The Authority of Scripture According to Scripture*

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I

The issue

1) What is the issue concerning Scripture that seems to be dividing and confusing evangelicals today? It is not, I believe, the question of inspiration as such: of whether and how the Bible was inspired. No evangelical that I know of would wish to deny that the biblical writers were inspired by God in what they wrote, or to dispute the basic assertions of 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. Nor is it, I believe, the question of authority as such: of whether the Bible is authoritative for Christians. All evangelicals are united in affirming that the Bible is the Word of God unto salvation, the constitutional authority for the church's faith and life.

Where evangelicals begin to disagree is over the implications and corollaries of these basic affirmations of the Bible's inspiration and authority. When we begin to unpack these basic affirmations, how much more is involved in them? How much more is *necessarily* involved in them? The disagreement, it is worth noting right away, depends partly on theological considerations (what is the theological logic of affirming the inspiration of Scripture?), and partly on apologetic and pastoral concerns (what cannot we yield concerning the Bible's authority without endangering the whole faith, centre as well as circumference?). In order to maintain these affirmations (inspiration and authority) with consistency of faith and logic, in order to safeguard these affirmations from being undermined or weakened—what more precisely must we define and defend? What does the assertion of the Bible's inspiration require us to affirm about the content of the Bible and of its constituent parts? What does the assertion of the Bible's authority require us to affirm about the continuing authority of any particular word or passage of Scripture?

2) There was a time (in the seventeenth century) when the defenders of the Bible thought that the inspiration of the Bible could be understood only in terms of what we now call 'the mechanical dictation theory', with the writers described as 'living and writing pens'.[1] There were even those at this period of scholastic Protestantism who found it

necessary to maintain that the pointing of the Massoretic text of the Old Testament belonged to the original autographs;[2] and that the Greek of the New Testament must be pure, free of the vulgarisms of the spoken Greek of the time and of Hebraisms in construction, otherwise God's credit as an author would be compromised.[3] Thankfully I know of no evangelical today who would wish to pitch his first line of defence at such an indefensible position. Evangelicals today are united in believing that such a fuller definition is both unnecessary and unfounded.[4]

Nevertheless, evangelicals do still disagree on where that first line of defence should be pitched. In particular, for a hundred years now there has been disagreement among evangelicals on whether it can or should be pitched at the line called 'inerrancy'. A century ago, A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield were the most doughty proponents of the view that the line could be drawn nowhere else. Thus, for example, in 1881 they made the following claim:

> The historical faith of the Church has always been, that all the affirmations of Scripture of all kinds, whether of spiritual doctrine or duty, or of physical or historical fact, or of psychological or philosophical principle, are without any error, when the *ipsissima verba* of the original autographs are ascertained and interpreted in their natural and intended sense.[5]

In cordial disagreement was James Orr, another evangelical stalwart,[6] who evidently was just as strongly of the opinion that the 'inerrancy' line of defence was no more defensible or worth trying to defend than the mechanical dictation theory of scholastic Protestantism.

> It is urged, for example, that unless we can demonstrate what is called the 'inerrancy' of the biblical record, down even to its minutest details, the whole edifice of belief in revealed religion falls to the ground. This, on the face of it, is a most suicidal position for any defender of revelation to take up.[7]

Thus was the range of disagreement within evangelical ranks on the question of inerrancy clearly outlined almost from the start.

For a lengthy period in the middle of this last hundred years, it looked as though the word 'infallible' would provide a better ground of defence on which almost all evangelicals could unite. This was in part, at least, because the word 'infallible' was more flexible than the word 'inerrant': a fact we should not ignore. On the one hand were those who interpreted it in terms of the classic Protestant formulation: 'an infallible rule of faith and life'.[8] On the other hand were those who consciously took their stand within the particular tradition of the great Princeton theologians and interpreted it as 'infallible full stop'. An example of the latter is E. J. Young:

> In all parts, in its very entirety, the Bible, if we are to accept its witness to itself, is utterly infallible. It is not only that each book given the name of

> Scripture is infallible but, more than that, the content of each such book is itself Scripture, the Word of God written and, hence, infallible, free entirely from the errors which adhere to mere human compositions. Not alone to moral and ethical truths, but to all statements of fact does this inspiration extend.[9]

But there were also those who would have preferred to echo the words of James Denney:

> The infallibility of the Scriptures is not a mere verbal inerrancy or historical accuracy, but an infallibility of power to save. The Word of God infallibly carries God's power to save men's souls. If a man submit his heart and mind to the Spirit of God speaking in it, he will infallibly become a new creature in Christ Jesus. That is the only kind of infallibility I believe in. For a mere verbal inerrancy I care not one straw. It is worth nothing to me; it would be worth nothing if it were there, and it is not.[10]

Unfortunately that period of relative calm and consensus has been broken. In the last few years those who see themselves as the heirs of Warfield have begun to insist that the line must be held at inerrancy. They sincerely believe that those evangelicals who do not hold to inerrancy are on the slippery slope that leads to unfaith, that inerrancy is only the first of a long line of dominoes whose fall will bring the whole line of Christian beliefs tumbling down. The storm broke in America with the publication of Harold Lindsell's book, *The Battle for the Bible* (Zondervan), in 1976, with its forthright insistence that only the Warfield position on Scripture is valid and orthodox, and its fierce attack on those evangelicals and evangelical institutions who, in Lindsell's view, have apostasized by abandoning the inerrancy line—a particular case in point being Fuller Seminary where Lindsell had previously been vice-president.[11]

The inerrancy wing of evangelicalism has continued to make the running in this renewed debate. In 1977 the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) was founded in North America, its objective being to provide a rallying-point for evangelicals based on 'a Bible that is true in whatever it touches', 'not merely in matters of faith and practice but also in other matters such as statements relating to history and science.'[12] Or as James Boice, ICBI's first chairman, puts it more concisely, 'What Scripture says, God says—through human agents and without error.'[13] One of the signs of the times is that someone of the stature of J. I. Packer feels it no longer enough to affirm the Bible's inspiration and authority, no longer enough to affirm even its infallibility. These have become 'weasel words' through having some of their meaning rubbed off, so that 'inerrancy' it has to be, despite the negative form of the word.[14]

3) The issues raised by these developments are serious and cannot be ignored. Are only those who affirm 'inerrancy' to be permitted to

rejoice in the description 'evangelical'? Are those who think 'inerrancy' a misguided and unhelpful word in this context—as indefensible a line of defence as Orr thought, as incapacitating a line of attack as Denney saw it—are they to be dubbed apostates and renegades, as grievous offenders against the holy majesty of God? Should 'inerrancy' be the watchword for today, the banner under which all those who acknowledge the inspiration and authority of Scripture unite?

How to answer such questions? At least we can agree that all evangelicals would want to give the first priority to listening to the voice of Scripture itself. We may need to dispute with non-evangelicals as to whether in so doing we are arguing in a circle. With other evangelicals we can assume a common willingness to submit such issues to Scripture.

But how to marshal the testimony of Scripture? Here at once the differences begin to appear within the ranks of evangelicals. The standard Warfield approach is to appeal, not unnaturally, to the passages which contain explicit or implicit teaching on Scripture as such. These are understood as requiring nothing short of the full inerrancy position. Other passages which may seem to contradict that conclusion, or to put it under strain, can usually be harmonized without overstraining the bounds of possibility, or if still intractable can be set aside until fuller illumination is given us. On the other hand, those less happy with the inerrancy line are less happy not because they wish to resist a clearly stated teaching of Scripture, but because they do not think this in fact is what Scripture teaches. They do not find the teaching passages pointing to such a thoroughgoing conclusion. To clarify what precisely they do teach about Scripture's inspiration and authority, it is necessary to listen to the fuller testimony of Scripture: necessary, that is, to observe not only what Scripture teaches about Scripture, but also how Scripture uses Scripture.

Since my brief is to expound the more 'radical' evangelical position on this issue, the rest of this paper will be devoted to exploring what I see to be a) the weaknesses of the Warfield position, and b) the strengths and implications of the alternative, also scriptural, also evangelical. As the title of my paper indicates, I am concerned here above all with the *authority* of Scripture: to ascertain what is involved in asserting Scripture's authority, how its authority 'works', and whether, in particular, inerrancy is a necessary condition of its authority.[15]

II

The weakness of the Warfield position

4) The passages which contain the strongest teaching about Scripture are 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 (already mentioned at the begin-

ning), and in addition two gospel passages, John 10:35 and Matthew 5:18.[16]

a) 2 Timothy 3:16

> All Scripture is inspired (*theopneustos*) by God and profitable (*ōphelimos*) for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.

It is difficult to see how this verse requires inerrancy. The word 'inspired' (*theopneustos*) is certainly a word rich in significance, which Warfield not unfairly translates 'God-breathed',[17] but the quality which it affirms of Scripture is that of having been given by divine inspiration. There is no indication that the author wanted to be more precise than that. And the consequence he himself draws is that since it is God-breathed, therefore it is 'profitable, useful, beneficial, advantageous'[18] in the matters of salvation (3:15), sanctification and moral education (3:17). If anything, the most natural interpretation of the verse would seem to support the distinction which some evangelicals have urged between what Scripture teaches concerning the believer's faith and life[19] and what it touches beyond that (scientific and historical detail).[20] At any rate it is hard to see how the verse can be used to justify extending the scope of biblical authority beyond that of 'teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness' (see further below p.111).

b) 2 Peter 1:20–21

> No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own (or the prophet's own) interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Here again the talk is of inspiration, and the metaphor is even more vigorous—of the prophecy as uttered by one borne along by the Spirit. But it says nothing more about the character of the prophecy, as to whether, for example, the words, descriptions or historical references used therein must therefore be error-free in all points of fact. Verse 20 probably draws attention to the dangers of subsequent interpretation (RSV, NEB, JB): the interpreter can mistake the meaning of the prophet, unless he is as dependent on the Spirit to understand the prophecy as the original author was in his writing. But some maintain that the reference is to the prophet's own interpretation (NIV): a thought perhaps parallel to that in 1 Peter 1:10–12.

c) John 10:35

> The Scripture cannot be broken.

The context is Jesus' response to the charge that he was making himself God. Jesus replies by citing Psalm 82:6, 'I said, You are gods', where

those referred to were probably thought to be judges.[21] If men can be called 'gods' (and Scripture cannot be broken), how much more the Son of God. The parenthetical phrase is open to a strong interpretation. For example, Leon Morris:

> The term 'broken' is not defined... But it is perfectly intelligible. It means that Scripture cannot be emptied of its force by being shown to be erroneous.[22]

But the point is not whether the psalmist was in error when he called judges 'gods'. It is rather that the psalmist's words cannot be without significance: that is, cannot be emptied of the significance they obviously contain, and which significance Jesus proceeds to draw out in the typical Jewish *a fortiori* or *a minori ad maius* argument. So the first half of Morris's last sentence catches the sense well ('Scripture cannot be emptied of its force'), whereas the latter half ('by being shown to be erroneous') is his own corollary rather than that of Jesus or John.[23]

Warfield also makes much of the casual nature of the clause in Psalm 82:6:

> In the Saviour's view the indefectible authority of Scripture attaches to the very form of expression of its most casual clauses. It belongs to Scripture through and through, down to its minutest particulars, that it is of indefectible authority.[24]

Whether that is an appropriate categorization of the original passage ('casual clause') may well be doubted, but in any case there is sufficient evidence that, in the first century AD, Psalm 82 (including v.6) was a focus of considerable interest, both among the rabbis and at Qumran: to whom did the description 'God' and 'gods' refer in vv.1 and 6?[25] No one doubted that the use of these words was significant; it was their reference that was uncertain. John therefore represents Jesus as drawing on a passage of contemporary interest whose force would be accepted (that men are called 'gods'), and as building his argument on that significance in good rabbinic style.

d) Matthew 5:18

> Truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished (*genētai*).

One of the interesting and puzzling features of this saying is that the very strong middle clause ('not one iota... will pass from the law') is qualified by *two* temporal clauses ('until heaven and earth pass away' and 'until all is accomplished'). It is clearly possible to take the first clause as asserting the law's *eternal* validity. As Boice does:

> Jesus Christ not only assumed the Bible's (*sic*) authority; he taught it, going so far as to teach that it is entirely without error and is eternal, being the Word of God [Matt. 5:18 is then quoted].[26]

The problem which that interpretation leaves us is to explain how the early churches could nevertheless abandon various important requirements of the law (more than just iotas and dots): animal sacrifice, the distinction between clean and unclean foods, and the sabbath.

The last clause is more ambiguous: it could be interpreted as referring to the end of the age, and understood as a reaffirmation of the law's eternal validity—in which case the same problem arises. Alternatively, it could refer to the fulfilment of the law (= the Old Testament scriptures?) in the person and work of Christ; and the first clause could then be taken as a hyperbolic affirmation of the law's continuing force (cf. Luke 16:17).[27] But if that durability of the law was only till it had been fulfilled in Christ, then we can hardly say that either Jesus or Matthew thought of the Old Testament as of eternally binding authority. The answer is most probably somewhere in between: Matthew probably thinks of the law here as the law reinterpreted through the life and teaching of Jesus, and not just in v.18 but throughout these four verses (5:17–20).[28] In which case, the force of the iota/dot affirmation has to be understood accordingly and cannot be taken as asserting the unconditional authority of the law.

Either way, it is the *authority* of the law which is in view here: the extent to which, and the way in which, its claim to complete authority still binds the believer. If that is what 'without error' means in this context (of continuing binding authority), then Matthew 5:18 can be interpreted only doubtfully and improbably as an unqualified affirmation of the law's lack of error—an interpretation which leaves larger problems than it resolves. And if 'without error' extends to points of history and science, then it need hardly be said that such a question lies not at all within the scope of the thought.

There is other biblical material which the followers of Warfield use to reinforce their stand on the inerrancy line, and some of it we will allude to later. But these four verses can justifiably be called the four corner pillars of the inerrancy stronghold. What a closer examination of them has revealed is the weakness rather than the strength of these four pillars (when treated as assertions of inerrancy). This weakness can be further clarified by reference to two key words: *intention* and *interpretation.*

5) The supporters of inerrancy have not paid sufficient heed to the question of the biblical author's *intention.*[29] To be sure, they recognize that the scriptural writer's intention must be taken into account,[30] but the point seems to serve primarily as a convenient explanation of a good deal of the phenomena of Scripture which clashes with an

unqualified assertion of inerrancy ('lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations').[31] Where it was not the author's intention to give precise details—so the argument runs, quite rightly—it is unjustified to count his imprecision as error.[32]

Unfortunately, however, the question of author's intention too often ceases to have bearing beyond the resolution of 'problem passages'. In the case of the four pillar passages reviewed above, for example, it is a question often not really posed at all—or else answered far too casually. But what *was* the intention of each of the authors of these four passages? In each case the proponents of inerrancy tend simply to *assume* that the utterance embraces the thought of inerrancy. But (as we have seen) in no case can it be shown with any probability that such was the author's intention. In particular, the conclusion which 2 Timothy 3:16 draws from the 'God-breathed' character of Scripture is its value for doctrinal and ethical instruction, which hardly amounts to an assertion or assumption of Scripture's lack of error.[33]

In point of fact, the conclusion drawn by the proponents of inerrancy (that these passages teach inerrancy) is not an exegetical conclusion at all. It is a dogmatic deduction drawn from their concept of God. 'God's character demands inerrancy... If every utterance in the Bible is from God and if God is a God of truth... then the Bible must be wholly truthful or inerrant.'[34] But here again the question of divine *intention* has been totally ignored. What, after all, if it was *not* God's intention to preserve the writers of Scripture from the sort of scientific and historical inaccuracy, to admit the presence of which in the Bible would be a slight on the divine honour (in the view of the ICBI)?[35] What if God's rule of faith and life never was intended to be confused with, or depend on, the possibility of harmonizing the variant accounts, for example, of Judas's death (Matt. 27:3–8; Acts 1:18–19)? What if it was God's intention that, for example, sayings of the exalted Christ through an inspired prophet or interpreter should be given a place in the tradition of Jesus' teachings and accorded the same authority?[36] Such questions *cannot* be answered (or dismissed) simply on the basis of a dogmatic premise. They are real and legitimate questions, and can only be answered, if answers can be achieved, by means of exegesis.

Consider two more cases which illustrate well the importance of taking the question of divine intention more seriously, and some of the wider ramifications: the historicity of Jesus' utterances in the fourth gospel, and the acceptability of pseudonymous letters within the New Testament. Here too we must ask, in the first case: What if it never was the fourth evangelist's intention that the extended discourses of the fourth gospel should be understood as uttered by Jesus during his ministry on earth? What if it was quite clearly understood, by author

and first readers alike, that these were sermons or meditations on some particular saying or episode or facet of Jesus' ministry? Reference to the repeated phrase 'Jesus said', and its equivalents, cannot be assumed to settle the matter, as any preacher who has elaborated a gospel incident in order to make it more vivid or to bring out its point more clearly for his hearers, must acknowledge. What the intention of the author or inspiring Spirit was on this point cannot be prejudged.[37] Such an issue can only be settled, if at all, by exegesis: by an exegesis which gives sufficient attention to historical context of meaning and genre;an exegesis which in this case must take proper account of the differences between John and the synoptics, and of the midrashic character of the Johannine discourses.[38] And if the exegesis points to the answer that the Johannine discourses *are* sermons or meditations on particular words or events from Jesus' life, then the most probable conclusion is that this is precisely what John intended them to be. With such a conclusion, it should be noted, the inspiration and authority of John as inspired Scripture is in no way threatened, but only properly understood; whereas the attempt to insist that John must have intended his readers to understand that the historical Jesus said every word while on earth, detracts from the authority of John as Scripture by making it teach something the author probably never intended.

Likewise on the issue of pseudonymity: What if pseudepigraphy was at least in some instances in the first century AD a recognized and acceptable form of literature? What if, for example, a disciple of Paul wrote one of the New Testament letters in the name of Paul, and the letter was received in the same spirit by the addressees? Here, too, the issue cannot be assumed to be settled by appeal to the opening words of a disputed letter, without reference to the wider historical context of literary practice and form.[39] B. M. Metzger, in his valuable review of this evidence, at one point cites Tertullian's comment that 'it is allowable that that which disciples publish should be regarded as their master's work.'[40] He subsequently concludes quite fairly:

> Since the use of the literary form of pseudepigraphy need not be regarded as necessarily involving fraudulent intent, it cannot be argued that the character of inspiration excludes the possibility of pseudepigraphy among the canonical writings.[41]

In both these instances the question of intention has not been given sufficient scope, and the inerrancy line has been drawn much too restrictively. By insisting on a particular understanding of the text which pays too little attention to a properly historical exegesis, the authority of Scripture has been more abused than defended.

The fact is, then, that once the question of intention is given wider scope (as above), the inerrancy line ceases to have the firmness and solidity which its proponents assume when they insist on building their defence on it. For not only does it have to be relaxed to allow for all

sorts of inexactitudes and casualness (as above, p.111 and n.31), but it has *always* to be subordinated to the issue of intended meaning. And each time exegesis points to the conclusion that an author's intended meaning does not depend on the inerrancy or otherwise of 'whatever he touches',[42] then the inevitable corollary is that the inerrancy claim has missed the point. In other words, when the question of divine intention in Scripture is taken seriously, the idea of inerrancy at best becomes more problematic and obscure than helpful. To say that a biblical author is true and reliable in the meaning he intends, is a statement which makes good sense. To insist that he is more than that—inerrant in all he says—confuses more than clarifies, and, worse still, directs attention as often as not away from the force of the biblical statement on to subordinate issues of factual detail.[43]

6) The other key word is *interpretation*: a word which opens up what is really another facet of the same broader issue. Interpretation is more demanding than exegesis. Exegesis, I take to be the task of trying to understand the biblical writing in its original meaning, within its own terms, within its own context.[43a] Interpretation, on the other hand, can be defined, for the moment, as the task of trying to translate that meaning into the language, thought-forms and idioms of the interpreter's day, as far as possible without adding to or subtracting from that original meaning. No one doubts that interpretation is necessary. We cannot expect all Christians to operate directly out of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in which the Bible was originally written. But as soon as we say translation, we are caught up in interpretation, and when translation becomes exposition, then interpretation is the name of the game.

The point is that interpretation inevitably involves *uncertainty*. Interpretation is the art of weighing probability against possibility. Again and again we cannot be certain as to what the biblical author intended to say and teach, and must settle for the most probable interpretation. We have seen this already in the case of the four pillar passages examined above. The same uncertainty affects even the most central elements in New Testament teaching. What, after all, did Jesus mean by 'the kingdom of God'? The fairly broad consensus on this one has been recently called in sharp question by Bruce Chilton.[44] What does Paul mean by justification through faith? Here, too, the Protestant consensus has similarly been called in question by the work of Krister Stendahl and Ed Sanders.[45] Is the *Living Bible* justified in its interpretative translation of John 1:1, 'Before anything else existed, there was Christ with God'? I for one take leave to doubt it.[46]

Of course, in most cases we can be sufficiently confident of the substance of the sense intended—of the author's main emphasis. There is no doubt, for example, that the Bible consistently presents God as Creator, even if the 'technical details' remain unclear. Again, there is

no doubt that the New Testament consistently teaches that the resurrection of Jesus is something which happened to Jesus and not simply to his disciples, even though there remains uncertainty as to whether we are talking about a physical resurrection (Luke 24:39) or of his resurrection as a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44–50). And in its overall instruction 'unto salvation' (2 Tim. 3:15) the message of the Bible is quite clear enough and consistent, even when emphases differ in different contexts.[47] The trouble is that the assertion of inerrancy wants to say more, and to be meaningful needs to be able to claim more. To be 'sufficiently confident of the substance of the sense intended, of the author's main emphasis' is not enough. It is inerrancy that is being asserted, not merely authority. It is inerrancy in point of detail, not merely authority of the main point of teaching (even if, it would appear, the author only *intended* to teach that one main point, to instruct unto salvation: see the discussion above, pp.110ff.).

To cry 'inerrancy' on all that the Bible touches, when we have to live with such uncertainty, is to promote a kind of double-think which cannot be healthy. Here it seems to me that Denney's point gains force. The authority of Scripture is not the kind that essentially depends on rational argument and logical demonstration of detailed inerrancy; it is rather a power that grasps the hearer, so that conscience, mind and will cry out, 'This is the Word of God'. Was it not just such a contrast Paul had in mind when he reminded the Corinthians that 'my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power' (1 Cor. 2:4)?[48]

When we move beyond particular texts to larger patterns and beliefs more broadly based in Scripture, the question of interpretation becomes even more important. Of course, central affirmations and insights of faith, consistently expressed throughout Scripture, become more firmly established: the one God's redemptive love, man's pride and selfish grasping, etc. But beyond such essentials, the simple fact is that *different* schemes and systems of faith and practice can be drawn from Scripture and claim legitimate grounding in Scripture. Here the important principle of interpretation, the perspicuity of Scripture, must be handled with great self-critical circumspection; otherwise it can quickly degenerate into little more than a confidence trick. For what it usually boils down to, in application, is the rule of thumb whereby I interpret the unclear passages of Scripture to conform to the clear passages. What I can too easily forget, or conveniently ignore, is that what is clear to me may not be clear to you, and what is unclear to me may be quite obvious to you. Consequently the *same* hermeneutical principle quickly leads to *different* patterns of faith and life. Why is it, for example, that almost all Christians have abandoned the sabbath as their holy day? The awkward answer is that they have conformed the very *clear* teaching of Exodus 20:8–11 to what is at best an *implication* drawn from the New Testament. Another awkward example:

Reformed tradition (including not least Princeton theology) has developed a form of worship which gives pride of place to the sermon, where the model of the Christian preacher, as like as not, is the Old Testament prophet. Yet the same tradition has managed to ignore (or discount) almost completely what is after all the most clear guidance in the New Testament on what should take place in Christian worship (1 Cor. 14:26).[49]

The fact is, like it or not, that we each one individually, and as part of a particular tradition, work with what amounts to a canon within the canon in order to justify the distinctive emphases of that tradition. For example: for the Lutheran it is Paul's teaching on justification through faith to which everything else is conformed; for the Pentecostal it is the pneumatology of Acts and 1 Corinthians 12–14 which is the 'clear' that enables him to interpret the 'unclear'.[50] Indeed *all* Christians must work with a canon within the canon, otherwise we would not be Christians. For we all interpret the Old Testament in the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ. We can only justify the abandoning of clear scriptural commands—for example, regarding the sabbath and sacrifices—by appealing to our canon within the canon. Whether we call it the principle of progressive revelation or not, the fact remains that we allow one scripture to reduce the force of another, to set aside another. But notice what this means. If we take the point about interpretation seriously—the inevitable necessity of interpretation and the character of interpretation—we *cannot* simply affirm 'What the Bible says, God says' as meaning that each word of Scripture is of continuing and irreversible authority, calling forth from us unquestioning obedience. In which case inerrancy, in the sense of indefectible authority, becomes a concept requiring still more qualification and causing still more confusion. And if we take seriously the diversity of legitimate interpretations, we cannot simply assert that problems will be resolved by harmonizing[51] without justifying the point of view from which we engage in the harmonizing; without justifying the exegetical clarity of the 'clear' to accord with which we interpret the 'unclear'; without justifying the canon within the canon by which we in effect render the rest of the canon of only deutero-canonical authority. But as soon as we recognize and admit that, at least in some instances, we have to choose *between* scriptures, the blanket assertion of inerrancy becomes inappropriate and indefensible.

In particular, the dogma of inerrancy is itself a particular interpretation of particular scriptural passages; an interpretation which, as we have already seen, is by no means self-evident. The Warfield line, Princeton theology, is itself a particular tradition within evangelical Christianity which is by no means clear to other evangelicals, let alone to other Christians.[52] To insist on this tradition as the only legitimate way of understanding the New Testament is to ignore the hermeneutical process altogether. It ignores the fact that the inerrancy line is built on

at best doubtful exegetical foundations. It ignores the hermeneutical uncertainty as to the divine intention in not a few passages of Scripture.[53] It ignores the fact that we all in effect ignore the teaching of many passages of Scripture because we find others more clear or more conducive.[54] In short, it seems to me to be a very dangerous kind of unselfcritical blinkeredness which makes it possible for some Christians to take an interpretation of Scripture whose hermeneutical justification from within Scripture is weaker than other interpretations, to exalt it above all other alternative views of Scripture, and to use it to deny validity to those others, even when they have at least as strong an exegetical base.

7) It will be clear by now that I have grave reservations about the legitimacy of the inerrancy position as an interpretation of Scripture—both of Scripture in its teaching on Scripture and of Scripture as a whole—and a deep disquiet at the attempt of the ICBI to persuade all evangelicals that the inerrancy line is the only sound line for the defence of Scripture's inspiration and authority. I fully recognize that for the proponents of inerrancy there are even bigger issues at stake—no less than the honour and trustworthiness of God.[55] I respect that concern, even when I believe they have jumped too quickly from 'God says' to 'without error', and have missed out the absolutely crucial intermediate questions—'How has he said? With respect to what? With what intention?'—questions whose answers in terms of exegesis and interpretation point up the inaccuracy and inadequacy of 'inerrancy' as a scriptural concept applicable to Scripture.[56]

I, too, think that the issues go beyond the confines of debate over hermeneutical principles and procedures. At three points in particular I believe the proponents of inerrancy are in considerable spiritual peril and are putting the faith of their disciples seriously at risk—I would not be so bold were it not that the issues are so grave.

a) In all seriousness, I fear that the ICBI, in its position on Scripture, cannot escape the charge of Pharisaic *legalism*. The Pharisees believed that the Torah must be clarified by their oral tradition. The oral law, they sincerely believed, was simply an explanation of the written law, and therefore of equal force. By means of their hermeneutical techniques, they were able to develop a tradition which made a consistent whole of the teaching of the law and the prophets. But Jesus criticized the Pharisees severely because their traditions were actually nullifying the clear teaching of Scripture—which of course they had incorporated into their systematized tradition, but with lesser force (Mark 7:9–13). From the criticisms levelled earlier against the inerrancy line, it will be apparent that it too is a tradition: a tradition based more on a systematized dogma than on Scripture itself; a tradition which ignores or harmonizes into conformity too much in Scripture which points away from inerrancy. Speaking personally, it is the harmonizing expedients

of the proponents of inerrancy[57] which have reminded me most strongly of the rabbinic casuistry that drew such outspoken condemnation from Jesus. It is possible, is it not, as Paul warned us (Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6, 14–17), to be so concerned for the letter of Scripture that we actually miss what the Spirit seeks to say to us through it; to stifle the life of the Spirit by concentrating on the incidental forms through which he speaks? That is the danger which I fear the ICBI is courting.

b) The second point is linked with the first. It is the fear that the heirs of Princeton theology are in grave danger of *bibliolatry*.[58] By asserting of the Bible an indefectible authority, they are attributing to it an authority proper *only* to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If we say the biblical authors wrote without error, we attribute to their writing what we otherwise recognize to be true only of Christ. We do for the Bible what Roman Catholic dogma has done for Mary the mother of Jesus; and if the charge of Mariolatry is appropriate against Catholic dogma, then the charge of bibliolatry is no less appropriate against the inerrancy dogma. We cannot argue for a precise analogy between the divine and human in Christ (effecting sinlessness) and the divine and human in Scripture (effecting inerrancy) without making the Bible worthy of the same honour as Christ—and that is bibliolatry.[59]

c) The third charge is even more serious, since it involves the spiritual health of others. It is that the inerrancy line is *pastorally disastrous*. Integral to the inerrancy position is the all-or-nothing argument, the slippery slope mentality, the repeated reasoning that if we cannot trust the Bible in all, we cannot trust it at all.[60] That may be an argument which appeals to the over-simplifications of spiritual infancy; but it is hardly an appropriate expression of the spiritual maturity defined by Paul as the enabling to discern the things which really matter, to approve what is essential (Phil. 1:10).[61] To make, for example, Jesus' teaching on love of God and love of neighbour dependent on the historicity of the fact that Jesus cursed the fig tree on the day after the cleansing of the temple (Matt. 21:12–19)—or was it the same day (Mark 11:12–15)?—is neither discriminating nor brave. In my experience of teaching theology, the student who is most at risk as regards faith is precisely the one who has been previously instructed in this logic. When such a student finds that some such peripheral matters cannot be harmonized without doing some exegetical violence to the text, he/she is forced by the logic to abandon all. The worst thing about the slippery-slope imagery is that it is a self-fulfilling prophecy in far too many cases. And the fault, be it noted, lies not with those who seek to train the student in exegesis, to develop his theological awareness and expertise, to enable him to discriminate between the primary and the secondary, and to handle the big questions confronting faith in today's world. The fault lies rather with those who have taught the student that it is all or nothing. And even those who cling firmly to the top of the slope—what a burden of (subconscious) fear they carry: fear

of finding even one error in the biblical record, fear of what the archaeologist's spade might turn up, fear of engaging in open-ended discussion, fear of asking searching questions in case the answer does not fit into the system. The top of that slippery slope looks to me too much like that state of spiritual immaturity which Paul was delighted to have left behind, where the spirit of slavery to fear and bondage to the letter is more noticeable than the liberty and life of the Spirit of sonship (Rom. 8:14f.; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17; Gal. 4:1–7). After all, the Pharisees were as convinced as the ICBI that their understanding and elaboration of the law was the only way to remain faithful to Scripture.

In short, if I had to sum up my criticism of the Warfield position it would be that it is exegetically improbable, hermeneutically defective, theologically dangerous, and educationally disastrous.

to be continued...

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NOTES

* This paper was given at the 1981 Anglican Evangelical Assembly in London.

1 F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (Macmillan, London 1886) p.373.

2 Helvetic Consensus 1675.

3 Farrar, op. cit., pp.374f.; A. B. Bruce, *Inspiration and Inerrancy* (James Clarke, London 1891) pp.19–20; J. Rogers, 'The Church Doctrine of Biblical Authority', in J. Rogers, ed., *Biblical Authority* (Word Books, Waco 1977) p.31 (see also p.36).

4 Though G. Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (1974, ET, Concordia, St Louis 1977) pp.68f., speaks almost with regret of the abandoning of this view as 'the first break in the dam', the highest point of 'the slippery slope' (see below pp.117–18).

5 'Inspiration', *The Presbyterian Review*, April 1881, p.238. In another statement Warfield affirmed 'the complete trustworthiness of Scripture in all elements, even circumstantial statements...' ('Recent Theological Literature', *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, 4, 1893, p.499).

6 Orr edited the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (5 vols., 1930) and was a contributor to *The Fundamentals*.

7 J. Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration* (Duckworth, London 1910) pp.197–8.

8 e.g. Fuller Theological Seminary modified its earlier statement of faith (which affirmed the Bible's freedom 'from all error in the whole and in the part') in the early 1960s to one which affirmed the Bible as 'the only infallible rule of faith and practice'.

9 E. J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1957) p.48.

10 Quoted by Bruce, *Inspiration*, p.4. In a similar vein to Orr's protest (above p.00) is G. C. Berkouwer's comment that when error in the sense of incorrectness is used on the same level as error in the biblical sense of sin and deception, 'we are quite far removed from the serious manner in which error is dealt with in Scripture'. 'In the end it (the postulate of biblical inerrancy) will damage reverence for Scripture more than it will further it' (*Holy Scripture* [Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1975] pp.181, 183, cited by Rogers, *Biblical Authority*, p.44).

11 Fuller has responded with a special issue of its *Theology, News and Notes* on *The Authority of Scripture at Fuller* (1976), which includes several important corrections

and clarifications on points of fact cited by Lindsell. Lindsell has responded in *The Bible in the Balance* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1979) ch. 5.

12 J. M. Boice, ed., *The Foundation of Biblical Authority* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1978; Pickering & Inglis, London 1979) p.10. The Chicago Statement, signed by 250 evangelical scholars and leaders in October 1978, is more carefully phrased: 'Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives'. But the insistence is still strong that 'Holy Scripture... is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches' (the full statement is printed in Lindsell, *Balance*, pp.366–71, and in N. L. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* [Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1980] pp.493–502). See also P. D. Feinberg, 'The Meaning of Inerrancy', ibid., pp.267–304.

13 J. M. Boice, ed., *Does Inerrancy Matter?* (ICBI Foundation Series 1, 1979) p.13.

14 ibid., preface, p.3. Contrast those evangelicals who continue to affirm infallibility without inerrancy—see, e.g., S. T. Davis, *The Debate about the Bible: Inerrancy versus Infallibility* (Westminster, Philadelphia 1977) and those attacked by Lindsell, particularly in his second volume (above n.11).

15 'The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded...' (Chicago Short Statement). 'It is clear that for the conservative understanding, inerrancy is the total basis for the authority of Scripture. To deny inerrancy... is to deny any authority of any kind to the Bible' (P. J. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture* [Westminster, Philadelphia 1980] pp.54f.).

16 See, e.g., G. L. Archer, 'The Witness of the Bible to Its Own Inerrancy', Boice, ed., *Foundation*, pp.94f.; Lindsell, *Balance*, pp.12f. cf. D. Hubbard, 'The Current Tensions: Is There a Way Out?', in Rogers, ed., *Biblical Authority*, pp.172–5.

17 B. B. Warfield, 'God-inspired Scripture', *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 11, 1900, pp.89–130; reprinted in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Marshall Morgan & Scott, London 1951) pp.245–96. He is followed by the NIV.

18 Arndt & Gingrich, *Lexicon, ōphelimos.*

19 cf. D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Tyndale Press, London 1957) p.164. In response to Lindsell's repeated insistence that 'error cannot be profitable', therefore 'profitable' here means inerrant (*Balance*, e.g. pp.12, 217), it must simply be repeated that that is *not* exegesis. For it to qualify as exegesis, it would have to be demonstrated that any NT writer regarded what Lindsell calls error (e.g. whether or not the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds) to be unprofitable, disadvantageous to salvation. Such a demonstration has *not* been forthcoming.

20 A distinction denounced in Article XII of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. Is it so difficult to distinguish between matters pertaining to faith and conduct, and matters of science and history, as Lindsell repeatedly asserts (e.g. *Balance*, pp.53, 214)?

21 The argument in John 10:34–6 is most obviously understood as assuming that at the time of Jesus (or John) the words had been addressed to men (those to whom the word of God came)—whatever the original reference might have been (Yahweh's heavenly host?).

22 L. Morris, *John*, New London Commentary (Marshall Morgan & Scott, London 1972) p.527. Lindsell repeatedly asserts that inerrancy was clearly taught by Christ (*Balance*, pp.44, 83, 91, 209–11)—even that Jesus taught 'the view of error-free autographs' (p.122)!

23 R. E. Brown notes that 'in reference to Scripture *lyein* is contrasted to *plēroun*, the passive of which means "to be fulfilled", and that therefore *lyein* means "to keep from being fulfilled". In rabbinic usage, *battēl*, which seems to be the Aramaic equivalent of *lyein*, means "to nullify, render futile"...' (*John*, Anchor Bible [Doubleday, New York 1966] p.404).

24 Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, p.140.

25 See Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 2, p.543; M. de Jonge & A. S.van der Woude, '11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament', *New Testament Studies* (*NTS*) 12, 1965–66, pp.301–26.
26 Boice, 'The Preacher and God's Word', in Boice, ed., *Foundation*, p.135; cf. the earlier statement of Archer, 'Witness', in Boice, ed., op.cit., p.94.
27 See e.g. the discussion in R. Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (CUP, Cambridge 1975) pp.213–20. In Matt. 5:17 Jesus says, 'I came not to destroy but to fulfil'. That is, he spoke of a fulfilling which is not a destroying, but is evidently not a leaving unchanged either. Rather it is a tranforming which involves an abandoning of particular injunctions given to regulate worship and life in specific ways; a fulfilling which is a bringing to completion of the law so that part at least of its earlier role is left behind.
28 See further Banks, op. cit., with summary statement on p.234.
29 I am aware of the literary critical discussion of intentionality and the 'intentional fallacy' (cf. E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* [Yale UP, New Haven 1967] ; also *The Aims of Interpretation* [Chicago UP, Chicago 1976]) but would wish to argue that uncovering the author's *intended meaning* is the primary goal of New Testament exegesis, whatever *significance* later interpreters might recognize in his words within some wider hermeneutical context.
30 See B. B. Warfield, 'Inspiration and Criticism', *Revelation and Inspiration* (OUP, Oxford 1927) p.420. Packer puts the point well: 'The question which the interpreter must constantly ask is: What is being *asserted* in this passage? The infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture are relative to the intended scope of the word of God . . . The concepts of inerrancy and infallibility . . . are not hermeneutical concepts, and carry no implication as to the character or range of biblical teachings' (*'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God* [IVF, London 1958] pp.97–8). Contrast e.g. the Exposition of the Chicago Statement: 'We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant' (Geisler, *Inerrancy*, p.500). The charge is thus entirely justified that 'the hermeneutical principle of conservative exegesis is Scriptural inerrancy, and no method or conclusion may be tolerated which would conflict with that principle'; 'any interpretation that might threaten inerrancy must be ruled out in advance' (Achtemeier, *Inspiration*, pp.58f.; see also J. Barr, *Fundamentalism* [SCM Press, London 1977] pp.40–55).
31 The Chicago Statement, Article XIII. Having recognized that God's honour is not compromised by use of irregular grammar, etc., why is it so difficult to accept that his honour can be equally unaffected if he chooses to use equivalent irregularities in historical and scientific detail?
32 The resulting confusion in the definition of 'error' ('incorrectness' or 'sin and deception'?) makes the concept 'inerrancy' at best unclear and unhelpful, and in most cases dangerously misleading. See further C. Pinnock, 'Three Views of the Bible in Contemporary Theology', in Rogers, ed., *Biblical Authority*, pp.64f.; Achtemeier, *Inspiration*, pp.61ff.
33 See above n.19. cf. Pinnock, in Rogers, ed., *Biblical Authority*, pp.63f., who describes himself as 'a defender of biblical inerrancy' but who makes a similar point.
34 Boice, *Does Inerrancy Matter?*, p.20. See also Barr, *Fundamentalism*, pp.84f.; Achtemeier, *Inspiration*, pp.50, 54.
35 'God uses fallible spokesmen all the time to deliver his word, and it does not follow that the Bible *must* be otherwise' (Pinnock, in Rogers,ed., *Biblical Authority*, p.64).
36 See my discussion of this issue in 'Prophetic "I"-Sayings and the Jesus Tradition: the Importance of Testing Prophetic Utterances within Early Christianity', *NTS*, 24, 1977–78, pp.175–98.
37 cf. J. Goldingay, 'Inspiration, Infallibility and Criticism', *Churchman*, 90, 1976, p.13.
38 See e.g. P. Borgen, *Bread from Heaven*, Supp. to *Nov. Test.* X, (E. J. Brill, Leiden 1965).

39 Contrast the Chicago Statement, Article XVIII: 'We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.'

40 Tertullian, *adv. Marcionem* 4.5 (with reference to Mark's gospel being regarded as Peter's, and Luke's narrative being ascribed to Paul).

41 B. M. Metzger, 'Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 91, 1972, p.22 (Tertullian quotation on p.14).

42 e.g., God is creator, whether in six days or not. Jesus is the good shepherd, whether he said these words or not during his life on earth.

43 See further Pinnock, in Rogers, ed., *Biblical Authority*, pp.65–7: 'Minute inerrancy may be a central issue for the telephone book but not for psalms, proverbs, apocalyptic and parables. Inerrancy just does not focus attention correctly where the Bible is concerned' (p.67); Achtemeier, *Inspiration*: 'Diversion of attention from the Bible's witness about God's saving acts to questions about the precise accuracy of minor details is, in the end, perhaps the most serious defect in the conservative equation of Scripture with its supposed inerrancy' (p.74).

43a The point is expressed here in terms most appropriate to New Testament exegesis. For a more careful statement see my 'Levels of Canonical Authority', *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 4, 1982.

44 B. D. Chilton, *God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (F. Plöchal, Freistadt 1979).

45 K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (SCM Press, London 1977); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (SCM Press, London 1977).

46 See my *Christology in the Making* (SCM Press, London 1980) ch. 7.

47 cf. the Westminster Confession I.VII: 'All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.'

48 'Particularly interesting is Paul's use of the word *apodeixis*, the sole occurrence in the NT. It is a more or less technical term in rhetoric and denotes a compelling conclusion drawn out from accepted premises. But Paul's point is precisely that the *apodeixis* of his message was nothing to do with his skill as a rhetorician, nothing to do with arguments and proofs; it was *apodeixis* of Spirit and power. That is to say, their experience was not so much of intellectual persuasion, but rather of being grasped by divine power, of being compelled with a whole-hearted conviction to accept and affirm Paul's message, despite Paul's obvious deficiencies as a rhetorician!' (J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* [SCM Press, London 1975] pp.226f.).

49 Hence the slightly naughty question in my review of Boice, ed., *Foundation* in *Expository Times*, 91, 1979–80, p.312: 'Does Jim Packer worship in accordance with 1 Cor. 14:26?'

50 See further J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (SCM Press, London 1977) pp.374f. Maier, *Historical-Critical Method*, protests vigorously against the idea of a canon within the canon: 'Scripture itself does not offer a canon in the canon, but the latter is exacted forcibly and against its will' (p.49). But later on he readily acknowledges that 'every interpreter establishes for himself a more or less conscious total impression of Scripture, which in this or that manner usually comes through when he interprets individual portions' (p.88). Since this 'total impression of Scripture' will differ from individual to individual, or at least from tradition to tradition, it is in effect just another name for a 'canon within the canon'.

51 'The confession of inerrancy... does make a full and faithful articulation of biblical Christianity possible *in principle*... it commits us in advance to harmonize and integrate all that we find Scripture teaching, without remainder...' (Packer, 'Encountering Present-Day Views of Scripture', in Boice, ed., *Foundation*, pp.78f. my emphasis)—the claim I would have to say of the systematic theologian, not of

the exegete. In similar vein Maier, *Historical-Critical Method*, p.71.

52 cf. Barr: 'The "evangelical doctrine of scripture" is largely a fiction imposed upon the Bible by human tradition' (*Fundamentalism* [SCM Press, London 1981²] p.xviii).

53 Note again the criticisms of Barr and Achtemeier mentioned in n.30 above.

54 To this extent, at any rate, James Barr's earlier criticism of 'Fundamentalism' still seems to be on target: 'There is no more severe self-indictment of fundamentalism than that it has produced no really interesting discussion of biblical interpretation' (*Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments* [SCM Press, London 1966] p.203).

55 e.g. J. H. Gerstner criticizes Berkouwer's willingness to allow that the Bible may contain errors in the sense of 'incorrectness' (see above n.10). 'This can only mean that if the Bible is the Word of God, then God can be incorrect, can err, can make mistakes, though he cannot deceive. This does more than "damage reverence for Scripture". This damages reverence for God' (The Church's Doctrine of Biblical Inspiration', in Boice, ed., *Foundation*, pp.49f.).

56 Maier completely ignores or misunderstands this unavoidable character of the hermeneutical task when he repeats too simplistically that 'the correlative or counterpart to revelation is not critique but obedience' (*Historical-Critical Method*, pp.19, 23, 53f.; followed by J. B. Payne, 'Higher Criticism and Biblical Inerrancy', in Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy*, p.95). The necessary middle term between revelation and obedience is interpretation. See also the criticism of Maier by P. Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (1975, ET, Fortress, Philadelphia 1977; SPCK, London 1979) pp.66–71.

57 A classic example is Lindsell's assertion that Peter actually denied Christ not just three time but *six* times in all (*The Battle for the Bible*, pp.174–6). Achtemeier's comment at this point should not be ignored: 'If what he (Lindsell) has constructed is the actual course of events, then *none* of the Gospels has given a true picture of objective reality. He has thus convincingly demonstrated that none of the four is inerrant, since none of them know what *really* happened, i.e. six denials. All claim three' (*Inspiration*, p.67).

58 cf. Pinnock, in Rogers, ed., *Biblical Authority*, pp.60–2, who notes that 'a false piety has grown up which would seek to protect the Bible from its own humanity', and who warns against 'an excessive veneration and overbelief about the Bible . . . an almost superstitious regard for every detail of it' (p.62). cf. also B. Ramm, 'Is "Scripture Alone" the Essence of Christianity?', in Rogers, ed., *Biblical Authority*, p.112. G. R. Lewis, 'The Human Authorship of Inspired Scripture', in Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy*, admits Pinnock's charge that conservative scholars have not paid enough attention to the human side of Scripture (pp.229f.).

59 The danger was brought home to me in my student days when I read Adolph Saphir, *Christ and the Scriptures* (Morgan & Scott, London, n.d.) pp.151–66 (a section entitled 'Bibliolatry'). For example, he comments on the phrase 'The Bible is the religion of Protestants': 'Paul never would have said that the Scripture was the religion of the Christian. Christ was his Light and Life' (pp.157f.). And again, 'The Holy Ghost is above Scripture. Not that there is anything in the Scripture which is not in accordance with the Spirit's teaching, for all Scripture is inspired of God, but the Church is in danger of ignoring the existence of the Holy Ghost and her constant dependence on Him, and of substituting for the Spirit the Book. And now commences the reign of interpreters and commentaries, of compendiums and catechisms; for if we have the Spirit's teaching in the Book instead of the Spirit's teaching by the Book, men wish to have it extracted, simplified, reduced to a system, methodised. And then practically speaking, the creed is above the Bible' (pp.158f.).

60 This argument recurs for example in the essays of Packer, Archer and Sproul in Boice, ed., *Foundation* pp.66,92,116; cf. p.18.

61 See Arndt & Gingrich, *Lexicon, diapherō, dokimazō*.