages make it clear that the psalmist recognizes the limitations on his knowledge; but equally they show that the psalmist can utter in human language what he *does* know of God's ways. Passages such as Psalm 119:18 and 1 Corinthians 2:8–9 presuppose that the epistemological cruxes to understanding the Word of God go beyond mere analysis of language (about which a little more will be said in the next section); but they do not suggest that there is a fundamental disjunction between Scripture and truth. Second, the reviewer does not attempt interaction with the voluminous biblical evidence Grudem adduces to show that the Scriptures themselves develop the view that what Scripture says, God says. And third, the review moves unexpectedly from a possible distinction between the message or the truth of Scripture and its words to a distinction between the human *witness* and the divine *revelation*—a change in categories that prematurely closes the discussion.

Nevertheless, the reviewer has raised some important points. Certainly there is a formal distinction between, say, Grudem and Bromiley. But the reviewer's own suggestion is a trifle disconcerting:

> We need to ask seriously whether words contain their meaning. Infallibility and inerrancy pertain to the revelatory meaning of the biblical words, but is this meaning endemic to the words themselves? Or is it given by the Holy Spirit to the eyes of faith when the words are seen in their integral relationship to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ?[121]

The difficulty is that the infallible meaning is not only removed from the words but from the realm of the text: it is "given" by the Holy Spirit to the eyes of faith. Apart from the fact that the work of the Holy Spirit is crucial to all human knowing of things divine (see the essay by Frame in this volume),[122] the kind of transfer of the locus of authority envisaged by our reviewer cannot be made to square with the biblical evidence amassed in the Grudem essay. But may it not be that the apparent discrepancy between a Grudem and a Bromiley is merely formal? The one reflects the fact that the Bible itself treats its words as God's words; the other reflects the linguistic stance that

treats words as concatenations of phonemes or orthographical conventions that are mere vehicles for meaning. The one treats words in a "popular" or "ordinary" way and is delighted to find that these very human words of Scripture are also God's words; the other treats words in the framework of modern theoretical linguistics and therefore sees a certain disjunction between naked words and meaning.[123] But our reviewer goes beyond both of these complementary positions to a new stance that locates meaning only in the Spirit-illumined knower.

The question, then, at least in part, is whether admittedly human words, when so superintended by God Himself, can convey divine truth—not exhaustively, of course, but truly. I think they can, and I find insuperable difficulties with any other position[124]—though this is not the place to defend that view. But there is a second question, namely, whether the "propositions" the words make up convey meaning or merely serve as meaning's vehicle. What quickly becomes obvious is that "proposition" is given various definitions that feed back and affect one's use of "propositional revelation" and even of "verbal inspiration."

It is here that Vanhoozer[125] is a reliable guide and makes significant advances in resolving these perplexing issues. He forces us to think through these slippery categories, and he points to ways in which we may preserve the substance of "propositional, verbal revelation" (i.e., the emphasis on verbal, cognitive communication with authority vested in the text itself) while simultaneously appreciating the ordinariness of the language of Scripture, the diversity of its literary forms, and therefore what it means to speak of Scripture's truthfulness.

VI. THE NEW HERMENEUTIC AND PROBLEMS OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Few questions are more persistent and more important in this decade than those dealing with hermeneutics. Among the most influential of the developments of this generation is that the older hermeneutical models that focused on the processes whereby the interpreter interpreted the objective text have been radically transformed into newer models that set up a "hermeneutical circle" between the text and its interpreter. Each time the interpreter asks questions of the text, the questions themselves emerge out of the limitations of the interpreter; and, therefore, the responses are skewed to fit that grid. But those responses shape the interpreter; they may radically alter one's world view if they provide sharp surprises. Therefore, when the interpreter returns to the text, the questions he or she now asks come out of a slightly different matrix—

and, therefore, the responses are correspondingly modified. Not only is the interpreter interpreting the text; the text in this model is "interpreting" the interpreter. Understanding does not depend in any important way on a grasp of the referents of words (i.e., that to which they refer) but emerges out of the heart of language itself. The text merely provides the room or the vehicle for the language-event, now understood to be the origin of all understanding.

Only recently have Evangelicals contributed tellingly to the contemporary discussion.[126] Generalizations about the outcome of the debate are still premature, owing not least to the fact that not all who appeal to the new hermeneutic adopt the full range of philosophical baggage that others want to associate with the movement. What is clear is that the authority and objective truthfulness of Scripture are bound up in the debate—and this at several levels.

A. DIFFERENT FRAMEWORKS

Achtemeier introduces one of these when he argues that conservatives have paid too little attention to the vastly different frameworks out of which interpreters in different generations approach the text:

> If Scripture is in fact free from error in the form in which it purveys divine truth, it must be free from such error not only for the time for which it was written but also for future times in which it will be read. Scripture therefore must be recognizably as free from error to the medieval scientist searching for the way to transmute base metal into gold as it must be free from error to the modern physicist seeking a field theory of physical forces, despite the widely differing presuppositions each brings to Scripture about the nature of the physical world. If truth is one, and the Bible as truth must exclude error, on whose presuppositions is that truth to be explained, the alchemist's or the modern physicist's? . . . The fact that this problem is seldom if ever addressed by conservatives points to a naive absolutizing of our current level of scientific theory and knowledge on the part of conservatives. . . . It is as though conservatives assumed that to our time and our time alone the final, unchanging truth of the universe had been revealed. . . . The need for apologetics for a particular world view and the idea of truth as unchangeable from age to age make the task of conservative apologetics for Scriptural inerrancy a uniquely unprofitable one.[127]

The telltale impact of the new hermeneutic is self-evident in this paragraph: a fundamental confusion of meaning and truth. It is possible to raise hermeneutical questions without raising truth questions—but not in the eyes of the strongest proponents of the new hermeneutic, who hold that where a different hermeneutic operates there must also be a different theory of truth. Achtemeier does not here discuss whether or not the biblical text is thoroughly truthful; rather, he discusses whether or not the biblical text can possibly be *perceived* to be perfectly truthful by people living under

different intellectual paradigms.[128] If Achtemeier's argument were pushed hard, however, it would have a painful sting in its tail. Because each human being is different from every other human being, therefore, to some extent, each of us operates under antecedent knowledge and bias that are different from those of every other human being; and this suggests that the notion of objective truth disappears forever. If that is so, one cannot help but wonder why Achtemeier should bother to try to convince others of the soundness, the rightness, the truthfulness of his views. That the problem is endemic to the discussion may be exemplified by a recent review of a book by Rudolf Schnackenburg, in which the reviewer tells us that the commentary in question

> . . . remains a victim of . . . the penchant to oppose a univocal concept of history to the category of literature. And the very emphasis to seek the "original intention" of the writer or editors, frequently called the "intentional fallacy," artificially restricts literary criticism and implicitly denies the existence of a literary universe in which texts have meanings that authors may never have dreamed of. This is as assured an assertion as the law of acoustics affirming the existence of overtones independently of a composer's intentions.[129]

Joseph Cahill skirts rather quickly around the distinction many make between "meaning" and "significance." Moreover, he slightly distorts the "intentional fallacy," which historically has not sought to deny intent to the author of a text but, instead, warns against all interpretative procedures that seek to determine the author's intention independently of the text. In other words, one must adopt as a basic operating principle that the author's intention is expressed *in* the text. Some authors may produce texts *designed* to be evocative, to have a certain narrative world of their own; and others may produce texts *designed* to convey certain information or opinions—very much like Cahill's review. What is quite certain, however, is that Cahill reflects a sizable and growing body of opinion that understands the discipline of history itself to be less concerned with what actually took place at some point in time and space than with the creation of a theory about what took place, based on fragmentary evidence and controlled by the historian's biases. Exactly the same assessment is now commonly made of the discipline of exegesis.[130]

B. POSITIVISM OR SUBJECTIVITY

Some of these developments are nothing more than a healthy reaction to the positivism of von Ranke. But proponents of the new history and of the new hermeneutic sometimes offer us an unhelpful disjunction: either suffer the epistemological bankruptcy of wishful historical positivism or admit the unqualified subjectivity of the historical enterprise.

Passmore offers important insight on this matter.[131] He admits that history is not a science the way many branches of physics are a science—controllable under the rigorous terms of repeatable experiments and quantifiable to many decimal places of precision. But history is as objective a "science" as, say, geology and many other "natural" sciences. Passmore examines eight criteria for objectivity and argues compellingly that if they are applied rigorously they exclude geology as swiftly as history; and if the criteria are softened a little to allow geology into the academy of the sciences, history slips in as well. For instance, his "criterion six" reads as follows: "An inquiry is objective only if it does not select from within its material." "Criterion eight" reads: "In objective inquiries, conclusions are reached which are universally acceptable." A moment's reflection reveals how many of the natural sciences will suffer as much difficulty under a tight understanding of such criteria as will history.

Exactly the same point may be made with respect to exegesis, that is, with respect to the understanding of Scripture. The new hermeneutic has helpfully warned us of our finiteness, our ignorance, our biases, the influence of our individual world views. Its more sophisticated exponents have also insisted on the process of "distanciation" in the interpretative enterprise; *and distanciation presupposes an ultimate distinction between the knower (subject) and the text (object).* The interpreter must self-consciously distance self and its world view, its "horizon of understanding," from the world view or "horizon of understanding" of the text. Only then can progress be made toward bringing the interpreter's horizon of understanding in line with that of the text, toward fusing the two horizons. When such fusion takes place, even if it is not perfect (let alone exhaustive), it allows the objective meaning of the text to be understood by the knower. This interpreter's understanding may not capture the meaning of the text exhaustively; but there is no compelling reason why it cannot approach asymptotically toward the ideal of capturing it truly. This is assumed by most scholars when they try to convince their colleagues and others of the rightness of their exegetical conclusions; and ironically, it is also assumed by the proponents of uncontrolled polyvalence in meaning when they write articles of considerable learning in order to persuade their readers. If it is true that there is no direct access to pristine, empirical reality, it is equally true that the person who argues there is therefore no real world out there, but that every "world" depends on value-laden constructions of reality, has opted for a self-defeating position; for we cannot espouse both value-ladenness and ontological relativity, because in that case it becomes impossible to talk meaningfully about conceptual relativity.

The issue has come to practical expression in the contemporary debate over "contextualization."[132] When books and articles offer "a feminist reading" or "a Black reading" or "an African reading" or "a

liberation theology reading" of this or that text, there can be no initial, principial objection; for, after all, some of us are busy giving *unwitting* White, Black, Protestant, Reformed or Arminian, conservative or nonconservative readings. If the readings from a different perspective challenge us to come to grips with our own biases, if they call in question the depth of our commitment to distanciation and thereby teach us humility, they perform an invaluable service. But it cannot follow that every reading is equally valuable or valid, for some of the interpretations are mutually exclusive. The tragedy is that many modern "readings" of Scripture go beyond inadvertent bias to a self-conscious adoption of a grid fundamentally at odds with the text—all in the name of the polyvalence of the text and under the authority of the new hermeneutic. The relationship between the meaning that pops into my head under the stimulus of the text and the meaning held by the writer becomes a matter of complete indifference. Utterly ignored is the crucial role that distanciation must play. By such hermeneutical irresponsibility the text can be made to authorize literally anything. As I have discussed contextualization theory at some length elsewhere,[133] however, I do not propose to pursue it again here.

C. SCRIPTURE'S USE OF SCRIPTURE

At quite another level, the hermeneutical debate has been pushed back *into* the canon. How does Scripture treat Scripture? How can we meaningfully talk about Scripture's authority if, as is alleged, later writers of Scripture not only self-consciously violate earlier Scripture but unconsciously impose on it an interpretative grid that makes a mockery of any natural reading of the text? What is left, if even the New Testament corpora reflect divergent views of the content of the Christian faith? Perhaps it is not too surprising to read in a recent work that the authority of the Bible for the modern believer does not extend beyond a minimalist affirmation: "Properly speaking, a believing reader shares with his biblical predecessors the God of Abraham, the God of Paul, and only coincidentally does he hold other beliefs which make his outlook similar to theirs."[134] One wonders how the author can be so certain that it is the same God, if what we think of Him has only coincidental overlap with the faith of Abraham or of Paul. Or again, one wonders how much genuine authority can be salvaged when the Bible is understood to be a casebook that leaves the interpreter free to seek the cases judged most relevant to the interpreter's situation. Thus, Kraft argues that each culture has the right, even the responsibility, to choose those parts of the Bible it finds most congenial and to downplay the rest—a stance that leads Kraft to suggest:

> We need to ask which of these varieties of theology branded "heretical" were genuinely out of bounds (measured by scriptural standards), and which were valid contextualizations of scriptural truth within varieties of culture or subculture that the party in power refused to take seriously. *It is likely that most of the "heresies" can validly be classed as cultural adaptations rather than as theological aberrations.* They, therefore, *show what ought to be done today* rather than what ought to be feared. The "history of traditions" becomes intensely relevant when studied from this perspective.[135]

The "scriptural standards" to which Kraft refers are not what the Bible as a whole says but a range of disparate theologies each based on separate parts of the Bible, a range that sets the limits and nature of the allowable diversity. Kraft here heavily depends on the work of von Allmen, extensively discussed elsewhere.[136] Appeals to a "supra-cultural core" in order to preserve at least some unity in Christianity are far more problematic than is commonly recognized.[137] It is not clear how or why God's macrosalvific purposes should escape the vicissitudes of paradigm shifts or cultural expression: even as simple a statement as "Jesus is Lord" means something quite different when transposed to a Buddhist context.[138] Finite human beings have no culture-free access to truth, nor can they express it in culture-free ways. Our only hope—and it is adequate—is in every instance so to work through problems of distanciation and the fusion of horizons of understanding that the meaning of the text is truly grasped. But if that is so for what I have called the macrosalvific truths, it is difficult to see why it should not be so for incidental details.[139]

Brown is only slightly oversimplifying the issue when he writes:

> Prior to Bauer, the prevailing view was that Christianity, whether it was true or false, was at least a relatively well-defined and fixed body of doctrine; after Bauer, it was more often assumed that doctrine was constantly in the process of development and that "historic Christian orthodoxy," far from having been a constant for close to two thousand years, was only the theological fashion of a particular age.[140]

The related issues are so complex that four essays in this pair of volumes have been devoted to them: Moisés Silva has written two of them, one dealing with the text form of the Old Testament as it is quoted by the New[141] and the other with the place of historical reconstruction in biblical exegesis;[142] Douglas Moo has discussed the way the New Testament actually cites the Old, and he ties his discussion to modern debates over *sensus plenior;*[143] and a fourth essay has attempted to point a way toward a recognition of the genuine unity in the New Testament when it is interpreted within a certain salvation-historical framework.[144]

Such innercanonical questions inevitably raise again the question of the nature of the canon: what justification is there for treating these books and not others as the authoritative Word of God? None, some

would reply.[145] Others, impressed by the canon criticism of Sanders[146] or of Childs[147] or convinced by traditional Roman Catholic arguments, adopt the general framework of the canon largely on the basis of the established tradition of the church. These issues, too, are extremely complex, and only infrequently discussed with knowledge and care by conservatives; and, therefore, David Dunbar's well-researched essay will prove particularly welcome to many.[148]

D. EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

At the deepest level, however, the questions raised by the new hermeneutic are epistemological. Some recent Reformed thought has unwittingly played into the hands of the more radical exponents of the new hermeneutic by dismissing both evidentialism and classical foundationalism and seeking to build a system on the view that belief in God is itself foundational, properly basic. If so, it is argued, Reformed epistemology and our belief in God enable us to escape the weaknesses of foundationalism and to stand above the mere amassing of bits of evidence. This line of approach is then sometimes projected back onto Calvin himself.

Quite apart from whether or not Calvin can be claimed in support for this view,[149] it seems open to the criticisms of van Hook,[150] who, arguing primarily against Nicholas Wolterstorff and Alvin Plantinga,[151] convincingly demonstrates that this new "Reformed epistemology" may justify the *rationality* of belief in God, but it is wholly inadequate to justify any God-talk as *knowledge*.[152] Van Hook, therefore, suggests we should follow the proposals of Rorty: redefine knowledge, defining it not epistemologically but sociologically—knowledge is "what our peers let us get away with saying." That means that whether any particular datum is to be considered knowledge very largely depends on the locus of the "peers": a different set of peers may generate a different assessment as to whether or not the datum is to be classified as knowledge.[153] The parallels to the subjective and relative interpretations generated by a skeptical handling of the new hermeneutic are obvious.

Perhaps part of the problem is that we have been so frightened by the extreme claims of philosophically naive evidentialists that some of us have been catapulted into a reactionary insistence that evidences are useless.[154] One inevitable result is the depreciation of such evidence as exists, the establishment of an unbridgeable gulf between hard data and theological truth-claims. Another part of the problem may be that much conservative writing has a wholly inadequate treatment of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Be that as it may, two essays in this pair of volumes have attempted to take steps to alleviate the need. Paul Helm[155] argues for a modified fideism to justify belief in the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, and John Frame[156] discusses the role of the Holy Spirit both in the creation of the written Word and in bringing people to place their confidence in it. These are seminal essays in an area where a great deal more work needs to be done.

VII. DISCOUNTING OF THE CONCURSIVE THEORY

It is safe to say that the central line of evangelical thought on the truthfulness of the Scriptures has entailed the adoption of the concursive theory: God in His sovereignty so superintended the freely composed human writings we call the Scriptures that the result was nothing less than God's words and, therefore, entirely truthful. Recently, however, the Basinger brothers,[157] in an apparent attempt to discount the concursive theory, have argued that it is illogical to defend simultaneously the concursive theory in bibliology and the free will defense (FWD) in theodicy. The former means one has accepted as true some such proposition as the following: "Human activities (such as penning a book) can be totally controlled by God without violating human freedom."[158] And that, of course, stands in contradiction to most formulations of the FWD. One must, therefore, choose between inerrancy (and the concursive theory on which it depends) and the FWD.

As the argument stands, it is valid; but perhaps it is revealing that the Basingers do not extend their argument to the major redemptive events. For instance, the death of Jesus Christ is presented as a conspiracy of leaders of Jews and Gentiles (Ac 4:27); yet those leaders "did what [God's] power and will had decided beforehand should happen" (Ac 4:28). God is not presented as a great chess player who brilliantly outfoxes His opponents by anticipating and allowing for their every move: the conspirators did what God Himself decided beforehand should happen. Yet the conspirators are not thereby excused: they are still regarded as guilty. Any other view will either depreciate the heinousness of the sin or render the Cross a last minute arrangement by which God cleverly snatched victory out of the jaws of defeat, rather than the heart of His redemptive purposes. If some sort of concursive theory is not maintained in this instance, one wonders what is left of an orthodox doctrine of God. And if the concursive theory is required here, why may it not be permitted elsewhere? Is it possible for any true theist with any degree of consistency to believe Romans 8:28 while arguing against a concursive theory of inspiration?

The philosophical issues cannot be probed here; but it is worth mentioning that human responsibility can be grounded in something other than "free will," where free will is understood to entail absolute power to the contrary.[159] And theodicy has other options than the FWD.[160]

VIII. THE DIMINISHING AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES IN THE CHURCHES

A high view of Scripture is of little value to us if we do not enthusiastically embrace the Scripture's authority. But today we multiply the means for circumventing or dissipating that authority. I am not here speaking of those who formally deny the Scripture's authority: it is only to be expected that they should avoid the hard sayings and uncomfortable truths. But those of us who uphold the thorough truthfulness of God's Word have no excuse.

The reasons for such failure are many. In part, we reflect the antiauthoritarian stance that is currently endemic to the Western world, and we forget that the Bible portrays true freedom not as absolute but as freedom from sin. This libertarianism has engendered two surprising children. The first is a new love of authoritarianism amongst some believers: they do not feel safe and orthodox unless some leader is telling them exactly what to say, do, and think. Inevitably this brings some power lovers to positions of religious leadership, supported sometimes by a theology that ascribes "apostleship" or some other special, charismatic enduement to them, sometimes by a theology of churchmanship that makes each pastor a pope. The authority of the Scriptures is in such instances almost always formally affirmed; but an observer may be forgiven if he or she senses that these self-promoted leaders characteristically so elevate their opinions over the Scripture, often in the name of the Scripture, that the Word of God becomes muted. The church cries out for those who proclaim the Scriptures with unction and authority while simultaneously demonstrating that they stand under that authority themselves.

The second is a fairly conservative mood, a reaction to the times, that some interpret as a great blessing. But this conservative swing does not appear to be characterized by brokenness and contrition. Far from it: it is imbued with a "can do" mentality not far removed from arrogance. Many of the most respected religious leaders amongst us are those who project an image of total command, endless competence, glorious success, formulaic cleverness. We are experts, and we live in a generation of experts. But the cost is high: we gradually lose our sense of indebtedness to grace, we no longer cherish our complete dependence on the God of all grace, and we begin to reject themes like self-sacrifice and discipleship in favor of courses on successful living and leadership in the church. We forget that the God of the Bible declares: "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isa 66:2). Mere conservatism must not be confused with godliness, mere discipline with discipleship, mere assent to orthodox doctrine with wholehearted delight in the truth. If Tozer were still alive, he would

pronounce no improvement in the years that have elapsed since the publication of his moving lament on "The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches."[161]

Along with the arrogance has come the exegetical and philosophical sophistication that enables us to make Scripture support almost anything we want. Henry incisively comments:

> . . . in recent years a . . . type of theft has emerged as some fellow evangelicals, along with non-evangelicals, wrest from the Bible segments that they derogate as no longer Word of God. Some now even introduce authorial intention or the cultural context of language as specious rationalizations for this crime against the Bible, much as some rapist might assure me that he is assaulting my wife for my own or for her good. They misuse Scripture in order to champion as biblically true what in fact does violence to Scripture.[162]

Worse, even some of us who would never dream of formally disentangling some parts of the Bible from the rest and declaring them less authoritative than other parts can by exegetical ingenuity get the Scriptures to say just about whatever we want—and this we thunder to the age as if it were a prophetic word, when it is little more than the message of the age bounced off Holy Scripture. To our shame, we have hungered to be masters of the Word much more than we have hungered to be mastered by it.

The pervasiveness of the problem erupts in the "Christian" merchant whose faith has no bearing on the integrity of his or her dealings, or in the way material possessions are assessed. It is reflected in an accelerating divorce rate in Christian homes and among the clergy themselves—with little sense of shame and no entailment in their "ministries." It is seen in its most pathetic garb when considerable exegetical skill goes into proving, say, that the Bible condemns promiscuous homosexuality but not homosexuality itself (though careful handling of the evidence overturns the thesis),[163] or that the Bible's use of "head" in passages dealing with male/female relationships follows allegedly characteristic Greek usage and, therefore, means "source" (when close scrutiny of the primary evidence fails to turn up more than a handful of disputable instances of the meaning "source" in over two thousand occurrences).[164] It finds new lease when popular Evangelicals publicly abandon any mention of "sin"—allegedly on the ground that the term no longer "communicates"—without recognizing that adjacent truths (e.g., those dealing with the Fall, the law of God, the nature of transgression, the wrath of God, and even the gracious atonement itself) undergo telling transformation.

While I fear that Evangelicalism is heading for another severe conflict on the doctrine of Scripture, and while it is necessary to face these impending debates with humility and courage, what is far more

alarming is the diminishing authority of the Scriptures in the churches. This is taking place not only among those who depreciate the consistent truthfulness of Scripture but also (if for different reasons) among those who most vociferously defend it. To some extent we are all part of the problem; and perhaps we can do most to salvage something of value from the growing fragmentation by pledging ourselves in repentance and faith to learning and obeying God's most holy Word. Then we shall also be reminded that the challenge to preserve and articulate a fully self-consistent and orthodox doctrine of Scripture cannot be met by intellectual powers alone, but only on our knees and by the power of God.

Notes

CHAPTER ONE
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE
D. A. Carson
1–48

[1]*Contra* Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 89ff.

[2]See especially H. D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study 1700–1960* [original titles *Ideas of Revelation* and *Theories of Revelation*] (1959 and 1963; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); and S. L. Greenslade, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

[3]Viz., D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

[4]The recent literature is legion. The most important books and articles include the following: Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980); M. R. Austin, "How Biblical is 'The Inspiration of Scripture'?" *ExpT* 93 (1981–82), 75–79; James Barr, *The Scope and Authority of the Bible* (London: SCM, 1980; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981); idem, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); David L. Bartlett, *The Shape of Scriptural Authority* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Robert Gnuse, "Authority of the Scriptures: Quest for a Norm," *BTB* 13 (1983), 59–66; Paul D. Hanson, *The Diversity of Scripture: A Theological Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Krister Stendahl, "The Bible as a Classic and the Bible as Holy Scripture," *JBL* 103 (1984), 3–10; idem, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). Also, many works on the interpretation of Scripture have important things to say about the Bible's authority. The same point could be made for some works published in other languages: the debate between Gerhard Maier, *Das Ende der historisch-kritischen Methode*, 5th ed. (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1984), and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Schriftauslegung auf dem Wege zur biblischen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1975); or the essay by Pierre Gisel, "Pour une theologie de l'Ecriture: Réactions face à la 'Théologie du mouvement évangelique,'" *Etudes théologiques et religieuses* 59 (1984), 509–21. Cf. also Eckhard Schnabel, "Die neuere Diskussion um die Inspiration der Heiligen Schrift," *Bibel und Gemeinde* 84 (1984), 409–30.

[5]So, for instance, James D. G. Dunn, "The Authority of Scripture According to Scripture," *Churchman* 96 (1982), 105–6. When Dunn argues that at the turn of the century the range of opinion among Evangelicals ranged from Warfield to Orr, he is, of course, right; but what he fails to assess is the *distribution* of those opinions among the Evangelicals. This sort of historical question receives a little more attention below.

[6]There is an enormous range of positions within this "left wing" of Evangelicals, as well as an enormous range of competency—from the mature and articulate to the astonishingly ignorant. Representative recent works include: William J. Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); idem, *Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 1975); Donald G. Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); idem, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, vol. 1, *God, Authority, and Salvation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 51–87; Dunn, "The Authority of Scripture According to Scripture," 104–22, 201–25; I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Robert M. Price, "Inerrant the Wind: The Troubled House of North American Evangelicals," *EQ* 55 (1983), 129–44; Bernard Ramm, *After Fundamentalism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983); Jack B. Rogers, "Biblical Authority and Confessional Change," *JPH* 59 (1981), 131–58; Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*.

[7]In addition to some purely popular publications, the principal ICBI-sponsored publications are as follows: Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979); idem, *Biblical Errancy: Its Philosophical Roots* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981); Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus, eds., *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984); John D. Hannah, ed., *Inerrancy and the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1984); Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, eds., *Challenges to Inerrancy* (Chicago: Moody, 1984).

[8]Paul D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 267–304.

[9]Most of the contributors to this present volume and *Scripture and Truth*, including the two editors, have written nothing for ICBI. In addition, many books and articles have been published recently whose authors or editors may hold some connection with ICBI, even though the publication itself has not been sponsored by that organization: e.g., Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsay Michaels, eds., *Inerrancy and Common Sense* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979); Paul Ronald Wells, *James Barr and the Bible: A Critique of the New Liberalism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980); Leon Morris, *I Believe in Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

[10]Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco: Word, 1976–83).

[11]I have defined the term in D. A. Carson, "Historical Tradition and the Fourth Gospel: After Dodd, What?" in *Gospel Perspectives II*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), 83–145.

[12]Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild, 1966), 119. See discussion by someone sympathetic to the final draft in Bruce Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972; London: Hutchinson, 1972), 144–50.

[13]I am referring to commentaries, journal articles, published dissertations, works of theology, and the like that approach the truthfulness of Scripture in ways that an earlier generation of Catholic scholars could scarcely imagine. These include not only the contributions of North Atlantic scholars (e.g., Eduard Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng) but many "third world" works as well (e.g., the left wing of the largely Roman Catholic theology of liberation movement).

[14]E.g., *inter alia* Raymond E. Brown, "Rome and the Freedom of Catholic Biblical Studies," in *Search the Scriptures* [Festschrift for R. T. Stamm], ed. J. M. Myers et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1969) 129–50; idem, *The Critical Meaning of the Bible* (New York: Paulist, 1981); Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration*; Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1983).

[15]I am thinking of the works of such scholars as Albert Vanhoye and Ignace de la Potterie.

[16]E.g., George A. Kelly, *The New Biblical Theorists: Raymond E. Brown and Beyond* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1983). For recent Protestant assessments, see Robert L. Saucy, "Recent Roman Catholic Theology," in *Challenges to Inerrancy: A Theological Response*, ed. Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 215–46.

[17]The cohesiveness of this tradition I shall briefly mention below; but one caveat must be entered immediately. Differences between Protestants and Roman Catholics in the wake of the Reformation do not focus on the truthfulness of Scripture—or on its authority *per se*—but on the means of obtaining an authoritative interpretation of Scripture and on whether the Scripture alone is the sole locus of absolute authority in the church. Whenever the present study appeals to the cohesiveness of the tradition across the centuries regarding the Bible's authority, it allows for this sort of caveat, since the issues raised by it are of little consequence to the present discussion.

[18]Martin E. Marty, "Tensions Within Contemporary Evangelicalism: A Critical Appraisal," in *The Evangelicals*, ed. David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 170–88.

[19]Ibid., 173, 180.

[20]See especially his *Biblical Study: Its Principles, Methods and History* (New York: Scribner, 1883).

[21]See especially the essays by Geoffrey Bromiley and John Frame in this volume.

[22]Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*.

[23]John D. Woodbridge, "Biblical Authority: Towards an Evaluation of the Rogers and McKim Proposal," *TJ* 1 (1980), 165–236; idem, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982). One reviewer of Woodbridge's book rather badly missed the point by suggesting that although Rogers and McKim had been answered at the historical level, Woodbridge had failed to tackle the important hermeneutical issues that Rogers and McKim had raised. But, in fact, theirs was not a hermeneutical but a historical thesis. Another (William J. Abraham, "Redeeming the Evangelical Experiment," *TSFB* 8:3 [January–February 1985]: 12n.5) obliquely refers to Woodbridge's work to excoriate conservative claims "about the Bible" because "they rest on arguments which are narrowly historical in nature." The lack of evenhanded rigor in such a charge is frankly astonishing; Rogers and McKim set forth a thesis based on their historical understanding, and they were refuted in the same arena. Why, then, is it the conservative arguments that are "narrowly historical in nature"?

[24]The word is chosen by Rodney L. Petersen in his review of Rogers and McKim in *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 4 (1983), 61–63.

[25]Ernest R. Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism: British & American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978).

[26]See especially Randall H. Balmer, "The Old Princeton Doctrine of Inspiration in the Context of Nineteenth-Century Theology: A Reappraisal" (M.A. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1981); idem, "The Princetonians and Scripture: A Reconsideration," *WTJ* 44 (1982), 352–65; John D. Woodbridge and Randall H. Balmer, "The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Ernest Sandeen Proposal," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 245–79, 396–410.

[27]Numerous writers have recently taken up this point (though a substantial part of contemporary scholarship continues to take the opposite view): e.g., James I. Packer, "John Calvin and the Inerrancy of Holy Scripture," in *Inerrancy and the Church*, 143–88; W. Robert Godfrey, "Biblical Authority in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Question of Transition," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 225–43, 391–97; Roger R. Nicole, "John Calvin and Inerrancy," *JETS* 25:4 (December 1982): 425–42; Eugene F. Klug, "Word and Spirit in Luther Studies since World War II," *TJ* 5 (1984), 3–46.

[28]Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?" *WTJ* 44 (1982), 250–89; 45 (1983), 219–72.

[29]Ian S. Rennie, "Mixed Metaphors, Misunderstood Models, and Puzzling Paradigms: A Contemporary Effort to Correct Some Misunderstandings Regarding the Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Response," a mimeographed but unpublished paper delivered at the conference, "Interpreting an Authoritative Scripture," in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on June 22–26, 1981.

[30]Ibid., 11.

[31]For this paragraph and the next, I am heavily indebted to Richard Riss in an unpublished paper, "A Critical Examination of Ian Rennie's Historiography of Biblical Inspiration." See also his forthcoming thesis, "Early Nineteenth Century Protestant Views of Biblical Inspiration in the English Speaking World" (M.A. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1986).

[32]Riss points out that "plenary inspiration" is not distinguished from "verbal inspiration" in Ebenezer Henderson's *Divine Inspiration* (1836), in Daniel Wilson's *The Evidences of Christianity* (1852), or in such important discussions of the doctrine as John Dick's *Essay on the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (1811) or T. F. Curtis's *The Human Element in the Inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures* (1867).

[33]Thus, William Cooke, who held to verbal inspiration, could write that his "immediate object" was "to maintain the *plenary inspiration* of the sacred writers, and to show that the books of the Old and New Testament are the authentic oracles of God" (*Christian Theology* [London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1879], 55). Cooke is not exceptional: cf. Eleazar Lord, *The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures* (New York: A. D. F. Randolph, 1858); John Farrar, *Biblical and Theological Dictionary*, ed. J. Robinson Gregory (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1889), 354.

[34]So, for instance, Henry Alford, in the sixth section of the first chapter of his preface to *The Greek Testament*. Similarly, Daniel Wilson, whom Rennie lists as a fine exponent of plenary inspiration, can emphasize that the Bible is "the unerring standard of truth" and was "universally considered as the infallible word of God" throughout the preceding sixteen or seventeen centuries (*The Evidences of Christianity*, 254–55).

[35]See the discussion by David F. Wright, "Soundings in the Doctrine of Scripture in British Evangelicalism in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *TB* 31 (1980): 87–106, who fails to treat this point adequately. He goes on to suggest that "[one] reason why Britain did not experience a Fundamentalist controversy in the 1910's and 1920's akin to the bitter battle in America lay in the more widespread acceptance of biological evolution by thinking evangelicals before the beginning of the century" (p. 92). But not only does this overlook the fact that Warfield himself was an evolutionist; it stands as an unproved judgment in need of immediate qualification by other factors. For instance, most Christians in England belonged to the state church; and a state church makes the kind of cleavage found in North America structurally almost impossible. The vast majority of institutions for theological training were either university faculties or state church theological colleges. Even so, the Baptist Union (a powerful independent denomination of Evangelicals in Britain as late as 1885) shortly thereafter split over the doctrine of Scripture, largely owing to the influence of C. H. Spurgeon. Moreover, many today would argue that the relative strength of American Evangelicals' institutions at the end of the twentieth century—and the consequent growth of the church—largely validates the painful and often courageous decisions to withdraw in the 1920s and 1930s from the parent organizations increasingly characterized at the time by straightforward unbelief.

[36]Thomas Ridgley, *A Body of Divinity*, vol. 1 (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1855), 57. Rennie's view needs further qualification from the thesis of Henning Graf Reventlow, *Bibelautorität und Geist der Moderne: Die Bedeutung des Bibelverständnisses für die geistesgeschichtliche und politische Entwicklung in England von der Reformation bis zur Aufklärung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1980), who argues that the eighteenth-century German moves adopting increasingly skeptical biblical criticism were dependent on seventeenth-century *English* developments. Reventlow's seminal study rightly debunks the stereotypical presentation of the rise of biblical criticism by showing that its roots are much earlier than the eighteenth century and are not simply German; but I suspect his important thesis unwittingly introduces a new reductionism by failing to discuss continental (especially French and Dutch) seventeenth-century intellectual history as well as English seventeenth-century intellectual history.

[37]Cf. Edward Norris Kirk, *Speech of Rev. E. N. Kirk at the Second Anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society* (New York: Anti-Slavery Society, 1835).

[38]Idem, *A Plea for the Poor* (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1843).

[39]Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration*; idem, "Creationism: Creative Misuse of the Bible," in *Is God a Creationist? The Religious Case Against Creation-Science*, ed. Roland Mushat Frye (New York: Scribner, 1983), 71–82.

[40]The title of the series is "Recent Interpretations of Biblical Authority." The third lecture is subtitled, "Does the Bible Teach 'Science'?" All are currently being published *ad seriatim* in *Bibliotheca Sacra*. I am indebted to Professor Woodbridge for stimulating discussions and important documentation in this area. See also his essay in this volume, "Some Misconceptions of the Impact of the 'Enlightenment' on the Doctrine of Scripture."

[41]The paradigmatic approach to the history of science was put on a respectable and influential footing by Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, 1970); but the theory has suffered a rather devastating attack in Frederick Suppe, ed., *The Structure of Scientific Theories*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Gary Gutting, ed., *Paradigms and Revolutions: Applications and Appraisals of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980).

[42]John D. Woodbridge, "Does the Bible Teach 'Science'?" *BS* 142 (1985): 199, referring to Wolfgang Milde.

[43]See especially Edward Rosen, "Kepler and the Lutheran Attitude Towards Copernicanism in the Context of the Struggle Between Science and Religion," in *Kepler, Four Hundred Years: Proceedings of Conferences held in honour of Johannes Kepler*, ed. Arthur Beer and Peter Beer (Oxford: Pergamon, 1975) 332–33.

[44]Ibid., 328.

[45]John D. Woodbridge, "Does the Bible Teach 'Science'?" p. 202.

[46]Cf. *inter alia*, Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," *Church History* 24 (1955): 257–72; Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 47–52; idem, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 55–61, 212–20; idem, "Preachers of Paradox: The Religious New Right in Historical Perspective," in *Religion in America: Spirituality in a Secular Age* (Boston: Beacon, 1982, 1983), 150–68 (esp. 163–64); Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 307–62; E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795–1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978), 72–154; John C. Vander Stelt, *Philosophy and Scripture: A Study in Old Princeton and Westminster Theology* (Marlton: Mack, 1978); Mark A. Noll, "Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought" (unpublished paper read at the 1984 Annual Meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society). These works are not all of a piece: the Ahlstrom essay is seminal and judicious, virtues not present in all of the others.

[47]This is, of course, a simplification. Some antecedents in Common Sense can be traced to Aquinas and Aristotle; and the title of "founder" of the movement is often assigned to Gershom Carmichael or James McCosh. But Reid is widely recognized as the "archetypical Scottish Philosopher" (the language is that of Sydney Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy," 260).

[48]See especially Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, 235–48.

[49]Marsden, "Preachers of Paradox," 163.

[50]See David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), 164–86, and the piercing critique of the method in the review by Gordon S. Woods of Gary Wills, *Explaining America: The Federalist*, in *The New York Review of Books* 28 (April 2, 1981): 16–18.

[51]See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 4 vols. (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1872–74), 1:340–65, 2:278–309.

[52]At a generalizing level, several scholars have pointed out that Common Sense traditions had great impact on the broad sweep of American intellectual life (e.g., Sydney Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy"); but insufficient attention has been paid to particulars. Arguably, for instance, the Yale systematician Nathaniel W. Taylor, in his *Lectures on the Moral Government of God*, 2 vols. (New York: Clark, Austin, and Smith, 1859), especially in his understanding of free agency (see vol. 2, esp. chs. VII and XII), displays greater dependence on Common Sense categories than does any of the Princetonians.

[53]See the penetrating review of Marsden's *Fundamentalism* by Steve Martin in *TJ* 2 (1981): 94–99.

[54]Interestingly, in his most recent essay, Marsden has begun to back away from making Common Sense the general whipping boy. Impressed by the miasma of subjectivity into which certain strands of modern historiography have sunk, he now suggests we can learn from Thomas Reid—but not so far as Reid's approach to science is concerned. See George M. Marsden, "Common Sense and the Spiritual Vision of History," in *History and Historical Understanding*, ed. C. T. McIntire and Ronald A. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 55–68.

[55]Darryl G. Hart, "The Princeton Mind in the Modern World and the Common Sense of J. Gresham Machen," *WTJ* 46 (1984): 1–25.

[56]Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:10.

[57]Some of the problems involved in defining how one may legitimately go about constructing a systematic theology are discussed in the essays by Carson and by Packer in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge.

[58]Even Vander Stelt, *Philosophy and Scripture*, 125, points out that in 1841, Hodge was proving the Bible's divine origin by appealing to *internal* evidences.

[59]This attempt at redefinition is currently appearing in articles, books, and conferences: e.g., Thomas Finger, "Evangelical Theology: Where Do We Begin?" *TSFB* 8 (November–December 1984): 10–14; Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984); Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 2 vols. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978–79).

[60]That the historian often becomes the persuader can scarcely be doubted. See, for instance, at least some of the essays in George M. Marsden, ed., *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), especially the essays by Joel Carpenter, Grant Wacker, Martin E. Marty, Nathan O. Hatch, and Richard V. Pierard. Or again, while many Fundamentalists are claiming much more vibrant Christianity in America's early roots than the evidence allows, the response can be equally biased in the opposite direction—e.g., Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1983), and the review in *Church History* 53 (1984): 539–40.

[61]Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 230.

[62]*Churchman* 98 (1984): 208–16.

[63]Ibid., 210.

[64]Ibid., 211.

[65]Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture*, 95.

[66]James Barr, "The Problem of Fundamentalism Today," in *The Scope and Authority of the Bible*, 79. I have discussed that book at some length in D. A. Carson, "Three Books on the Bible: A Critical Review," *JETS* 26 (1983): 337–67.

[67]Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 174–76.

[68]My library has many scores of Evangelicals' commentaries and expositions on the Gospels, and not one adopts Lindsell's interpretation.

[69]See Wayne A. Grudem, "Scripture's Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture," *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 19–59 (esp. 51–53).

[70]Ibid.

[71]Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963).

[72]E.g., E. J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

[73]One thinks, for instance, of William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), and Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (Waco: Word, 1982).

[74]Douglas J. Moo, "Tradition and Old Testament in Matt 27:3–10," in *Gospel Perspectives III: Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 157–75.

[75]Gary V. Smith, "Paul's Use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8," *JETS* 15 (1975): 181–89.

[76]Dewey M. Beegle, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963 [*Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973)]).

[77]Roger R. Nicole, "The Inspiration of Scripture: B. B. Warfield and Dr. Dewey M. Beegle," *The Gordon Review* 8 (1964–65): 106.

[78]This same argument is especially stressed by William J. Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). I have discussed that book at some length in Carson, "Three Books on the Bible."

[79]R. C. Sproul, "The Case for Inerrancy: A Methodological Analysis," in *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium on the Trustworthiness of Scripture*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1973), 242–61; see also Paul Helm, "Faith, Evidence, and the Scriptures," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 303–20, 411.

[80]See Arthur F. Holmes, "Ordinary Language Analysis and Theological Method," *BETS* 11 (1968): 131–38; John Warwick Montgomery, "The Theologian's Craft: A Discussion of Theory Formation and Theory Testing in Theology, in *The Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1970), 267–313; James I. Packer, "Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority," *Themelios* 1 (Autumn 1975): 3–12; Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," 265–304, 468–71; and the literature cited in these works.

[81]Packer, "Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority," 3.

[82]Roger R. Nicole, "The Biblical Concept of Truth," *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 283–98.

[83]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I, part 2, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 531. Similarly, see Ramm, *After Fundamentalism*, 103.

[84]Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration*, 169.

[85]Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 97, 100.

[86]Ibid., 99–100.

[87]Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), s.v. *accommodatio*, p. 19. See also John D. Woodbridge, "Some Misconceptions of the Impact of the 'Enlightenment' on the Doctrine of Scripture" (in this volume).

[88]Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration*, 152.

[89]See especially Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity," *Interpretation* 31 (1977): 19–38.

[90]William J. Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[91]See the review by Tony Lane in *Themelios* 8 (1982): 32–33; Carson, "Three Books on the Bible" (esp. 337–47).

[92]Louis Gaussen, *Theopneusty; or, The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, trans. Edward Kirk (New York: John S. Taylor & Co., 1845 [French original 1841]).

[93]Ibid., 128.

[94]Grudem, "Scripture's Self-Attestation."

[95]Benjamin B. Warfield, " 'God-Inspired Scripture'," *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 11 (1900): 89–130; reprinted in idem, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 245–96.

[96]Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (esp. ch. 3).

[97]E.g., the so-called Ligonier Affirmation.

[98]Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy"; see also Carson, "Three Books on the Bible" (esp. 354–67).

[99]D. A. Carson, "Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool," *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 115–42.

[100]See, *inter alios*, Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1966); D. O. Via, *The Parables* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); J. D. Crossan, *In Parables* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). For surveys of the extraordinarily complex questions related to the interpretation of parables, see J. G. Little, "Parable Research in the Twentieth Century," *ExpT* 87 (1975–76): 356–60; 88 (1976–77): 40–44, 71–75; W. S. Kissinger, *The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1979); Craig L. Blomberg, "New Horizons in Parable Research," *TJ* 3 (1982): 3–17.

[101]E.g., B. Olsson, *Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel: A Text-Linguistic Analysis of John 2:1–11 and 4:1–42* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1974).

[102]E.g., Daniel Patte, *Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel: A Structural Introduction to the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 31ff., where the dependency on discovering certain structural opposites frequently leads to a distortion of Galatians.

[103]R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

[104]See the review in *TJ* 4 (1983): 122–26.

[105]These developments have come about in part because of the influential work of Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

[106]James S. Ackerman, "Joseph, Judah, and Jacob," in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives Volume 2*, ed. Kenneth R. Gros Louis and James S. Ackerman (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 85–113. Of course, this does not mean that rhetorical criticism justifies the *historicity* of the passage in question. In one of his essays in the same volume (viz., "The Jesus Birth Stories," 273–84), Gros Louis stresses that Matthew and Luke display such different literary approaches in their respective birth narratives that it is improper to attempt conflation. More broadly, many practitioners of the new literary criticism begin with models drawn from novels—a form devoted to fiction.

[107]E.g., Gerd Thiessen, *The First Followers of Jesus: A Sociological Analysis of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1978); idem, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), especially the third part of the book; David L. Mealand, *Poverty and Expectation in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1979); Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed* (London: SCM, 1979); John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless* (London: SCM, 1982); E. A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century* (London: Tyndale, 1960). Cf. R. Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament: The Present State of Research," *NTS* 26 (1979–80): 164–79; and especially the perceptive review article by Edwin Yamauchi, "Sociology, Scripture and the Supernatural," *JETS* 27 (1984): 169–92.

[108]E.g., John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975).

[109]Cyril S. Rodd, "On Applying a Sociological Theory to Biblical Studies," *JSOT* 19 (1981): 95–106. See also Derek Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983).

[110]I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 28.

[111]Craig L. Blomberg, "The Legitimacy and Limits of Harmonization."

[112]Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

[113]See especially the unfortunate exchange: Norman L. Geisler, "Methodological Unorthodoxy," *JETS* 26 (1983): 87–94; Robert H. Gundry, "A Response to 'Methodological Unorthodoxy,' " 95–100; Norman L. Geisler, "Is There Madness in the Method? A Rejoinder to Robert H. Gundry," 101–8; Robert H. Gundry, "A Surrejoinder to Norman L. Geisler," 109–15.

[114]See D. A. Carson, "Gundry on Matthew: A Critical Review," *TJ* 3 (1982): 71–91; and the exchange: Douglas J. Moo, "Matthew and Midrash: An Evaluation of Robert H. Gundry's Approach," *JETS* 26 (1983): 31–39; Robert H. Gundry, "A Response to 'Matthew and Midrash,' " 41–56; Douglas J. Moo, "Once Again, 'Matthew and Midrash': A Rejoinder to Robert H. Gundry," 57–70; Robert H. Gundry, "A Surrejoinder to Douglas J. Moo," 71–86.

[115]E.g., C. H. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); Philip L. Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

[116]E.g., Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*.

[117]D. E. Aune, "The Problem of the Genre of the Gospels: A Critique of C. H. Talbert's *What Is a Gospel?*" in *Gospel Perspectives II*, 9–60.

[118]Richard N. Longenecker, "On the Form, Function, and Authority of the New Testament Letters," *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 97–114.

[119]The literature on this subject is voluminous and generally well known; but often overlooked is the work of Loveday C. A. Alexander, "Luke-Acts in Its Contemporary Setting with Special Reference to the Prefaces (Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1)" (D.Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1977). She argues that there is a distinct break from about the third century B.C. on in the formal characteristics of the prefaces to Greek books; the "historical" tradition is increasingly differentiated from the "scientific" tradition. The former works are characterized by much greater freedom from the historical reality they describe and much more rhetorical embellishment for various dramatic purposes; the latter are characterized by much greater fidelity to the historical reality. Luke's prologues, she demonstrates, are formally and substantially in the tradition of the prefaces to the latter works.

[120]Donald G. Bloesch, "In Defense of Biblical Authority," *The Reformed Journal* 34 (September 1984): 28–29.

[121]Ibid., 29.

[122]John M. Frame, "The Spirit and the Scriptures" (in this volume).

[123]The failure to make this distinction between "ordinary" usage and a more "technical" usage of "word" stands behind a plethora of slightly skewed criticisms—e.g., "Since the autographs of the Scriptures are collections of symbolic markings on objects suitable for the purpose, it seems odd to think of them as revealed of or by God. Any educated person can make intelligible marks on smooth, flat surfaces" (Stanley Obitts, "A Philosophical Analysis of Certain Assumptions of the Doctrine of the Inerrancy of the Bible," *JETS* 26 (1983): 129–36.

[124]Cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), especially 432–38; John M. Frame, "God and Biblical Language: Transcendence and Immanence," in *God's Inerrant Word*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974) 159–77; Brenton L. Thorwall, "Prolegomena for a Theocentric Theory of Language," (M.A. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1981).

[125]Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture's Diverse Literary Forms" (in this volume).

[126]The most important work is that of Thiselton, *The Two Horizons;* but cf. also Hendrik Krabbendam, "The New Hermeneutic," *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 533–58, and the equally important "Responses" by J. I. Packer and Royce Gruenler (pp. 559–89); J. I. Packer, "Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics," *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 321–56. Broader treatments that shed considerable light on the topic include Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), and Roy J. Howard, *Three Faces of Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Current Theories of Understanding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[127]Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture*, 96–97.

[128]We have thus returned to the theories of Thomas Kuhn, briefly discussed earlier in this study.

[129]P. Joseph Cahill, in *CBQ* 46 (1984): 368, reviewing Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 3, *Commentary on Chapters 13–21* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

[130]The literature on this subject is now immense. See the bibliography of the essay by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Semantics of Biblical Literature," in this volume; and cf. J. G. Davies, "Subjectivity and Objectivity in Biblical Exegesis," *BJRL* 66 (1983): 44–53.

[131]J. A. Passmore, "The Objectivity of History," in *Philosophical Analysis and History*, ed. W. H. Dray (New York/London: Harper & Row, 1966), 75–84. On the related questions of the nature of proof and belief in such matters, cf. George I. Mavrodes, *Belief in God: A Study in the Epistemology of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1970).

[132]One of the better brief introductions to the subject is the article by D. J. Hesselgrave, "Contextualization of Theology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 271–72.

[133]D. A. Carson, "Reflections on Contextualization and the Third Horizon," in *The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study*, ed. D. A. Carson (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986).

[134]Bruce D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus' Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984), 150.

[135]Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980), 296.

[136]Daniel von Allmen, "The Birth of Theology: Contextualization as the dynamic element in the formation of New Testament theology," *IRM* 64 (1975): 37–52 [reprinted in *Readings in Dynamic Indigeneity*, ed. Charles H. Kraft and Tom N. Wisbey (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1979). This work is discussed at length in Carson, "Reflections on Contextualization and the Third Horizon."

[137]For examples of such an appeal, see Daniel von Allmen, Charles H. Kraft, and G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

[138]A devout Buddhist would take this to mean, among other things, that Jesus is inferior to the Buddha, since something is here predicated of Him.

[139]I have discussed this at greater length in "Reflections on Contextualization and the Third Horizon."

[140]Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 26.

[141]Moisés Silva, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Text Form and Authority," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 143–65.

[142]Idem, "The Place of Historical Reconstruction in New Testament Criticism" (in this volume).

[143]Douglas J. Moo, "*Sensus Plenior* and the New Testament Use of the Old" (in this volume).

[144]D. A. Carson, "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: The Possibility of Systematic Theology," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. Carson and Woodbridge, 61–95.

[145]E.g., Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980, 1982), especially 2:1ff.

[146]Cf. James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972); idem, "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon," in *Magnalia Dei* [Festschrift for G. Ernest Wright], ed. F. M. Cross et al. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 531–60; idem, "Hermeneutics," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 404–5; idem, "Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon," *USQR* 32 (1977): 157–65; idem, "Text and Canon: Concept and Method," *JBL* 98 (1979): 5–29; idem, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

[147]Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1970); idem, "The Canonical Shape of the Book of Jonah," in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies* [Festschrift for W. S. LaSor], ed. G. Tuttle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 122–28; idem, "The Canonical Shape of the Prophetic Literature," *Int* 32 (1978): 46–55; idem, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); idem, "Some Reflections on the Search for a Biblical Theology," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 4 (1982): 1–12; and his methods are well exemplified in idem, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminister/London: SCM, 1974).

[148]David G. Dunbar, "The Biblical Canon in Recent Study" (in this volume).

[149]For a balanced treatment (though now somewhat dated) of Calvin's appeal to evidence, see Kenneth S. Kantzer, "John Calvin's Theory of the Knowledge of God and the Word of God" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1950).

[150]Jay M. Van Hook, "Knowledge, Belief, and Reformed Epistemology," *The Reformed Journal* 31:7 (July, 1981): 12–17.

[151]Most recently, see Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, ed., *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

[152]Knowledge, unlike belief, is commonly defined in such a way as to make it immune to falsity. Belief may be mistaken; knowledge cannot be, or by definition it is not knowledge.

[153]Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[154]For instance, Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), brilliantly surveys a vast amount of literature and concludes that miracles cannot reasonably have any evidential force. In a perceptive review article (*JETS* 27:4 [December 1984]: 473–85), William Craig persuasively demonstrates that Brown forces later categories onto many of his historical sources by requiring that miracles address the radical, post-Kantian skepticism with which we have become familiar. Historically, appeals to miracles were far more likely made in the face of competing *theistic* claims; and here they do enjoy certain evidential force.

[155]Helm, "Faith, Evidence, and the Scriptures," 299–320.

[156]John Frame, "The Spirit and the Scriptures," in this volume.

[157]Randall Basinger and David Basinger, "Inerrancy, Dictation and the Free Will Defence," *EQ* 55 (1983): 177–80.

[158]Ibid., 176.

[159]Cf. C. Samuel Storms, "Jonathan Edwards on the Freedom of the Will," *TJ* 3 (1982): 131–69.

[160]John Feinberg, *Theologies and Evil* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979); idem, "And the Atheist Shall Lie Down with the Calvinist: Atheism, Calvinism, and the Free Will Defence," *TJ* 1 (1980): 142–52; D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), especially the last chapter.

[161]The article was first published posthumously in *The Alliance Witness* on 15 May 1963 and has been republished many times—most recently in *BT* 255 (December 1984): 1–4.

[162]Carl F. H. Henry, "The Bible and the Conscience of Our Age," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Radmacher and Preus, 917.

[163]See especially David F. Wright, "Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of ΑΡΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΑΙ (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10)," *VigChrist* 38 (1984): 125–53.

[164]See especially Wayne Grudem, "Does *kephalē* ('head') Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," *TJ* 6 (1985): 38–59.