

The Doctrine of Scripture Today **Trends in Evangelical Thinking**

The main section of this booklet was first given as an address at the annual conference of the *British Evangelical Council* in Liverpool, November 1968. It includes some additional material, and is preceded by a brief positive statement of the biblical doctrine of Scripture, which was previously published in the quarterly magazine of the *Sovereign Grace Union*.

By [Hywel Jones](#)

Dr. Hywel R. Jones, B.A., *University of Wales*; M.A., *University of Cambridge*; Ph.D., *Greenwich University School of Theology* (UK). He is currently Professor of Practical Theology at *Westminster Theological Seminary* Escondido, California.

Dr. Jones has written commentaries on Exodus, Philippians, and most recently Let's Study Hebrews. His research work, which consisted of an assessment of ecumenical documents on major Christian doctrines, is now published as *Gospel and Church*. Under the title of *Unity in Truth* he edited the addresses that Dr. Lloyd-Jones gave at British Evangelical Conferences. In *Only One Way* he examined and critiqued the view that people do not need to hear and believe the Gospel in order to be saved.

The aim of this study is to sound an alarm in the light of current trends in evangelical thinking on the doctrine of Scripture. Because certain main points concerning what the Scriptures teach with regard to their own nature have been increasingly subjected to "reinterpretation", the doctrine is being vitiated by its foes and even misrepresented by its friends. That within the contemporary evangelical world there are friends is demanded by the very nature of the case, and one ventures to hope that they may be helped by a study such as this; that there are foes is often hotly denied and largely overlooked.

This latter claim would no doubt be denied on the grounds that agreement as to the nature of Scripture will not necessarily result in a uniformity of interpretation of Scripture. Since there is a distinction between Scripture and the interpretation of Scripture — between what the Scriptures purpose to teach and what expositors sometimes make them teach — the differences between contemporary evangelicals do not touch upon the nature of Scripture, but how particular portions of it are to be interpreted. At first blush this might seem to be cast iron logic, but on closer examination this proves not to be the case. That there is such a difference we would be the last to deny, but in a large number of

cases this is invoked as a cover for moving the issue in conflict from the realm of an over-riding authority to the sphere of a freedom of interpretation. This in effect results in an unwarrantable accommodation of Scripture's teaching to non-biblical thought forms. We shall have occasion to note and comment on current instances of this.

All this is largely passed over and not noticed by many who espouse this doctrine faithfully. This is attributable to two factors. First, the vast majority of believing folk have never been able to unfold the characteristic elements of this doctrine because of the ignorance which resulted from the engulfing of theological colleges and pulpit ministries by liberalism at the turn of the century. To be able to recognize error, one must know the truth. Sadly, now that some attempt is being made to recover the ground which has been lost, what is coming into vogue is a diluted doctrine which is defective at decisive points. To discern half-truth demands a thorough grasp of the truth. What is the truth about the holy Scriptures? The first section sets out to answer this question in principle form, and in connection with this a bibliography is appended.

The second reason why this matter is being by-passed is that the issues at stake are not being clearly presented. As we shall see current writing in the United States and Holland manifest error in this field, but in Britain error is lurking behind an orthodox vocabulary which serves as a smokescreen for the erosion of those fundamentals which it was intended to define and safeguard. In this country, attitudes and trends speak louder than words (these are scarce though not entirely wanting), and it is with trends that we shall concern ourselves, individuals and religious bodies being mentioned only in connection with evidence adduced.

This study therefore divides itself naturally. In the first section we shall submit a brief positive statement of the biblical doctrine of Scripture; and, against this background, in the second section we shall show some of the ways in which defection from this doctrine is manifesting itself today. Finally, by way of introductory comment, let no one think that we are engaging on a purely academic enquiry. Nothing could be more practical, because what we believe with regard to Scripture will soon affect our other beliefs and practices.

I. THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

We shall consider distinctive emphases of the doctrine under the following four categories and in connection with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Sec. I. i-viii).

1. The origin and purpose of Scripture.
2. The mediation of Scripture.
3. The characteristics of Scripture.
4. The preservation of Scripture.

1. The origin and purpose of the Scriptures

The opening section of the *Westminster Confession* is explicit on this crucial issue. Its answer in principle is : “it pleased the Lord . . . to reveal Himself”. In our study of the Scriptures, we must begin from a point outside them (but one which is unitedly and repeatedly attested by them), a point in eternity not in time, in heaven not on earth, in God and not man. This is *revelation*.

No man can by searching find out God, whose thoughts and ways far exceed ours. There can be no fathoming of His understanding. When man was at his finest hour he was but a finite creature, and depended on God to disclose to him His Person and will (Gen. 2). Eden was the universe in cameo, aflame with God’s “everlasting power and divinity” (Rom. 1:20). Man was God’s image (Gen. 1: 27), and yet God was under a necessity to reveal His will to him by words, and commands. Creation and reason were not sufficient. The Lord God “commanded” as well as “made”.

However, the *Westminster Confession* in this section posits a distinction within revelation which is to be found in the Scriptures (e.g. Psalm 19:1, 4, 7). This differentiation is normally termed “general” or “natural” as distinct from, but not unrelated to, “special” or “supernatural” revelation. We shall consider these and their inter-relation and unique features, but as we do so we must bear in mind, as this is germane to our study, that revelation is *always* a divine activity of self-unveiling, and *never* a human achievement of discovering. That revelation is free, voluntary, gracious, purposive, sufficient and plain is in the very warp and woof of the Scriptures.

(1) *The distinguishing features of these two types of revelation.*

(a) *General or natural revelation.* Each adjective points a particular significance, and is therefore important. “General” refers to the fact that the content of this revelation is made known universally, and “natural” to the fact that it is made known in “the works of creation and providence.” The former refers to the diffusion of the revelation; the latter to the means used. The content of this revelation is in principle “the everlasting power and divinity” of God (Rom. 1:20).

No man can evade being constantly confronted with God’s existence, power, wisdom, goodness, justice in the created universe, and in his own creaturely constitution (Rom. 1:19, 2:14, 15). These realities are known by immediate intellectual and sense awareness’. These externally given disclosures of the existence and certain attributes of God (Rom. 1 :20, Acts 14:17; 17:27) find a confirming testimony placed by God within the heart of every man (Rom. 1:20). Coupled with this, in the heart of every man is an attestation of God’s justice and judgment on sin and sinners (Rom. 1:32), and that man is under law to God (Rom. 2:14, 15).

However, this revelation which is universally given is universally misinterpreted and suppressed, and that deliberately. Every man, in accord with his fallen nature inherited from Adam, “holds down the truth” (Rom. 1:20), “professes to be wise” (Rom. 1:22) and “worships and serves the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). Still God continues to restrain iniquity in His common grace, to remonstrate in His longsuffering (Amos 4:6ff), though judicially giving up men and women in His wrath to the power of their own evil desires (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Every man, on the grounds of sin within at least the terms of general revelation, is without excuse (Rom. 1:20), and everyone’s mouth will be stopped at the last day (Rom. 3:19).

(b) *Special or supernatural revelation.* Here again these adjectives have their particular force. This revelation is directed to the people of God as opposed to all mankind, and is accomplished not through natural processes but by a divine, direct incursion into the natural order in a supernatural way. The former adjective refers to the exclusiveness of the revelation; the latter to the means used. The content of this revelation in principle is “a righteousness of God” (Rom. 1:17). No revelation of the saving grace of God was possible within the terms of general revelation, for this it was “not sufficient”, (*West. Conf. I. i.*), whereas the sole and all-inclusive theme of special revelation is — “I will be your God, and you shall be my people.”

However, the manifold and extensive contents of this embryo-theme are not set out in the two Testaments by way of a fully-blown system which is repeatedly enunciated, but is expressed “at sundry times and in divers manners.” This means that God revealed Himself and His will within the confines and courses of a historical process, and yet His over-ruling sovereignty did not make history unrealistic.

The unfolding of this saving purpose is described in the Scriptures, and it is most suitably considered in terms of the homogeneous development of seed to shoot to stalk to bud to flower. The seed is Genesis 3:15 which contains in embryo all that is described in the culmination of this revelatory process around the appearing, Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in its application until the consummation.

This principle has far-reaching repercussions with regard to the relationship between the two Testaments. This single theme described above is precisely what unites the Testaments, and what separates them. The seed contains the flower in principle and by nature and promise, but the bloom can never be forced back into the form of a seed. To treat the Old Testament as if it were essentially the New in a shadowy typical form is to ignore the fact that the fulfillment is in the New; to treat the New as if it were novel and unheralded is to leave it without the foundation and adumbration of the Old.

Special revelation is thus characterized by expansions of its contents and variations in its modes of disclosure while it deals with its single theme and stems from its single source (Heb. 1:1-2). This raises two large themes which cannot be dealt with in full here, namely the modes of revelation in the Scriptures, and a description of the expanding contents of this covenantal promise as they are unfolded by God through His appointed means. We shall try to sketch in a few bold lines on the former topic only because it lies a little nearer the heart of our subject.

In the Scriptures certain stages of revelation may be noted, but the lines are not to be drawn too heavily between them. Subsequent to the Fall, we first see that in the patriarchal age God addressed men through their physical senses by means of symbols, dreams, manifestations and theophanies. Then after Sinai the characteristic of prophetic inspiration began to appear, again with varied phenomena, in connection with which God worked internally in His chosen instruments and revealed His secrets there. This paves the way for the New Testament with its emphasis on the inwardness of true religion. However, on interpreting any portion of the Scriptural revelation, one must have regard to its place within the process of God's self-disclosing, the person to whom the disclosure was made and to the fact that revelation is historically conditioned, and thus is adapted "to historical circumstances, personal characteristics and cultural levels" (G. J. Spykman, Article "Accommodation" *Encyclopaedia of Christianity* I, p.43). This is no veiled confession that the biblical revelation partakes of the errors of the various times in which it was given, but is only an affirmation that "it confines itself to the limitations of finite modes of communication" (*ibid.* p.43).

In this connection one matter must be stressed. This divine self-disclosure is not to be reduced to the guiding of the historical process to a redemptive goal, nor to a divine human encounter in which man is made aware of God's glory and claims. This is a debased though widely held concept of revelation. It results in a wedge (philosophical, not biblical) being driven between the written Scripture and the Word of God, the former being a fallible human record to the latter which is the revelatory Word. As a result Scripture becomes a nose of wax in the hands of those who claim to be believers in and servants of the Word of God, and conceals the Word of God rather than revealing it.

Revelation is God speaking, God interpreting His own work. It is propositional, communicated in the form of truths expressed in words, and is aimed at leading the elect to a knowledge of its Author and Giver. (Gen. 12:1-4; 17:1-22; Ex. 20:1; Josh. 4:1; 2 Sam. 7:4ff; 23:2; 2 Kings 3:11f; Jer. 3:6f; Ezek. 7:1.)

(2) *The relation between these two types of revelation*

One cannot do better than to quote Prof. B. B. Warfield's definitive statement here: "The one is adapted to man as man; the other to man as sinner; and since

man, on becoming sinner has not ceased to be man, but has only acquired new needs requiring additional provisions to bring him to the end of his existence, so the revelation directed to man as sinner does not supersede that given to man as man, but supplements it with these new provisions for his attainment, in his new condition of blindness, helplessness and guilt induced by sin, of the end of his being." *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p.74.

2. The mediation of the Scriptures

With equal emphasis to that which has already been used respecting the divine origin of the Scriptures, we now state that the Bible has come to us through the instrumentality of men, and not directly from heaven. The only perfect man — Jesus Christ — never wrote a book, whereas each of the books of the Bible has a human author, whether known by name or not. On this ground many have unjustifiably drawn the conclusion that human authorship must mean that the records are fallible and erroneous in some respects. However, the biblical doctrine of inspiration does perfect justice to the human agency and the divine authorship of the Holy Scriptures, without distorting either.

It should be emphasized that the divinity of Scripture is not to be maintained by depreciating human agency. To underscore the fact of divine authorship does not necessitate that we overlook the fact of human instrumentality. To maintain such is to manifest a grossly deficient understanding of the nature of divine providence and its relation to free agency. Inspiration treats men as men and not as typewriters or automata, heightening rather than destroying their personal characteristics and abilities, and yet secures the amazing fact that what was written by men was first of all breathed out by God (2 Tim. 3:16).

Therefore, within the terms of our statement we must stress that the Scriptures were written by human beings for other human beings. This means that there are certain superficial similarities, as well as the differences which we tenaciously maintain, between the Bible and other literature. The Bible is the result of the thinking and speaking of diverse men and women who thought and spoke in particular ways (idioms), languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic), and from within varying historical conditions. They wrote in poetry (Isaiah 40) or prose (I Samuel); historically (Chronicles I and II) and devotionally (Psalms). They wrote directly or from specified sources (Joshua 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18; Num. 21:14) and sometimes did not even write themselves but used amanuenses (Rom. 16:22). To ignore these features and far more besides is to distort not elevate Scripture.

Two basic questions arise in this connection, namely, how it could ever be that what men wrote God had said, and that inspiration which alone explains this phenomenon is restricted to these sixty-six books alone?

(1) The inspiration of Scripture

In commenting on 1 Corinthians 2:7-13, Charles Hodge writes: —

“There is neither in the Bible nor in the writings of men a simpler or clearer statement of the doctrines of revelation and inspiration. Revelation is the act of communicating divine knowledge by the Spirit to the mind. Inspiration is the act of the same Spirit controlling those who make the truth known to others. The thoughts, the truths made known, and the words in which they are recorded are declared to be equally from the Spirit. This from first to last has been the doctrine of the Church. . . .”

Dr. K. Runia in *Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture* gently criticizes this statement because Hodge “concentrates inspiration one-sidedly upon the aspect of infallibility”. Whilst agreeing with Hodge’s contention, Dr. Runia stresses that, “The main aspect is the material one, namely, that in inspiration the Holy Spirit operates in, with and through persons, selected by Himself, in such a way that what they say or write is indeed the revelation of God. What these men produce is not a collection of human ideas, however sublime, nor is it a human and fallible witness to revelation, but it is really what it claims to be: God’s own, and therefore infallible, revelation” (p.153).

In this connection the apostolic teaching of 2 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 is definitive. Paul states that all Scripture is not breathed into by God when it has been written, but that what is written was breathed out by God. Peter states positively that chosen instruments were raised up and borne along by the Spirit’s initiative and control, and this divine act resulted in the writing of Scripture. He explicitly excludes any suggestion that the origin of Scripture is to be found in human initiative or reflection of any kind, and yet as explicitly asserts human instrumentality.

While in context these claims refer strictly to the Old Testament, there are factors which demand that they be predicated of the New Testament as well. The constant retrospective references of the Lord, the apostles, and the other authors of New Testament books to the Old Testament in terms of prediction and fulfillment argue strongly in favor of the two Testaments being regarded as inter-related on the same plane of inspiration and authority. In addition, the active conscious submission of the characters in the New Testament period to the Old Testament points in the same direction. The Lord Himself authorized His apostles to become infallible teachers of the truth, and for this promised them the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13-14). Of this they were conscious and spoke and wrote as such (e.g. Rev. 22:18-19; Acts 6:2; 2 Cor. 10:8-11; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 John 10).

The inspiration of the Scriptures is therefore not mechanical, in which man is depersonalized, but organic, as the divine revelation is clothed by a divinely formed and furnished, albeit human, mind and personality into a divine-human revelation. Such inspiration cannot but be verbal, which means that given, intelligible words in their accumulated significance reveal and do not conceal or

distort the living Word of God. Also, this inspiration is plenary; there is no part of Scripture which is less inspired than any other, though not every part is charged with the same revelatory significance (e.g. the Speech of Eliphaz and John 17). History, genealogy, cosmology as well as salvation are the Word of God, and no wedge of selectivity or preference can be driven between what God has in the Scriptures bound together inseparably.

This of course only refers in the strict sense to the original manuscripts as they were first written in Hebrew and Greek. This will be developed later. However, the divine originals are to be regarded as having “come from heaven, as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them.” (Calvin—*Institutes* I. 8.i.)

The canons of the Testaments

The inspiration of the books which appear in the Bible made them authoritative (canonical) in themselves, and their inclusion in an “official” collection by Jews and Christians respectively, was by virtue of their intrinsic authority being recognised. (*West. Conf.* I.ii)

The canon of Old Testament books was already formulated by our Lord’s day, and to the three-fold division of that collection, He referred approvingly in Luke 24. How was the extent of this collection determined? There are certain indications of the process in the Old Testament itself. In this the figure and ministry of Moses was crucial (e.g. Deut. 31:24-26, 11; 17:18-19; Josh. 1:8). The testimony of the prophets possessed the same character (Isa. 8:5, Jer. 3:6, Amos 3:1), and the historical books Joshua–2 Kings were prophetic in that they were an interpretative history of the period following Sinai, written on the basis of the covenantal or prophetic principle. The remainder were recognized as inspired, and later queries regarding the inspiration of Ecclesiastes and Esther were only raised in academic circles. The Apocrypha was decisively rejected because it did not display the same characteristics as these other books.

With regard to the New Testament the figures of the Lord and His apostles replace Moses and the prophets. Here is a closed collection alongside that of the Old Testament, each book of which is imbued with divine authority. These books and letters were circulated among various churches singly or in collections, and gradually these and no others came to be recognized as having stemmed from God because of their internal authority and characteristics.

3. The characteristics of the Scriptures

To grant that what was written by way of holy Scripture was God-breathed is to commit oneself in advance to maintain a position that what was written has indefectible authority. God does not deceive nor err, and it is impossible that Scripture should not partake of the character of its author. As Warfield wrote —

“Revelation is but half revelation unless it be infallibly communicated; it is but half communicated unless it be infallibly recorded.” This is iron logic and if this were not true of Scripture, what kind of a God emerges?

The holy Scriptures are wholly true, supremely authoritative, and sufficiently clear to communicate that saving knowledge of God’s Person and will which cannot be gained from any other source. We shall now examine the three parts of this assertion.

1. The Scriptures are *true* — they are infallible and inerrant. These two adjectives are often used interchangeably in current discussion but, strictly speaking, they refer to distinct though related aspects of the nature of the veracity of Scripture. If a record is infallible then it cannot deceive the reader by anything it says, and if it is inerrant then it cannot be mistaken on any detail which it mentions. This is what is to be maintained with regard to this matter. Clearly, the former epithet demands the latter, and both together refer to *all* that is found in holy Writ.
2. The Scriptures are *authoritative* — they will not pass away, and they cannot be broken. In Matthew 5:17 the Lord refers to the minutest data of Scripture as possessing this characteristic of abiding validity and authority. The “jot” is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and the “tittle” is a minute projection which distinguishes consonants of similar form from one another. The law is meticulously accurate, and is indissoluble in its authority. These jots and tittles are important for the meaning they preserve and convey. It is however, wrong to think abstractly of words and letters as being inspired, but of these as set in clauses, sentences, books, and indeed the whole of Scripture.

John 10:34 and 35 are also to be noted because there are two phrases here which relate to the authority of Scripture, and impute the very authority of God Himself to it. In verse 34 there is an appeal to written prepositions which partake of the character of law and not to oral traditions, or religious concepts. “Your law” stands for the whole of the Old Testament as in John 12:34, and not merely Psalm 82 from which the quotation is actually taken. In this quotation, one word (gods) supports the whole argument of the Lord which, as it happens in the context, is a claim on His part to be the Son of God. If one word cannot be annulled, then what of the whole? Verse 35 supplies the reason why in the Lord’s estimation the appeal to Scripture was so conclusive — it cannot be broken. Its authority is indefectible; its inerrancy, irrefragable.

3. The Scriptures are *plain* — they are sufficient and perspicuous. This completeness means that all that is needed to disclose the will of God lies within their pages, and therefore no addition from man’s reason or other sources is permissible, let alone necessary. Their clarity means that the humblest person taught by the Spirit, may read and understand, and

therefore no priestly caste is needed. The Bible is an open, public book, and is not to be restricted to a special class for circulation.

4. The preservation of the Scriptures.

We are not shaken by the taunt that this Bible, for which we have been claiming so much, is in point of fact non-existent because the original records, even if they were breathed out by God, are no longer extant. On the contrary, just as revelation without inspiration is only half revelation, so we are persuaded that the inspiration which must and did result in infallible recording is no inspiration unless what was so recorded is also preserved. This preservation is the result of the “singular care and providence of God” which kept “pure in all ages” what was originally given. The Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek are authentic.

However, having said this, it must be freely confessed that, within this one statement there is a deep cleavage of outlook among equally thoroughgoing evangelicals of the present day, as there has been over the last eighty years. The issue is how, by using the many manuscripts we have of the original autographs, we may recover the best text — namely, the reading in each case which is most faithful to the original autographs.

The division of opinion relates mainly to the New Testament. On the one hand Dean J. W. Burgon (1813-1888) and Dr. E. F. Hills in our own day oppose the textual methods of Bishops Westcott and Hort, to whose influence B. B. Warfield is claimed to have succumbed, and they maintain that there is but one providentially preserved text — the Byzantine, which was the Reformation text, and the one behind the Authorized Version translation. On the other hand, there is the view to which expression is given in *The Infallible Word*. This is too large and technical a matter to be investigated in brief, and readers are referred to the relevant literature in the Bibliography, where both views are fully presented.

The Bible is a book which, though it is written by men for men, is yet written by God for His own glory. Its subject matter is God, and how He becomes *our* God through Jesus Christ; to this both Testaments bear witness. It is therefore a book which must be studied in its own light, and that is the light shed on the words by its Author — God, the Holy Spirit.

II. DEVIATIONS FROM THE DOCTRINE

We wish to assert unequivocally that the position as outlined is to be regarded as standard, and any deviations from it or reservations in connection with any of its features partake of the character of heresy. These claims in statement form are not open to such expansion as results in an adaptation of or departure from the

principles which they enshrine. It is to the existence of such trends among contemporary evangelical scholars that we now draw attention. As we do so, we wish to remind ourselves that a *trend* is something very different from an “odd” letter written to a religious paper; it is a manifest, persistent inclination towards a set definable course. We also wish to make it plain that we take no perverted delight in being able to adduce the following evidence, and would prefer that there were no instances to submit of such an adaptation and departure as we have mentioned. However, there is too much at stake to justify a “charitable” silence, and we claim that the responsibility for what we shall present is to be laid at the door of evangelical scholars.

No one enjoys being derided. Scorn strikes at one’s personal feelings and at one’s desire to be accepted and esteemed by one’s contemporaries. No more frequent charge has been leveled against evangelicals than that, in an age when the restricting confines of human knowledge and experience are being pushed back and the traditional gives place to the modern, their minds are closed, and they live in the intellectual and emotional backwoods. This barbed comment when it is voiced nowadays is soured even more by the allegation that evangelicals are afraid to face the insights and expansions of a “new age”, knowing full well that, were they to do so, the inadequacy and untenability of their beliefs in God, the origin of the world, and the Bible would become plain not only to others, but more especially to themselves. So it is claimed that we prefer blissful delusion, rather than to learn through first being undeceived.

However, our forbears were not prepared to let the written Word of God be exposed to such ridicule (vide J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, pp. 24-29). They were able to meet the higher critics on their own ground, and to expose the hollowness of their claim to have an “open mind” by uncovering their philosophical presuppositions, and to refute their “assured” conclusions by the sheer weight of their learning. Much that was written to uphold the veracity of the Scriptures in the United States (from old Princeton and new Westminster) was abundantly vindicated, and is still more precious than gold. In this literature a determined assault was launched on the already tottering fortifications of classical higher criticism of the Wellhausen variety, and on the other hand, a plain demonstration was given of how all the new facts relating to the Bible were perfectly in keeping with the dogmatic position Scripture claims for itself. This vigorous apologetic was and still is of real service in the cause of truth.

An incipient departure from the orthodox position on Scripture can now be discerned in the work of a succeeding generation of evangelical scholars. It appeared as a shift of stance; it was soon to harden into a position. This was that the unequivocal self-witness of Scripture to its inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility and authority came to be minimized and the case for these claims came to be formulated in terms of the inner values of the Scriptures, the witness of archaeology and tradition, and the processes and conclusions of a dedicated scholarship. This was deemed necessary in order that their arguments should

carry some weight with their opponents. Admittedly, this is a slight shift, but it is the thin edge of a very significant wedge, and increasingly nowadays, scholarly study lies between us and an appeal to Scripture's self-witness.

There is a growing body of opinion, particularly among younger evangelical scholars, which demands that we must now dispense with (not minimize as formerly) a deductive approach to Scripture, and employ an inductive one exclusively. (The stance has become a position!) This claim means that the orthodox position regarding Scripture can no longer be established by an appeal to Scripture's witness to itself, and to a study of the Scriptures in the light of this statement (deductive). We must rather begin at the other end with a painstaking study of all the textual variants and difficulties, exegetical problems, contradictions, (so-called) and our conclusions from the above must be allowed to determine whether we can assent to the age-old doctrine or whether it needs an academic face lift. This is indeed a dangerous course to adopt because the kind of methodology we employ determines the conclusions we can make. It is impossible to try and salvage biblical (evangelical) conclusions from anti-biblical presuppositions. We have thus lost important ground by failing to maintain it unashamedly and persistently. To consign a truth to a silence, however temporary, is to run the risk of consigning it to oblivion, not only beyond one's own reach but beyond the reach of succeeding generations too.

Dr. Runia comments incisively and with relevance on this matter in the book to which reference had already been made (pp.111-113). He points out that the inductive approach, if followed, has two devastating side-effects. First, were it to be strictly observed, it would never permit its followers to come to a real theological doctrine of Scripture. He says, "The examination of the structure of the Bible is a purely historical affair, and as such it never leads to a theological doctrine." Secondly, such a procedure involves the adopting of the starting-point of unbelief. Here Runia quotes Bavinck, who wrote, "Everyone who makes his doctrine of Scripture dependent upon the historical examination of its formation and structure, begins already with rejecting its testimony, and therefore does not stand any more in the attitude of faith to Scripture."

1. Concessions to non-evangelical scholarship

However, scholarship becomes all-important, if not indispensable, for the maintenance of the position Scripture ought to occupy, and the wider field of scholarly thought is a place where treasures may be found. For example, in a review of the *New Bible Dictionary* which appeared in the *Bulletin* for theological students published by the I.V.F. is the following: "The *New Bible Dictionary* displays a new feeling among conservative scholars in their relationship to others working in the same field . . . Absent are the prejudices and attitudes of a bygone era that felt constrained to dismiss everything critical."

This is the first trend which appears in contemporary evangelical thought and writing. There is a new openness abroad; positions which were formerly polarized are now being inter-related. Evangelical scholars let it be known and show that they feel able to consider the views and entertain the conclusions of non-evangelical scholars favorably, though these are precluded by the Scriptures which they claim to uphold. Nowhere does this appear as clearly as in reviews of non-evangelical books and commentaries by evangelical reviewers. Adjectives used are “valuable”, “profitable”, “stimulating”, “worthy of consideration”, whereas there is a painful lack of criticism. For example, in the *Life of Faith*, November 2nd, 1967, Prof. F. F. Bruce reviewed a commentary on the book of Exodus by Principal Henton Davies of Regent’s Park, Oxford. In passing, the reviewer mentions that the author believes that Exodus manifests expansions by a later age of the bare facts of the exodus-motif. No stricture is passed on this, and so a crypto-evolutionary view of the development of Israel’s religion, and of the literature of the Old Testament is apparently sanctioned by an evangelical scholar in an evangelical newspaper.

Before we note further evidences of such unwarrantable concessions to what amount in reality to groundless hypotheses, we shall look at a typical representation of what is meant by this “open-mind” approach which evangelicals call on their fellows to display.

In the *Graduates Fellowship* magazine of the I.V.F. of June 1966 an article appeared entitled “The Open Mind” by Prof. D. M. Mackay, a vice-president of the I.V.F., of Keele University. Though this lacks many of the detailed out-workings of this approach it is clear in the main thrust of its argument. It is that God, who is “dead straight”, in whom there is no “double think”, demands that we be “open — obediently open — to His truth *wherever it is found*” (my italics). These last words are the crucially important ones for they do not refer exclusively or even supremely to the holy Scriptures, but they amount to a claim that God’s truth can be found outside the Bible. He says on this very point: “This is crucial — because he, the Christian, wants nothing more than to receive God’s correction on any point where he thinks amiss, he must ensure (as best he can) that he erects no barriers to such correction *in any quarter*, however unthinkable it may be to him to expect it from there.”

This amounts to having a closed mind to the finality, sufficiency, infallibility and authority of the Scriptures on all that they say — and they speak of everything — and an open mind to what men of secular scholarship have to say. To adopt this approach characterized by “an open mind to God’s truth wherever it is found” would require that one be open to the influence of what would, on inadequate grounds, demand that devastating shifts of position be made which the terms of our doctrine would exclude as being untenable and unnecessary. Let it not be thought that Scripture’s position can only be maintained in the obscurity of an evangelical corner. We are not campaigning for a closed-mind approach. On the contrary, we are calling for a thorough-going mind which will be evidenced in a

fearless willingness to draw *all* the conclusions of the doctrinal statements we make. Our claim is that this is not being done by contemporary evangelicals, and that at this point there is a basic flaw and contradiction in their position. Let proven facts and deeper understanding modify doctrinal statements, but let not an uncritical acceptance of shifting theories do so. Let God be true and every man a liar!

The contradictory treated as complimentary

Lest it should be thought that we are not aware of the thesis under which these originally diverse outlooks are blended we shall now turn to examine the claim that what has usually been regarded as contradictory (e.g. Science and Genesis 1) are in reality complementary. Dr. D. C. Spanner in his Falcon book entitled *Creation and Evolution* outlines this approach in a popular plausible form. (The more popularized a view becomes, the more dangerous its influence!). All our thinking is dimensional, he maintains, and the world and life are full of complexities. It therefore follows that “there is always more than one valid viewpoint”. Examples follow, and one will suffice: “When we stand in the garden and look at our house all we can see is the rear elevation. Only two of its three linear dimensions enter the picture. If we wish to see the other dimension we must trespass on our neighbor’s property (has this any parabolic significance?) to get the end-on view, and we find that as the new dimension (of depth) comes into sight so one of the previous ones (that of length) passes out.” (p.15).

How true of all human thinking this is, and how widespread an attitude to Scripture it is. For example, how often it is said that the Bible is not a text book for science, history or geography. But this misses the whole point which is that Scripture is not merely the human dimension on anything it says — it is the divine dimension that not only does not need to be, but cannot be correctively supplemented.

True, Scripture is not a formal text book on every academic discipline, making scholarly enquiry and activity unnecessary, but it is not merely a handbook on faith and morals either. It contains what God wishes us to know and believe about all that is within its pages, such as creation and the history of mankind, and lays down the principles within which any study must be conducted. These principles cannot be disproved and the framework used can never be dispensed with. To depart from this mooring is to depart from the Word of God and to sail on the sea of free thought.

The new evangelicalism

The above note has been sounded in the United States more loudly and plainly. There is, for example, a phrase which was coined at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1948 and it is “the new evangelicalism”. H. J. Ockenga in a press dispatch from Boston, December 1957, is on record as saying: “The evangelical believes

that Christianity is intellectually defensible, and that the Christian cannot be obscurantist in scientific questions pertaining to the creation, the age of man, the universality of the flood, and other debatable biblical questions . . . The new evangelicalism is willing to face the intellectual problems and meet them in the framework of modern learning.”

Against this Harold Lindsell writes in the *Bulletin* of the Evangelical Theological Society (Winter 1965), predicting in outline the consequences of this attitude: “Today there are those who have been numbered among the New Evangelicals, some of whom possess the keenest minds and have acquired the apparatus of scholarship, who have broken, or are in the process of breaking, with the doctrine of an inerrant Scripture . . . One can predict with almost fatalistic certainty that in course of time the moderating evangelicals who deny inerrancy will adopt new positions such as belief in the multiple authorship of Isaiah, the late date of Daniel, the idea that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are myth and saga. And then these critical conclusions will spill over into the New Testament, and when the same principles of higher criticism are applied, this can only lead to a scrapping of the facticity of the resurrection etc. This has ever been the historical movement, and there is nothing to suppose that such a repetitive process will not follow.”

Is this the statement of an alarmist? No! Concessions are being made on these issues. In the *New Bible Dictionary* (I.V.F.) N. H. Ridderbos writes on Isaiah (p.573) “In the opinion of the present writer it is acceptable to hold that chapters 40-66 contain an Isaianic core upon which the prophet’s disciples (men who felt themselves closely bound to him) later worked in the spirit of the original authors. It is, however, impossible for us to assess how much belongs to the Isaianic core, and how much to later elaborations”. So we are at least two removes from Isaiah the son of Amoz!

Again D. A. Hubbard in his article on the Pentateuch (p.963) writes, “As far as the Genesis stories are concerned, Moses may or may not have been the one who compiled them from their written and oral forms.”

In *Israel and the Nations* Prof. F. F. Bruce refers to “Deutero-Isaiah” with approval and does not include Daniel in the section relating to the Babylonian exile. The inference is that Daniel is a second century work, and this view is demanded by a veiled reference on p.123 to the Seleucids and Ptolemies being described in chapter 11.

Two books from the evangelical Anglican wing published by Hodder and Stoughton manifest this. They are *A Christian’s Guide to the Old Testament* by J. B. Taylor, and *The Meaning of Salvation* by Michael Green.

In *A Christian’s Guide to the Old Testament*, by J. B. Taylor, Genesis 1-11 is passed over in silence, and the significance of the Abrahamic covenant, the ritual

and history for “the Christian” is not discussed. This is the direct result of the author’s bondage to the modern historical approach to the Old Testament. There is a defective view of the Canon and inspiration when the books of Esther and Song of Songs are discussed. The Old and New Covenants are divorced, and the RSV alone is used. Yet this book was reviewed in the *Life of Faith* by H. L. Ellison as being elementary, but interesting. No criticism was offered except that it was a little brief.

The Meaning of Salvation, by Michael Green, shows the same defects. There is no mention of creation or fall, and in his two chapters on the Old Testament his concessions to modern scholarship are alarmingly evident. Leviticus is a priestly book written at the time of Deutero-Isaiah — some six centuries after Moses; Daniel is pseudonymous, and comes from the mid-second century and not the 6th century B.C. Here is a complete sell-out not only regarding the Scriptures but their source, namely, propositional revelation. Green says, (p.12) “God’s self-disclosure is seen less in biblical statement than in biblical history, while it cannot be denied that God’s acts in rescuing his people are even more important than the interpretation given to these acts in the pages of the Bible.”

The crowning statement appears in the Tyndale Commentary *Genesis* by Derek Kidner, where with regard to the Mosaic authorship of Genesis, the ascription of the whole law to Moses by the Lord is not regarded as conclusive. And the section on the authorship is closed by a vague attempt to evade the factual authority of the words of the Lord by appealing in a semi-spiritualizing manner to the authority of His Person. The reference is to be found on page 24, and reads: “Whether we are tempted, in our pentateuchal studies, to erect many tabernacles or few, for Moses or a multitude, the answer of heaven is: ‘This is my beloved Son, hear Him.’”

Two alarming consequences follow. First, evangelical scholars are increasingly maintaining what Scripture teaches on the grounds that scholars are coming to accept it. For example Michael Green in the above work writes in a footnote “that John could have spoken of Jesus as the Lamb . . . of God, is no longer inconceivable, Brownlee shows. . . .” (p.94), and again “if we are to believe St. Luke, and scholars are increasingly recognizing the primitive nature of the birth stories, . . .”

Secondly in *Christian View of Science and Scripture* by Bernard Ramm, we read (p.29): “If the differences between the sciences and the Bible were to grow to a very large number and were of the most serious nature, it would be questionable if we could retain faith in Scripture. True we may believe some of the Bible in spite of science, but certainly the situation would change if we believed all of the Bible in spite of science.” That such a possibility could be entertained by an evangelical believer in Scripture is something to be wondered at, but that science or rather scientific theory (science falsely so-called) should be given the position of dictating to Scripture is unforgivable.

Nature and Scripture as equivalent revelations

J. C. Whitcomb lays his finger on the source error. He says in *The Origins of the Solar System*, “This theory maintains that God has given to man two revelations of truth, each of which is fully authoritative in its own realm; the revelation of God in Scripture and the revelation of God in nature . . . The theologian is the God-appointed interpreter of Scripture, and the scientist is the God-appointed interpreter of nature, and each has specialized tools for determining the true meaning of the particular book of revelation which he is called upon to study.”

In a Tyndale Monograph entitled *Genesis I Reconsidered* D. F. Payne, Head of Department of Semitic Studies, Queen’s, Belfast, says: “While stating that God was the Maker of the Universe and all it contains, Genesis 1 shows a total disinterestedness in the mechanics of creation. It certainly gives an answer to the question, ‘Who?’; it does not remotely answer the question ‘How?’ (The divine fiat is strictly speaking not so much the mode as the instrument or agent of the Creator.) As soon as this fact is understood and assimilated, one realizes that it is both proper and sensible to resort to scientists if one wishes to learn anything of the mechanics of creation”.

But this is false, for to speak of the “how” as distinct from the “who” involves us in a concept of process. Creation is act not process. Hebrews 11: 3. A “method of creation” means that creation is reduced to a providential process. Creation means God’s act of producing the truly new — new as to matter, new as to form, or new as to both form and matter. God used dust to create Adam’s body, but the creative act did not involve process. It was an act of the divine will — a “fiat”.

Acts and processes are not complementary as Mackay in *Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe*, and Spanner in *Creation and Evolution* maintain; they are irreconcilably contradictory. Spanner seems to be blissfully persuaded that evolutionary theory may be looked upon as being the origin of the world and possibly even of man, and biblical faith be undamaged as a result. One damaging result is that Spanner can only call Genesis 1 an “incomparable fragment”, and a “prophetic message”. The introduction to Kidner’s Commentary *Genesis* exhibits the same unawareness, namely that to believe in evolution, even of man, and the Scripture’s infallibility and authority is utterly impossible.

Theistic evolution or progressive creation are really “children of evangelical embarrassment” when faced with the onslaught of natural evolution. To hold to Genesis as sober history and evolution as a fact means that we must make room for the vast periods of geologic time in the six-day scheme. This is tantamount to building a halfway house which lacks the solid bedrock of Scripture and the shifting sand of consistent scientific theory for a foundation.

We ought not to be beguiled into confusing or obliterating the fact that the distinction between creation and evolution is the consequence of the

unbridgeable chasm between pure theism and pure chance. Theistic evolution is God interfering in a chain of chance reactions at as many points as modern evangelical theology may determine to be necessary in order to save its academic face (e.g. the actual beginning of inanimate creation and the origin of rational and moral life). These are not biblical exceptions, but from the viewpoint of the consistent evolutionist unwelcome intrusions and pathetic emphases, and from the viewpoint of the consistent biblicist the result of a needless and unwarrantable concession to the thought of man, and defection from the Word of God.

In this relation the review of Morris and Whitcomb's *The Genesis Flood* which appeared in the *International Reformed Bulletin* by Van Fliert, the Professor of Geology at the Free University of Amsterdam, is most revealing. He regards any attempt to revive "biblical catastrophism" as "a good joke". He closes a lengthy, rather pedantic tirade by saying, "There is revelation (but of a different kind than that of the Bible) in the development of this created world, also in the results of human scientific and technical possibilities during the last centuries. It cannot be denied and should not be denied that as a result of this development our world picture has obtained huge dimensions, both in time and space and has become entirely different from those of the authors of the Bible. But this is the world God has wanted us to live in, us and our children."

2. Orthodoxy viewed as restrictive

The second trend which must be noted, which in the light of the foregoing cannot but appear, is that the old terms in which the doctrine of Scripture used to be confessed, have become somewhat cramping for those who engage in the kind of scholarly activity described. To countenance what Scripture precludes and uphold Scripture as authoritative at the same time is a dilemma which will not go away, and which cannot long continue, and in order to maintain these new insights, the inhibiting statements of Scripture's doctrine have to be re-interpreted.

Paul King Jewett in *Christian Life XVII*, March 1956, wrote, "Our all important Protestant conviction of biblical authority needs revitalizing". He listed Scripture translation, biblical authority, and the doctrine of scriptural inspiration as needing fresh life, and this investigation, he felt, would come from helpful biblical criticism.

In *Christianity Today*, November 10th, 1961, a survey of the beliefs of American clergymen showed — 12% Liberal; 14% Neo-Orthodox; 35% Fundamentalist; 39% Conservative. The interesting feature for our purposes is the division between the last two groups; the report admitted that what separated them was the doctrine of total or complete inerrancy to which the Fundamentalists subscribed.

E. J. Carnell in his book *The Case for Orthodox Theology* confesses “The problem of inspiration is still a problem”, and berates intellectual stagnation among evangelicals.

Dr. Carl Henry in *Christianity Today*, April 26th, 1963, is unambiguous in his article upholding verbal inspiration, and yet the two volumes of essays by contemporary evangelical scholars entitled *Revelation and the Bible*, and *Jesus of Nazareth, Saviour and Lord*, to which he writes the opening essay, contain two rather disturbing facts. In the first, E. F. Harrison concludes his essay on “The Phenomena of Scripture” (p. 250) by saying: “Unquestionably the Bible teaches its own inspiration. It is the Book of God. It does not require us to hold inerrancy, though this is a natural corollary of full inspiration. The phenomena which present difficulties are not to be dismissed or underrated. They have driven many sincere believers in the trustworthiness of the Bible as a spiritual guide to hold a modified position on the non-revelation material. Every man must be persuaded in his own mind”.

Then in the latter volume, Paul Althaus is numbered among evangelical scholars! He wrote a book on the theology of Martin Luther, and took exception to Luther’s statement: “Because God says it I will believe that it is so; I will follow the Word and regard my own thoughts and ideas as vain”. To which Althaus, the “evangelical”, replies: “This faith involves the compulsion to believe and to submit humbly to the written word as such; according to this understanding of faith, God commands us to believe the entire content of Scripture as though he himself were the author, and he insists that we abandon reason and the questions and doubts this poses for us . . .”

Infallibility and inerrancy reinterpreted

It was announced some two years ago that evangelical scholars were meeting in the U.S.A. to discuss the doctrine of the Scriptures. No report has been given, but in the recent issue of the *International Reformed Bulletin*, devoted to Scripture, there appears a paper by Prof. H. N. Ridderbos given in Boston in June, 1966. In this article entitled “An Attempt at the Theological definition of Inerrancy, Infallibility and Authority”, Professor Ridderbos suggests that we can dispense with the former epithet “inerrancy” because it could lead to “an inadequate approach to the Scripture, in so far as it concerns itself more with the details than with the whole of Scripture and its purpose”. Inerrancy is surely included in infallibility, he argues.

But though for Prof. Ridderbos the Scripture can be identified with the Word of God, having unconditional authority and being the infallible foundation for faith, it is only this because of its soteriological purpose. One is therefore left suspicious as to whether this is the old doctrine of limited inspiration, countered by B. B. Warfield, that the Scriptures are not infallible on everything they say, but only when they teach what is integral to the saving knowledge of God. This suspicion

is reinforced by the following statement of Ridderbos: "One cannot say everything of the Scripture which one can say of the Word of God, and one cannot identify the Apostles and Prophets with the Holy Spirit. The Word of God endures forever; is perfect. But the Scripture is not eternal, and is also not perfect. Inspiration consists in this: that God speaks His Word through men, that he makes their words the instrument of His Word. As such, the human word stands in the service of God, and participates in the authority and infallibility of the Word of God. But it remains a human, and therefore also an inadequate instrument. If one denies this, or if he ignores it in fact, then he must arrive at the Docetic view of the Scripture, and he takes away the peculiar nature of the Scripture, as also of the authority and infallibility of the Scripture as Word of God".

As regards the relation between inspiration and infallibility (authority), Prof. Ridderbos says it is difficult if not impossible to determine because we cannot make distinctions between parts of the Scripture on the grounds of inspiration and non-inspiration, nor can we give a blanket approval to all the content of Scripture as being divinely revealed. This, says Ridderbos would involve us in accepting as "correct and exact all that the Scripture contains of pronouncements, statements and data".

His conclusion is that "if there is more light cast upon the Scripture than was formerly the case, also by the investigations of historical science, then the church must rejoice in this, though it may compel her at the same time to a readiness to reconsider and re-define her theological definitions in regard to Scripture".

A more popular expression of this thesis is found in a Falcon book by Michael Green entitled *The Authority of Scripture*. On this very matter of authority he writes: "It is to the Scriptures inspired by the Spirit that Christians have habitually turned as the nearest to an ultimate authority that mortal men can find". Is this what the Bible claims for itself? No! However, in the light of the Archbishop of Canterbury's being quoted with approval on this matter, perhaps we ought to be thankful for the retention of some supremacy for Scripture even if it is only the "nearest to the ultimate"! However, he goes further still and says: "We must distinguish between the Bible itself and the teaching of the Bible. It is the latter which is the Word of God that we must obey" (p.32).

This is a pernicious distinction for it enables a person to sit loose to the formal data of Scripture, and yet to maintain its principles and message. Authority and inerrancy are then restricted to the latter. This attitude is also seen at work in an article on "Genesis 1. Science? History? Theology?" by Dr. J. A. Thompson of Melbourne University, which appeared in the T.S.F. *Bulletin*, Spring, 1968. "Whatever view is adopted in regard to the literary nature of the chapters, the definition of the central affirmations should be approximately the same." Michael Green goes on, "The central issue in Genesis 1-3 is one of authority not of *interpretation*. Our interpretation will differ according to whether we regard it as

straightforward history or as a poetic story, couched in non-scientific language, and designed to teach abiding spiritual truth. But we bow to the *authority* of its message if we stay true to the revelation it contains . . . This is the teaching of the passage, and it is clearly quite a different matter from the literary genre employed” (p.29).

Evasion of plain historical statements

This begs the whole question for it is based on a false distinction between Word revealed and Word inscripturated and presumes on the right to view Genesis 1-3 as history or poetry. Does Genesis 1-3 leave this open to us, or does it present itself as sober history, and is not this presentation as authoritative as the message these chapters declare? If it claims to be history, then as the Word of God written it must be believed as history.

Again we read (p.30) that heaven is described in picture language and is not to be interpreted literally. This is deceptive, it is to be interpreted literally, that is, with regard to the symbols used, but not literalistically (see *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* p. 102f). On this basis, Green writes: “Or take the story of Jonah. It *may* be meant as straightforward history, particularly as we know of a Jonah from 2 Kings 14: 25, and as Jesus referred to his sojourn in the belly of the great fish (Matt. 12:40). On the other hand, we may be meant to read it as a parable to teach us the importance of missionary work. Admittedly, it does not say that it is a parable. But then, neither does the story of the Prodigal Son! And I do not suppose that anybody feels that the importance of the teaching of that story depends on whether there was such a son or not. The important thing is not whether we regard the stories of Jonah and the Prodigal as historical or parabolical (on that there may be legitimate differences of opinion) but on whether we bow to the divine authoritativeness of the message they enshrine”.

He closes this section by saying: “Literalism, then, is no essential part of any orthodox doctrine of scripture”. There is only one answer to this, and it is that attempted evasion of the plain historical statements of the Old Testament and the Lord Himself is expressly forbidden by the orthodox doctrine of Scripture.

Green comes to the crucial issue which is involved when he says, “The inerrancy of all minutiae in the Bible account has never been the main concern of upholders of the supreme authority of the Scriptures”. Here James Orr is pitted against the stronger, more consistent line of B. B. Warfield, but it is completely ignored that it was the former who commissioned the latter to write the article on “Inspiration” in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Orr himself wrote in *Revelation and Inspiration* (p.216) that: “The Bible, impartially interpreted and judged, is free from demonstrable error in its statements, and harmonious in its teachings to a degree that of itself creates an irresistible impression of a supernatural factor in its origin”.

Rationalising fundamentalism

It should be said in conclusion that what we have been grieved to note has not passed unnoticed by modern theologians who represent a non-evangelical viewpoint. In *Old and New in Interpretation* (S.C.M. Press) Prof. James Barr of Princeton University writes: "As soon as fundamentalists come into contact with a more sophisticated majority culture, and are surrounded by people aware of modern science and history, they become anxious for some principle which will sustain them, supporting them in their traditional and supposedly Bible-centered view of all truth. The idea of revelation through history may assist them at just this point; its effects *may* be (I do not say *must* be) to rationalize fundamentalism or many of the attitudes which go with it". This is a judicious comment and one which is borne out by the evidence submitted. What Barr tentatively suggests to modern evangelicals has in fact already become the principle on which they operate. "Revelation through history" amounts to a concentration on human encounter with God and a recording of that encounter in human terms, and the result of the application of this principle has already been to "rationalize fundamentalism" in our own day.

What does the future hold? To say the least, it cannot be visualized without some foreboding, on account of the dangerous trends manifest in the evidence we have submitted. W. B. Glover writes of the last century in *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism* (p.139), and with particular reference to Alexander Maclaren. "The example of so great a preacher who was tolerant of higher criticism, and who even entertained the possibility that the story of the fall was mythical could not have been without effect." It *was not* without effect, and the whirlwind that is being reaped following the "sowing of the wind" has not yet blown itself out.

Indeed, there are those who are persuaded that evangelicals will be blown away if they merely try to ride out the storm in their traditional harbors. Dr. Carl Henry writes in *Jesus of Nazareth, Saviour and Lord* (p.9) "If evangelical protestants do not overcome their preoccupation with negative criticism of contemporary theological deviations at the expense of the construction of preferable alternatives to these, they will not be much of a doctrinal force in the decade ahead."

With due respect we must dissent sharply because we believe, and have submitted, that it is as a result of an attempt to construct a "preferable alternative" that we have lost not only "doctrinal force", but are in danger of even losing a doctrinal position. Without wanting in the slightest to shackle further exegetical study of the Bible, and continued attempts to systematize its teaching, we would nevertheless maintain that our only hope in the decade ahead is to *maintain* the position from which these "contemporary theological deviations" have departed, and to do this not as "a preferable alternative", but as the *sine qua non* of saving biblical truth.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*. If you would like to discuss this article in our online community, please visit our [Reformed Perspectives Magazine Forum](#).

Subscribe to Reformed Perspectives Magazine

RPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like RPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [Reformed Perspectives Magazine](#), please select this [link](#).