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Brevard Childs and the Protestant Dogmaticians: A Window to a New Paradigm of Biblical Interpretation[1]

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Hans Küng and David Tracy have recently edited an important book. It reflects a groping about for a basic theological consensus, 'in "a time of troubles", a time when old certainties are breaking up, a post-modern era, an era post-Auschwitz and post-Hiroshima.'[2] Employing Thomas Kuhn's now foundational category of paradigm,[3] they have titled this work: *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future* (1989).

The book is the result of an international ecumenical symposium held in the University of Tübingen and attended by seventy men and women, mostly theologians, but also sociologists, philosophers and others. What brought them together was the self-evident loss of a theological consensus on how to approach the Bible in the post-modern world.

What I would like to suggest in this paper is that those who still regard themselves as in some sense confessional or catholic, need also to consider their own crisis. The reigning so-called *evangelical* paradigm of Biblical authority is crumbling. They, too, must look for a 'paradigm change,' in favour of an approach that has, in short, more integrity; an approach to 'The Bible Without Illusions,' to use the title of yet another recent work addressing the Bible in the modern world.[4]

Not all may be inclined to accept the pessimistic view of the popular author Francis Schaeffer, who assessed the *evangelical* terrain a few years ago in his final work, bemoaning what he called 'The Great Evangelical Disaster.'[5] The serious criticism of Bernard Ramm, however, in his *After Fundamentalism*, (1983);[6] or those of James Barr in his *Beyond Fundamentalism*, (1984 U.S.A.),[7] cannot be disposed of so easily. First, perhaps, I should define what I believe to be the dominant evangelical paradigm.

It is inevitable that we should turn first to J.I. Packer's book, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (1958). While there are many

commendable facets to this work,[8] fundamentally, it is merely a restatement of the position of B.B. Warfield.[9]

As I have argued elsewhere,[10] it is my conviction that Warfield himself represented a paradigm shift at Princeton, away from the tradition of Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge. In this I think it right to refer to Warfield's paradigm as the first '*neo*-orthodoxy,' because while it differed from what Barth would propose a few years later, it was, nevertheless, a *new* orthodoxy. It was Warfield's neo-orthodoxy that made possible the final break with the Reformed dogmaticians who had provided Princeton with a paradigm that served confessional Calvinists since the seventeenth century.[11] In this break, Warfield anticipated Barth by at least a generation.

Warfield's wholly new paradigm, which relegated final authority to the *autographa*, rather than to the *apographa*, left Princeton vulnerable to the fragmenting effects of early twentieth century Biblical criticism. Warfield probably never foresaw that his quest for the historical *text* (for here alone is where he would find his *inerrancy*) would evolve into the quest for the historical *Jesus* at Princeton, just as it did in Britain in the eighteenth century and in Germany in the nineteenth century.[12] Eventually, even Princeton was reorganized to make way for the historical criticism and the next neo-orthodoxy.[13]

While Barth's paradigm was an attempt to retain orthodoxy in a post-critical way, like another mediating theologian, Schleiermacher, Barth imbibed too much of the prejudice of his age against the tradition of the Protestant dogmaticians. Like Schleiermacher, for Barth, Scripture was not a verbal revelation but merely a witness to a revealing God. In this Barth was not radical enough in his post-critical stance. Had he gone far enough he would have recognized what other scholars within the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* have come to see. Namely, considered phenomenologically, analogous to other sacred texts of other world religions, the Judeo-Christian Bible has always been revered just because of a belief in its *verbally* dictated inspiration. Because Barth was still locked in the polemical debates of the nineteenth century, his vision was hindered on this point.

For Barth, therefore, the dogmaticians' view of Scripture was, paradoxically, 'naturalistic' because it presupposed that God had actually used human language as a vehicle for divine revelatory propositions. Consequently, Barth's final judgment was that 'therefore we have to resist and reject the 17th-century doctrine of inspiration as false doctrine.'[14]

In an unguarded moment, however, Barth frankly admitted that the position of the Protestant dogmaticians was 'merely a development and systematisation of statements which had been heard in the Church since the first centuries.'[15] John Barton, in his recent

Bampton lectures for 1988, confirms Barth's interpretation of the early Church:

> We have to acknowledge that the authority of the books in the 'canon' was [for the early Church] clearly much greater than it is for most modern people. This authority was felt to inhere in the exact verbal form of the biblical text to an extent now scarcely believed even by fundamentalists.[16]

The late R.P.C. and A.T. Hanson admitted the same point:

> The Fathers' treatment of the Bible is essentially atomic. It rests upon the assumption, of course, that there is a pretty similar level of inspiration and revelation to be found in every part of the text.[17]

Barth admitted, therefore, that it was not really the seventeenth century dogmaticians he opposed; it was the *catholic* doctrine of Scripture which they had retained. It was this he branded as 'false doctrine.' A high price to pay to play the rôle of the supreme mediating theologian of his day.

While Barth's own dogmatics were intended to replace that of the seventeenth century, we find they have not fully satisfied the modern sense of having lost a mother, that is, the mother Church—catholic tradition. It is my conviction that it is this *catholic* view of inspiration which must be reappropriated, in a post-critical, *post*-modern way, leaving behind the decidedly modern neo-orthodox paradigms of both Warfieldianism, as well as Barthianism. Furthermore, for Protestants, it is the position of the Protestant dogmaticians which must be creatively rediscovered, if they have any hope of maintaining continuity with authentic catholic tradition.

Presently, in The United States, we are witnessing a highly interesting development. Prominent Protestant theologians, scholars and ministers are going over to the fold of the Roman communion. A *New York Times* headline read on 9 September 1990: 'Citing Luther, A Noted Theologian Leaves Lutheran Church for Catholicism.' The noted theologian was John Richard Neuhaus, author of *The Naked Public Square* and *The Catholic Moment*.[18] He was a former member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and until recently, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

A few years earlier, the well-published, evangelical author, Thomas Howard, then Professor of English at Gordon College and author of *Evangelical is Not Enough*,[19] also became a Roman Catholic. Recently, the Revd. Scott Hahn, a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Seminary in Boston and a pastor in the conservative Presbyterian Church in America, converted to Rome and now teaches in one of their universities in Ohio. Hahn's significance goes far beyond his own conversion because as a popular and influential

leader in his church he has also had considerable pull in bringing other conservative Presbyterian pastors and laymen over to Rome in the last few years. The one thing all these men had in common is that they were serious about theology and were all originally from conservative traditions.

Why the leap? Could this be one response to Schaeffer's 'evangelical disaster'? Could it be that much of contemporary Protestantism, both liberal and conservative, bears little resemblance to the catholicity preserved in the seventeenth century Reformed, Anglican and Lutheran dogmatic traditions?

Neuhaus, like many others in the early seventies, felt betrayed by the Missouri Synod's assimilation of American fundamentalism (by way of the un-Lutheran influences of John Warwick Montgomery) and along with Martin Marty, and Jaroslav Pelikan, he left the Missouri Synod in its time of upheaval in the mid-nineteen-seventies. He then left the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America because he could find no echo for his catholic concerns. Howard admits he simply was not fed by the blandness of American evangelicalism. Scott Hahn was hungry for an identifiable body of dogmatic tradition which is so sorely lacking within a brand of Presbyterianism which is progressively assuming the character of the modern American corporate model, with church growth as the new bottom line.

But why the stress on the Protestant dogmaticians, such an antiquated and near impenetrable tradition (most of their works have never even been translated from the Latin)? It is because I have come to see that one cannot reappropriate the authentic legacy of the Protestant Reformation, in its catholic dimensions, except by way of the dogmaticians.

It is this tradition, with its refining definitions, though cumbersome at times, that prevents the sixteenth century Reformers from being lifted from their historical moment and forced to speak an alien discourse reflecting the *Sitz im Leben* of modernity. It is this alien discourse, I believe, that has driven at least some earnest folk toward Rome. Within the bosom of Rome one finds, even after Vatican II, a living continuity of dogmatic tradition, ironically, closer in kind to the seventeenth century Protestantism, than are most contemporary expressions of Protestantism.

Perhaps one lesson we should learn from Warfield, as well as from Barth, is not to despise, as they did, the wisdom of the Protestant dogmaticians, simply because the seventeenth century formulations were produced in a pre-critical age. Rather, we should see the seventeenth century context as an advantage. The dominant theological concern of that age was to develop dogmatics fashioned by the constraints of the Biblical data and secondarily, by catholicity. Dogmatics in the modern era, both liberal and conservative, tend to be fashioned as an apologetic response to the age of *scientia* (a

discipline which proved to be subject to as many paradigm shifts as any other intellectual enterprise).

But is it realistic to think one can reappropriate the Protestant dogmaticians in a post-critical milieu? I believe the proposals of Brevard Childs offer just such an opportunity.[20] What are his proposals? I will begin with a brief historical sketch illustrating how the Bible lost its sacred text status. I will then propose how I believe Childs can provide the opportunity to rediscover the Bible on this basis, in a post-critical way.

Ninian Smart and Richard Hecht have provided what I think is the best definition, from a history-of-religions stand-point, of what constitutes a sacred text:

> We may look at sacred texts as being those which contain a power and authority and are given certain status within a given community. Such communities and traditions are held together most typically through liturgical acts, which help to focus life upon that which is ultimate and to which the sacred texts give testimony. The status of the sacred text is canonical: as well as being normative for a community or tradition, it is also that community or tradition's canon or canonical text. The term 'canon' has a variety of meanings, but in the context of sacred texts it means the defined groups of texts for the community or tradition . . one does not add to or subtract from them.[21]

The given community we have in view, of course, is the Christian Church; the liturgy is that, broadly speaking, reflecting catholic orthodoxy from the fourth century, which in turn, reinforced the sacred text standard.[22]

Since (and before) the emergence of catholic orthodoxy, until the Reformation, the Bible was forever to be found within the context of church use and so retained its status as a sacred text.[23] It was, in fact, ecclesiastical *use* that actually determined the *macro* canon (books) as well as the *micro* canon (the textual form of those books).[24]

Not only was the Bible regarded as a sacred text in liturgical or catechetical functions but also in the process of reproduction. We find that scribal habits became much more conservative from the fourth century onward—the century that witnessed the emergence of the canon—particularly within the Greek tradition, if not always in the Latin.[25]

As the Church divided into the Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) communities, the canonical dimensions of the sacred text experienced a diversity. A *Greek* vulgate became the standard in the Eastern Church, corresponding to a *Latin* vulgate in the West. Eventually the antagonism between these two bodies extended beyond doctrinal disputes to the belief that the canonical texts used to affirm each opposing community's distinctives, were themselves corrupted: the Greeks distrusted the Latin Biblical texts and the

Latins were convinced the Greeks had altered their texts.[26]

Each textual standard continued to be authoritative, however, for their given community and constituted a sacred text. In both communities these texts were read, studied, interpreted, as well as conceptualized in icons and mosaics (in the East), or in images and stained glass (in the West).

Moreover, in an extended definition of sacred text, offered by Robert Detweiler, he includes the rôle of 'privileged interpreters—priests, shamans, prophets, preachers, ayatollahs . . enjoying a special relationship to the divinity . . and thus able to disclose the text's "true" meaning.'[27] It was within the Christian communities that the Bible was interpreted, multiplied and distributed as the unique possession of the Church, by churchmen—monks, priests, and bishops—as a sacred text.

I say this lasted until the Reformation, which may seem surprising at first. Was not the Reformation just another form of ecclesial continuity? Was it not the Enlightenment that truly liberated Biblical texts from the domain of church and theology? Without wanting to engage the debate of whether or not the Reformation was the beginning of modernity or a continuation of medievalism, in many respects the answer to these questions is, 'yes'.

Nevertheless, I believe it was the Christian humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, himself a *disaffected* monk, who in a decisive way, disrupted the canon of the Western Church—putting in its place the Greek New Testament canon of the Eastern Church—and thus set in motion a process that by the nineteenth century, culminated in the loss of the Bible as a sacred text in the West. What emerged was the Bible as *religious* text.

By religious text I mean a text which still retains a 'traditional specialness' but has lost its status as a sacred text. Once it was removed from the ecclesiastical matrix, its dimensions and interpretation were no longer determined by theologians who were preeminently churchmen. Leaving the context of the Church, the interpretation of the Bible became subject to a 'new hermeneutic.' Detweiler observes that the 'history of secularization in the west is, in one important sense, the story of readers learning to read our sacred texts in a different way.'[28]

To read the sacred text in a different way is to now read it within the matrix of the university, rather than the Church. Hans Dieter Betz has analyzed what this means:

> The function of the Bible in the University appears to be twofold. First, the Bible is recognized as a piece of world literature with a wide range of references to many disciplines. Second, the Bible is recognized sociologically as the holy scripture of living religious communities and traditions which exercise great influence in the contemporary society.[29]

This is a new, detached, phenomenological view of the Bible as a religious text—important as religious genre, but not decisive to its reader as an authoritative and sacred text.[30]

Presently, a tension exists between the continuing use of the Bible as a sacred text within contemporary faith communities, and the phenomenological use of the Bible as a religious text within the university context. This tension, between the Bible as an ecclesiastical text and as the text of the university, reminds us of the words of Tertullian, 'What indeed hath Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?' Tertullian would be dismayed to learn that since the nineteenth century, the Academy has completely prevailed over the Church, resulting in 'The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative,' and the arrival of 'The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church.'[31] Keegan has recently captured the present mood:

> The complaint is that biblical scholars have taken the Bible away from the people. Biblical scholars have rather successfully convinced many in the community of believers that only they, the biblical scholars, can really appreciate the Bible. They are the only ones who can determine what it means. The rest of the community must sit up and listen to the biblical scholars explain what the Bible means.[32]

No 'community consensus' has emerged from the Academy explaining what the Bible means as a 'religious text' (or, these days, even what are its boundaries), analogous to the great ecumenical or Reformation creeds of the Church. It is this vacuum that called forth the symposium mentioned at the beginning of this paper. This gaping open-endedness has invited Christian atheists to propose a project of 'Deconstruction,'[33] while certain feminists seize the moment to offer a thorough-going 'reconstruction,'[34] which happens to coincide with their revisionist view of history.

To be fair, however, it must be said that it never really was part of the design of the Academy's Biblical criticism to offer the Church a new certainty regarding her long cherished belief that the Bible is a *sacred* text. Morgan and Barton have recently reminded us that it is not even a matter of the different *methods* used by Church and Academy to study the Bible; it is a matter of their different *aims*.[35] I believe the aims of both domains to be not only legitimate, but necessary within their given contexts.

What are the roots of these different aims? A few years back, Bernhard W. Anderson, in his Presidential Address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1980, put his finger on Johann Philipp Gabler's inaugural address at the University of Altdorf in 1787 as holding a partial answer to this question. In Gabler's address, *De iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus*,[36] he called for a method that would make a distinction

between the aims of *Biblical* theology and of *dogmatic* theology. Biblical theology would concern itself with what is 'historical in nature,' what 'the sacred writers thought about the things of God.'[37] While dogmatic theology, which is 'didactic in nature,' would treat 'the philosophizing of a particular theologian concerning Godly things in terms of his own mode of thinking, historical situation, denomination and school.'[38] This method led, contrary to Gabler's own wishes, to a

> separation between two disciplines, as it is to this day. Liberated from doctrinal controls and ecclesiastical management, biblical studies were pursued in the liberal atmosphere of *academia*, where historical methodology was refined and the larger theological questions were often ignored in the interests of specialization.[39]

Anderson attributes this method to Gabler's Enlightenment presuppositions. Surprisingly, however, one finds antecedents for this separation in the dogmaticians of the seventeenth century and earlier yet, in Melanchthon and Luther.

Robert Scharlemann emphasized a dual approach to theology in Luther and Melanchthon, corresponding to Church and Academy and to the realms of faith and reason. Melanchthon saw the difference between theology as *academic* (what did the text mean in its historical context) and *Kerygmatic* (what does it mean to the Church today).

> This distinction is contained in the difference Melanchthon saw between the 'knowledge' and 'true knowledge' (*vera cognitio*) of the Scripture. Theological knowledge is the knowledge derived from Scripture and objectively seen by any competent scholar to be the content of Scripture. True theological knowledge is the knowledge which comes through the Scripture when concretely proclaimed and heard as the voice of God (*vox Dei*).[40]

For Melanchthon, the public, philological method, analogous to other university disciplines and refined by the humanist tradition, while not enough to arrive at the *vera cognitio*, was, nevertheless, the necessary first stage.

Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) of the University of Jena brought this distinction forward into the era of Protestant scholasticism. He recognized the difference between theology 'considered systematically and abstractively' and theology 'considered habitually and concretively' as 'a divinely given habit conferred on a man by the Holy Spirit through the Word.'[41] It is this distinction, Scharlemann judges, that determined the domain for each aspect of Bible study—the formal or objective suited for the university and the personal proclaimed *vox Dei*, in the Church.

Certainly, neither the Reformers, nor the dogmaticians like Gerhard, nor even Gabler, could have foreseen the secularization of

the university. Nevertheless, in germ they each provided, in their own way, for the two separate domains. The clock cannot now be turned back to a more idyllic age when a theological world-view prevailed within the university. For many reasons, perhaps we should even be thankful for this.

The problem that has been with us since the nineteenth century, however, is that the Academy's criteria have entered the Church and subsumed the prerogatives of the ecclesiastical use of the Bible.[42] Brevard Child's canonical approach provides, I think, an opportunity once again to place both approaches, with their different aims, back within their own *soevereiniteit in eigen kring*.[43]

There has been a revolt, (in the Academy itself!), over the loss of the *sacred* text. There have been many calls to recognize the Bible as a book *sui generis*. There is now a call to reconsider *The Bible as the Church's Book*,[44] and the *New Testament as the Church's Book*.[45] There are pleas for 'Theological Hermeneutics.'[46] Introductions are being written for 'the Old Testament as Scripture' (Childs, 1979), and for 'The New Testament as Canon' (Childs, 1985). This is no doubt the result, on the part of many of these new advocates, of wanting to recapture the loss of transcendence in the Church that has accompanied the loss of the Bible as a sacred text.

The Church has not, however, captured the high ground and fully reclaimed the Bible. The struggle continues to this very hour and is probably most focused in the current debate between James Barr (representing a *religious* text view of the Academy) and Brevard Childs (representing a *sacred* text view of the Church, but from an historical or phenomenological, post-critical perspective).[47]

For some years Childs, and others, have been arguing that since the Bible entered the domain of the Academy, 'critical-historical scholarship has become capsulated within a methodology which has become incapable of handling the theological dimension of biblical texts'.[48] For Childs, the first step in recognizing the *theological* dimension is to begin with the final ecclesiastical form of a Biblical textual standard:

> The canonical approach to text criticism applies a very different methodology in its use of the textual history in the pre-stabilization period. It does not attempt to establish a 'better' text than the Masoretic, but chooses to remain with the canonical text and thus identifies the level of literature with which it is concerned. Nevertheless, this canonical approach is vitally interested in all the evidence from the recensional history of the pre-stabilization period. It simply uses the evidence in a different manner towards achieving a particular goal, namely, the understanding of the canonical text.[49]

To return to the theme of this paper, this is perfectly in keeping with what served as sacred Scripture for the Protestant dogmaticians. The difference is that in Childs's method we approach the canonical

texts in a post-critical way, fully informed that no *ur* text is necessarily discoverable.[50] Childs contrasts this with the model that both Warfield and Barth would have employed:

> The usual method of text criticism results in each successive generation of critics offering fresh suggestions regarding the form of the original text. This highly individualistic model seems unaware of the continuing and enduring role of the canonical text, held in common by ongoing religious communities, which serves an authoritative function. The point is not to defend unreflected tradition, but at least to remain in conversation with it.[51]

Childs is concerned that the Academy's near exclusive preoccupation with biblical criticism causes it to lose sight of the hermeneutical significance of the canonical configuration of the traditional Church texts. In a post-critical way, Childs has been calling for a reconsideration of the Bible as a sacred text, for ecclesial, religious purposes, as it functioned for the communities that produced this final form. In this way we gain insights into their hermeneutic.[52]

Childs believes a post-Enlightenment 'Biblical theology' can be discovered if one attends to the fact that

> a religious reading of Israel's traditions arose early in its history and extended in different ways throughout the oral, literary, and redactional stages of the growth of the material until it reached a fixed form of relative stability. This religious interpretation involved a peculiar construal which sought to give the developing material a shape which could be appropriated by successive generations.[53]

By successive generations Childs means the Bible can, even in our modern era, be reappropriated as the Church's book, after the rigours of all aspects of Biblical criticism—indeed, not until such criticism has been performed.

James Barr disagrees. He has seen too much misconstruing of data in the area of Biblical semantics, in the name of theology, to turn the bible back over to the Church.[54] He in fact sees himself as a key figure in accepting the rôle of a gadfly, preventing the theologians from quietly stealing the Bible away from the Academy, only again to shroud it in medieval-like canonical authority, in the name of 'biblical theology.' While he is willing to grant that the Bible will continue to have its use within the context of the Church,

> It also has a context in a wide academic community, and it can fully serve the context of the church *only* [my emphasis] in so far as it respects also the integrity of modes of study and interpretation, valid within that community, over which theology as theology cannot pronounce.[55]

While these remarks are intended for Childs and his advocates,

certainly Childs would whole-heartedly agree! In fact, Barr himself freely acknowledges of Childs,

> Childs entirely accepts in itself the historical principle, that one can validly and must necessarily consider previous stages of the books [of the Bible], that one must consider their relations with writings outside the biblical canon, and that the books can be understood in terms of their origins and background.[56]

Furthermore, in the same article, Barr admitted that Childs's method, in the final analysis, is really a legitimate aspect of historical criticism;

> Traditional biblical scholarship has had a bias toward *origins*, toward explaining things through what they had been *beforehand*. Childs wants us to look with equal interest at what came afterwards . . . Biblical scholarship, in its claims to be historical, has often been historical in one direction rather than in the other; it has looked for antecedents, but been unable to deal with after-effects.[57]

Nevertheless, it is the project of rediscovering the Bible as *canon* that disturbs Barr, because this

> accords with much popular religious sentiment: biblical studies are hideously complex, they require technical expertise, they are full of divergent sources, periods, and hypotheses: the canonical principle leaves the believer at peace, alone with his Bible.[58]

Barr's more recent criticism reflects an unhappiness with Childs's additional canonical approach and sees this as too concessive, a method that finds its justification in a 'valuation of traditional critical scholarship . . . almost exactly the same as the valuation attached to it by conservative/fundamentalist circles.'[59] While this is clearly an over-statement, it nevertheless reveals Barr's true concern: Childs aids and abets the theologians.

Conclusion

The struggle between the Church and the Academy continues. What Childs provides is an opportunity not to have to take sides. The canonical approach takes seriously all aspects of Biblical criticism—something neither the Warfield nor the Packer model will allow for—and yet permits the Bible to retain its sacred text status at the canonical level, something Barth disparaged. The implications of this are varied and promising.

It means that the Academy retains her right of full autonomy, doing authentic Biblical criticism with integrity, not bound by any individual community's model of a 'believing criticism,' (which amounts to doing Biblical criticism with one hand tied behind one's back).

Furthermore—and as a Lutheran, I speak in terms of a Protestant catholicism—the Church has an opportunity to rediscover, in a creative and discerning way, the rich, theological corpus of the Protestant dogmatic traditions, which operated with Scripture at the same level as does the canonical approach. This time, however, it can be in a fully informed and post-critical way.

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NOTES

1 This paper was read to a meeting of the *Scripture and Theology Group* of the Rutherford House Fellowship held in London, 24 October 1990.
2 Hans Küng and David Tracy, ed. *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future* trans. by Margaret Köhl (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p. xv.
3 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962; second edition enlarged, 1970). Kuhn's theory of Paradigm Shift attempts to explain the development of new scientific insights, leading to significant new theories, not by means of empirical method; nor by a critical rationalist approach. Rather he attributes such breakthroughs to changes in 'an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community'. For an analysis of the epistemological implications of his theory, see Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith: Constructing Theories in Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) pp. 47–67. For further clarification of Kuhn's theory, *cf.* Thomas S. Kuhn, 'Reflections on My Critics' in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
4 A.T. and R.P.C. Hanson, *The Bible Without Illusions* (London: SCM Press, 1989). The authors stated, 'This book has been written under the conviction that the interpretation of the Bible needs entire seriousness and scrupulous honesty. It is indeed the dishonesty of much contemporary treatment of the Bible that has largely impelled the authors to write it.' p. 3.
5 Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (New York: Crossway, 1984).
6 Bernard Ramm, *After Fundamentalism: The Future of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984).
7 James Barr, *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).
8 I particularly appreciated his proper interpretation of Burgon's language on inspiration, pp. 179–80. Though, like Nigel Cameron's informed essays, 'Inspiration and Criticism: The Nineteenth-Century Crisis,' *Tyndale Bulletin* 35 (1984): 129–59; 'Dean Burgon and the Bible: An Eminent Victorian and the Problem of Inspiration,' *Themelios* 7 (1982): pp. 16–20, Packer's book does not make the necessary connexion between Burgon's view of inspiration and its bearing on his approach to text critical issues.
9 Packer saw, however, the weakness of Warfield's position in 1958
> How is it warrantable to treat the Bible as we actually have it as the Word of God, when we have no reason to think that any manuscript or version now existing is free from corruptions? It is sometimes suggested that the evangelical view of Scripture can have no practical application or significance, since the faultless autographs which it posits are not available to us, and that in practice we are involved in an inescapable subjectivism by the necessity of relying on conjectural reconstructions of the text. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), p. 90.

10 Theodore P. Letis, 'The Protestant Dogmaticians and the Late Princeton School on

the Status of the Sacred *Apographa,' Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 8 (1990): pp. 16–42; 'B.B. Warfield's Common-Sense Philosophy, New Testament Text Criticism and Inerrancy,' a guest lecture presented to the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Boston, 5 December 1987, published in the *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society,* Autumn 1991, *(American Presbyterians Society.)*.

11 Warfield's *new* orthodoxy no longer recognized the *apographa* as the sacred text. For Warfield only the mythical autographs could now have such status, which he now insisted must also be viewed as *inerrant.* This word, *inerrancy* betrays us, however, always promising more than any extant Biblical MS has ever been able to deliver. Furthermore, source criticism will not allow for one discoverable autographic exemplar for, say, any one Gospel, but recognizes a series of oral and written sources culminating in an ecclesiastical recension. On this, see the classics F.C. Grant *The Gospels: Their Origin and Their Growth* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957) and B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1936); and recently, William Stoker, *Extracanonical Sayings of Jesus* (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1990) and Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press, 1990).

12 In my earlier treatments of Warfield I emphasized the neglected aspect of his introducing the German method of text criticism at Princeton. This I see as playing a major rôle in his paradigm shift. It softened extensively an inherent resistance at Princeton to all aspects of German criticism. Others, however, had earlier detected the extremes to which Warfield might be driven in his apologetic task, illustrating further his distance from the dogmaticians and his affinity for the modern age of science. Sandeen noted, 'Warfield once stated: "The verities of our faith would remain historically proven to us even had we no Bible." These are remarkable words and have seemed to some to open up a possible area of compromise between criticism and conservatism, but I do not believe the hope was ever a real one. In these few passages we glimpse, as if through a partly opened door, a new side in Warfield's personality . . .' Ernest R. Sandeen, 'The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism,' *Church History* 31 (1962): p. 316. For a further perceptive analysis of Warfield in this vein, cf. Mike Parsons's excellent treatment, 'Warfield and Scripture,' *Churchman* 91 (1977): pp. 198–220.

13 Some have tended to stress a different interpretation of Warfield's legacy, crediting his paradigm with offering Evangelicals what Mark Noll called, 'believing criticism' in his *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986). Rudolph Nelson's recent, *The Making and Unmaking of An Evangelical Mind: The Case of Edward Carnell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), however, is a tragically sad but poignant tale reflecting in microcosm the broad intellectual schizophrenia produced by the Warfieldian paradigm in the latter half of the twentieth century.

14 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the World of God* Vol 1, Part 2 ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans, G.T. Thomson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1956), p. 525.

15 *Ibid.*

16 John Barton, *People of the Book: The Authority of the Bible in Christianity* The Bampton Lectures For 1988 (London: SCM Press, 1988), p. 28.

17 R.P.C. and A.T. Hanson, *The Bible Without Illusions* (London: SCM Press, 1989), p. 30.

18 J.R. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); *The Catholic Moment* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).

19 T. Howard, *Evangelical is not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacraments* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).

20 Childs's most influential works have been, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970); *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*

(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); *The New Testament As Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). For a complete listing of his works through 1988 consult his *Festschrift*, Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen and Robert R. Wilson, edd. *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, Press, 1988), pp. 329–336.

21 Ninian Smart and Richard D. Hecht, edd. *Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. xiii–xiv.

22 That is, the orthodoxy arrived at by the early Councils reinforced a canonical configuration of the New Testament text which best reflected this orthodoxy from among the several floating textual recensions.

23 On the ecclesiastical use of the Bible in medieval times, the following standard works provide a good introduction, B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952); *The Gospels in the Schools c.1100-c.1280* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1985); R.E. McNally, S.J., *The Bible in the Early Middle Ages* (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1986) [reprint of 1959 edition]; G.W.H. Lampe, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West From the Fathers to the Reformation* vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); G.R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); K. Walsh and D. Wood, edd. *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

24 Adolf Jülicher spoke of *Anagnosis*, or public reading in the Church, as one of the earliest criteria for the developing canon. By the time of Justin Martyr (150 AD), Jülicher notes,

> the first act in the worship of God on Sundays was to read aloud before the whole congregation a portion of Scripture, either from the 'Memoirs' of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets. It seems to me that there is more here than a mere 'germ of the New Testament Canon,' . . . the Gospels and the writings of the Prophets are placed on an equal footing. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. J.P. Ward (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1904), pp. 480, 484. *Cf.* also Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 331.

There is yet resistance to this idea applying equally to the canonical books as well as to the canonical *text* of those books, by those still labouring within the Warfieldian paradigm. They can abide by the consensus of the Church for the final form of the canon, but reserve the right to continue 'the quest for the historical text' because only the autographic text will provide them with their theoretical inerrancy. *Cf.* Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., 'The New Testament as Canon,' in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, a Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), pp. 181 ff.

25 The Latin Bible seemed to suffer more during the medieval era than did the Greek Bible. R. Loewe noted,

> In the centuries following Jerome's death, the spread of both the new version [Jerome's] and the Old Latin remained ungoverned by self-conscious consistency or the canons of responsible textual criticism . . . Heterogeneous interpolations would be included to meet the requirements of the immediate situation, and the text thus modified would become perpetuated as it was diffused in the course of missionary activity. 'The Medieval History of the Latin Vulgate,' in *The Cambridge History of the Bible* Vol. 2, p. 109.

26 The Greeks disparaged the *Vulgata Latina* because it was merely a translation from the inspired Greek of the New Testament and because Jerome abandoned the Greek LXX Old Testament text—thought to have the sanction of the apostolic Church—in favour of the Hebrew text. On the criticism that Jerome received for this, see his *Apologia contra Rufinum II*, 24-25. On the other hand, the Latins came to regard Jerome's standard as sanctioned by the Pope and the usage of the Western Church and therefore distrusted the editions of the Eastern Church when

they differed from Jerome. On this see, Theodore P. Letis, '*The Vulgata Latina* and the Council of Trent: The Latin Bible as Verbal Icon,' a paper presented before the summer meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society, 20 July, 1990, Chichester, England, pending publication.

27 Robert Detweiler, 'What is a Sacred Text?,' *Semeia* 31 (1985): 214.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

29 Hans Dieter Betz, ed. *The Bible as the Document of the University* (Chicago: Scholars' Press, 1981), p. 2.

30 Detweiler observes, 'A text becomes sacred when a segment of the community is able to establish it as such in order to gain control and set order over the whole community,' *op. cit.*, p. 217. In like manner, once it loses such status it also loses the power to control human institutions and communities. Hence, the crisis in the modern Church.

31 Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); James D. Smart, *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church: A Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970).

32 T.J. Keegan, O.P., *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 9.

33 See Thomas J.J. Altizer, *et al.*, *Deconstruction and Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

34 See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

35 Robert Morgan and John Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 271–296.

36 'A Discourse on the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Boundaries to be Drawn for Each.'
For an English translation of the entire text, see John Sandys-Wunch and Laurence Eldredge, 'J.P. Gabler and the Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 (1980): pp. 133–158. For an excellent analysis and introduction to Gabler's thought, see Hendrikus Boers, *What is New Testament Theology?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 23–38.

37 Bernard W. Anderson, 'Tradition and Scripture in the Community of Faith,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): p. 6.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*

40 Robert Scharlemann, 'Theology in Church and University: The Post-Reformation Development,' *Church History* 33 (1964): p. 23. Luther held a similar distinction between a *theoretic* knowledge of the word and what Scharlemann calls the *acoustic* knowledge, 'mediated by the word which is concretely heard as the voice of God' p. 23.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

42 It should not be neglected to add that even in the modern era a religious tyranny can enter the modern secular university as well, playing havoc with the sacred notion of academic freedom. Note particularly in the United States the religiously motivated, forced imposition of an ideological grammar on entire academic communities, resulting in the constriction of intellectual discourse by such predetermined linguistic boundaries. There should be no place for language in uniform within the academic community.
For an astute analysis of this development in the United States from a British perspective, see James Bowman, 'Big Sibling is Watching You,' *The Daily Telegraph Weekend* (February 23, 1991): pp. 1–2.

43 This is a Dutch phrase used by Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) which is translated 'Sphere Sovereignty.' It had reference to Kuyper's belief 'that various distinct spheres of human authority . . . each have their own responsibility and decision-

making power, which may not be usurped by those in authority in another sphere.' L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1975), p. 353.

44 Phyllis A. Bird, *The Bible as the Church's Book* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982).

45 Willi Marxsen, *The New Testament as the Church's Book* trans. J.E. Mignard (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972).

46 Charles M. Wood, *The Formation of Christian Understanding: An Essay in Theological Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981); 'Theological Hermeneutics,' *Quarterly Review* 7 (1987): pp. 91–100.

47 It is true that Barr has addressed the issue of 'The Bible as a Document of Believing Communities,' in Hans Dieter Betz, ed. *The Bible as a Document of the University*, pp. 25–47, but his concluding sentiment captures his real emphasis:

> Openness to the world is gained for the Bible when the study and appreciation of it, as I have emphasized, are not limited by the traditional perceptions and methods of the believing community but are open to all the world and to its ways of thinking. And with this, starting out from the believing community, we come back to join hands with the thought of the Bible as the document of the university (p. 45).

Barr's inaugural lecture at Oxford, *Does Biblical Study Still Belong To Theology?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), gives a clear witness to Barr's emphasis and aims, anwering 'no' to this question. Childs is proposing a process which is the inverse of Barr's: from the historical-critical study of the Bible within the Academy to a post-critical appreciation of the Bible as the sacred canon of believing communities—both past and present.

48 Paul D. Hanson, 'The Theological Significance of Contradiction within the Book of the Covenant,' in G.W. Coats and B.O. Long, edd., *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 112.

49 Childs, *Introduction*, p. 104. It is interesting to note that Barr, in his Croall Lectures at New College, Edinburgh, (1970) also accorded considerable significance to the final canonical form of the Biblical text:

> But though in principle all stages of the tradition which went to make up scripture are relevant, a certain basic character attaches to the text of the literary units as they now are . . . all others are a matter of historical reconstruction, however probable. From the point of view of modern literary appreciation also, the final form of the text has the first importance . . . The form as it stands is, from the point of view of the tradition, the definitive form, the state in which the tradition ceased to modify the text and agreed that it should stand. Thus both the theological motivation of the tradition and the scholarly techniques of modern investigation agree in according a certain fundamental character to the final state of the text. James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973), pp. 163–64.

50 In Childs's words:

> My understanding of canon was offered as a major criticism of late seventeenth and eighteenth century Reformed orthodoxy which tended to place the authority in a divinely inspired book apart from its reception by the communities through the work of the Spirit. By defining canon as those sacred writings which were received, treasured, and shaped by a community of faith, I proposed a very different dynamic from that, say, of Charles Hodge, but one which was akin to the early Church Fathers' view of a rule-of-faith (review by Childs of *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* by James Barr, in *Interpretation* 38 (1984): p. 67).

For the purpose of my thesis, however, I must also stress that while the dogmaticians may not have had a fully informed historical understanding of the process leading to the final form of the text, they did purposefully perpetuate the

rule-of-faith consensus arrived at by the orthodox fathers when they affirmed the same ecclesiastical recensions as did the early Church—the Greek New Testament text of the Eastern Church and the Hebrew text underlying the Latin Church text, a unique Protestant blend of both catholic traditions.

51 Childs, *Introduction*, p. 105.

52 This extra *aim* of canonical hermeneutics would appear to have next to no relevance for those whose exclusive domain is the Academy. I think this lies behind much of the antagonism between Barr and Childs. In an early response to Childs, Barr remarked, 'An exegesis which would work strictly within the confines of the canon is certainly a possibility that could be added to other forms of exegesis, but it is doubtful how it could be the basic theological form of exegesis.' Barr, *s.v.* 'Biblical Theology' in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Supplementary Volume) (Abingdon: Nashville, 1976), p. 110. I believe that because Childs's aim is mostly irrelevant to Barr's own concerns, Barr is unwilling to consider sympathetically how Childs's method could provide such a theological exegesis.

53 Childs, Review of *Holy Scripture*, p. 67.

54 James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: SCM Press, 1961).

55 Barr, *Does the Bible Still Belong to Theology?*, p. 16.

56 James Barr, 'Reading the Bible as Literature,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 56 (1973–74): p. 24.

57 *Ibid.*

58 James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), p. 169. Barr's most recent critique of Childs appears in the latter's *Festschrift*, 'The Theological Case Against Biblical Theology,' *Canon, Theology and Old Testament Interpretation*, pp. 3–19.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 148. In reality, this charge proves to be little more than a strawman. I know of no fundamentalist who has endorsed Childs. In fact, just where one would expect endorsement, if Barr's charge had merit, one finds instead disapprobation, *cf.* Dale A. Brueggeman's rather typical fundamentalist antagonism against Childs, 'Brevard Childs' Canon Criticism: An Example of Post-Critical Naiveté,' *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (1989): pp. 311–326. Moreover, Carl Henry has recently placed Childs on the index of works unacceptable to evangelicals, 'Canonical Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal,' *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 8 (Autumn 1990): pp. 76–108. Here Henry continues to display both a resistance to Biblical criticism and a nervous jealousy for the inerrant autographs theory, a preoccupation of his critique.