EVANGELICAL TENSIONS OVER BIBLICAL INSPIRATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:

A CASE STUDY ON THE VIEWS OF PETER ENNS AND JOHN FRAME

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Statement of Original Authorship

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ABSTRACT

Divergent views of inspiration have increasingly characterised the evangelical branch of Christianity since the middle decades of the twentieth century. Specifically, a divergence between inerrantist and non-inerrantist understandings has arisen, sharply dividing evangelical scholarship in its discussions on the doctrine of Scripture. This case study examines two contemporary Reformed theologians who represent significantly divergent views in this field: Peter Enns, a progressive evangelical, and John Frame, an inerrantist evangelical. The study focusses largely, though not exclusively, on one representative work from each author, through which their broad positions are revealed. An evaluation and comparison identifies and closely examines two specific themes as found in each author's work: the incarnational analogy as it may be applied to the doctrine of inspiration and the inductive-deductive approaches to understanding the biblical phenomena. The evaluative-comparative study exposes areas of strength and weakness in both authors' systems, from which areas requiring further study are suggested in some detail. The general purpose of the study is to further scholarly understanding on inspiration, and in particular to endeavour to expose the basic issues that nourish a seemingly intractable and widening scholarly divide within evangelicalism.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of the Problem

With respect at least to the post-Reformation period, the 'Battle for the Bible'[1] has been raging for more than 150 years.[2] While at first the contention was largely between "conservative" and "liberal" scholars, the major battles over the Bible's authority now occur within that conservative branch of Christianity commonly called evangelical.[3] Ironically, the most conservative Christians now appear to be defending their position less against the liberals than against many who likewise identify themselves as evangelical, albeit "*progressive* evangelicals."[4] Although some level of disagreement within the evangelical camp has been evident since at least the 1940s,[5] conservative Christians in the early decades of the twentieth century were mainly concerned with polemics against liberal scholarship. But, in the view of a number of contemporary scholars, liberal theology is itself now in disarray; the old paradigms are touted with less assurance than previously, where they are

[1] The phrase was made famous with Harold Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976). Compare Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 14, who constitutes just one example of a subsequent writer making use of this phrase.

[2] Jason S. Sexton, "How Far Beyond Chicago? Assessing Recent Attempts to Reframe the Inerrancy Debate," *Themelios* 34, no. 1 (April 2009): 28.

[3] The term 'evangelical' resists easy definition; the matter of definition will be discussed in the following chapter, n. 3.

[4] In this paper, 'progressive evangelicals' will refer to evangelicals who do not subscribe to an inerrantist view of Scripture (see also the following chapter, under "The Twentieth Century," sub-section "Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism"). It is nevertheless recognised that the term progressive may also be used to distinguish liberal theologians, in their various hues, from fundamentalists, evangelicals and even those within the conservative confessional tradition (see Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, and Postmodernity: 1950-2005* [Louiseville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006], 6).

[5] Works that provide details of the fracturing of evangelicalism during this period (and beyond) include: Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950–2000* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000); Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 74-116; Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 155-80.

still supported at all.[6] Consequently, it now seems less of an urgent task for evangelicals to direct their energies against the liberal agenda. Indeed, the battle over the Bible has migrated largely to within evangelicalism itself,[7] as is evidenced by the steady stream of publications and resulting controversy in the form of reviews, rejoinders and rebuttals.[8] In particular, the writings of Peter Enns have been suggested as representative of a new wave of dissension from the conservative evangelical viewpoint.[9]

Enns, a graduate of Harvard University and former professor of theology (OT) at Westminster Theological Seminary, gained notoriety with his *Inspiration and Incarnation* (2005).[10] Although written from a professedly Reformed, evangelical perspective, the contents of *Inspiration* and the challenges it put forward were deemed theologically unacceptable by Westminster. In 2008, Enns resigned from his teaching position there. He

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[6] "While [liberalism] had come to dominate the American religious landscape by the mid-20th century, by the end of the century it was dying as it suffered defeats in mainline churches and as American Christianity began placing a renewed emphasis on doctrinal orthodoxy." "Theological Liberalism," http://www.theopedia.com/Theological_liberalism (accessed 20 April 2015). See also A. T. B. McGowan, *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture: Retrieving an Evangelical Heritage* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 105; Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Evangelicals and the Doctrine of Inerrancy," in *The Foundation of Biblical Authority*, ed. James M. Boice (London & Glasgow: Pickering & Inglis, 1979), 147-148; and Stone, *Boundaries*, 1-2. A more upbeat assessment is provided by Gary Dorrien who, while noting that "the certainties of liberal theology faded to nothing as it was overpowered by rising secular, liberationist, and postmodern trends and a huge cultural backlash of conservative politics and religion," liberalism nevertheless "experienced a hidden renaissance in the last decades of the twentieth century" ("American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, Decline, Renewal, Ambiguity," *Crosscurrents* [Winter 2006], 457).

[7] Gregory K. Beale observes that the objections to the Bible's authority voiced by liberal theologians in the past "are being voiced again but this time from within sectors of evangelicalism" (*The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008], 220). Jason B. Hunt is another who claims that the inerrancy issue is central to the inter-evangelical controversy over Scripture. See his "Bavinck and the Princetonians on Scripture: A Difference in Doctrine or Defense?" *JETS* 53, no. 2 (June 2010): 317.

[8] See the following chapter for details.

[9] See, for example, Sexton (n. 2, above). However, it would perhaps be more accurate to suggest that Enns is representative of *one of* the new waves within evangelicalism. For there is, in addition, the very significant challenge from certain "post-conservative" evangelical theologians such as Stanley Grenz, Brian McLaren, Roger Olson, Robert Webber and Nancy Murphy. An enlightening, though critical examination of post-conservatism's ideas, personalities, and impact on evangelicalism may be found in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Holster and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

[10] See n. 1, above. Hereafter, *Inspiration*.

has continued to publish books and blogs regularly, often writing on similar topics in both forums. Indeed, his subsequent major work, which explores biblical concepts of Adam,[11] extends some of the arguments advanced earlier in *Inspiration*.[12]

It would certainly appear to be the case that Enns has articulated afresh, and with striking clarity, some significant and longstanding issues of contention in respect to the doctrine of Scripture. In *Inspiration*, three areas are given particular attention: the relationship between the Old Testament and other ancient Near Eastern literature, "theological diversity" in the Old Testament, and the way in which the New Testament authors handle Old Testament texts.[13] In his treatment of each of these topics, Enns puts forward views that are sometimes contrary to traditional, as well as contemporary conservative, evangelical understandings. It is clear, moreover, that these three items themselves embrace other issues. For example, the first item–the relationship between the Old Testament and other ancient Near Eastern literature–touches on the issue of divine accommodation[14] and of how the Genesis creation story (or stories) is to be understood in the light of current scientific paradigms. Both are points of contention in contemporary discussions on the doctrine of inspiration. Similarly, what Enns refers to as "theological diversity" clearly connects with the issue of errancy as against inerrancy, and the same may be said for both his other issues.[15] In addition, Enns's 'solution' for handling the issues he

[11] Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say About Human Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2012).

[12] Fuller biographical details of Peter Enns will be provided here in Chapter 2, "Peter Enns: Challenges to the Traditional View."

[13] In *The Evolution of Adam* (see n. 11, above) Enns extends his discussion of the first and third of these challenges. What differentiates the later volume from the earlier is that Enns there applies the principles set forth in *Inspiration* to a particular theological topic (the biblical Adam).

[14] Indeed, Beale suggests that "perhaps the overarching theme of Enns's book is his conception of divine accommodation in the process of scriptural inspiration" (*Erosion of Inerrancy*, 27).

[15] In evangelicalism's most agreed-upon and enduring statement on inerrancy, "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" (1978), it is affirmed that the term "inerrancy" relates to "the complete truthfulness of

describes–that is, his appeal to the incarnational analogy–itself raises issues of importance for evangelical theology. Finally, his 'bottom up' approach, by which the phenomena of Scripture are deemed determinative for constructing a doctrine of Scripture, likewise illustrates a contentious issue in theological methodology. These last two issues, in particular, will be analysed and assessed in Chapter 4 ("Comparison and Evaluation") of this thesis.

Thus, while Enns's thesis encompasses a small number of well-defined topics that are largely Old Testament related, it in fact has, at every point, profound implications for the wider doctrine of inspiration and, *ipso facto*, for evangelicalism as a whole. For evangelicals are intensely interested in Scripture: it was the bibliological issue of inerrancy that largely defined early fundamentalism,[16] while the subsequent history of evangelicalism in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries evidences an almost constant (though not exclusive) preoccupation with various aspects of bibliology.[17] What Enns has to say, therefore, is of both interest and significance to evangelicals. Sexton's suggestion that the controversy following Enns's *Inspiration* marks a third wave in the modern battle for the Bible has some merit in setting forth this theologian as representative of one major strand of contemporary

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Scripture" (Article 13). Additionally, the Statement affirms that "the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God" (Article 3), that "the whole of Scripture and all its parts . . . were given by divine inspiration" (Article 6), and that Scripture evinces a "unity and internal consistency" (Article 14). On the face of it, none of these statements is easily reconciled with the major views that Enns presents in *Inspiration and Inerrancy*. The Chicago Statement may be viewed online at http://www.churchcouncil.org/ICCP_org/Documents_ICCP/English/01_Biblical_Inerrancy_A&D.pdf. It is also reproduced in a number of evangelical publications, such as Beale, *Erosion of Inerrancy* (267-79) and Norman L. Geisler and William C. Roach, *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 26-31.

[16] Speaking of the five points of fundamentalism, Harriet A. Harris, a non-evangelical, writes: "Most significantly, the inerrancy of Scripture came first, and the remaining four points were believed to follow logically from that doctrine" ("Fundamentalism (Scripture)" in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 813). From the conservative evangelical perspective, Geisler and Roach clearly equate evangelicalism with adherence to the inerrancy doctrine (see their prologue to *Defending Inerrancy*, 12-14).

[17] Many such instances will be referred to in the following chapter.

progressive evangelical scholarship.[18] Enns's claim that the three issues he raises in *Inspiration* "have not been handled well in evangelical theology"[19] is likewise suggestive of the need to evaluate his proposals in connection with that evangelical theology against which his views were framed.

2. Justification for this Study

A number of reviews of *Inspiration* are already available in the literature.[20] Why, then, the need for this dissertation? Earlier reviews have, quite naturally, tended to offer blow-by-blow refutations or appraisals of the detailed examples Enns discusses in *Inspiration*. The most thorough reviews were offered by Gregory Beale and Donald Carson. Beale's two reviews, between them treating each of Enns's three issues, received responses

[18] Sexton, "How Far Beyond Chicago?" 30. Daniel J. Treier ("Scripture and Hermeneutics," in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012], 88) mentions in particular a renewed controversy over the incarnational analogy following publication of Enns's *Inspiration*. Geisler and Roach similarly cite Enns (as among neo-orthodox or neo-orthodox-influenced theologians) as expressing "the most explicit and intentional use of the new [that is, non-traditional] incarnational model" (*Defending Inerrancy*, 311). Inerrantist Gregory K. Beale used his previously published interactions with Enns as the basis of his book-length defence of inerrancy (his *Erosion of Inerrancy*; see n. 7, above). For a more extensive list of major reviews of *Inspiration*, see n. 20, below.

[19] *Inspiration*, 15.

[20] Major reviews of *Inspiration* have been provided by: (1) G. K. Beale, "Myth, History, and Inspiration: a Review Article of *Inspiration and Incarnation* by Peter Enns," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (2006): 287-312; "Did Jesus and the Apostles Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Revisiting the Debate Seventeen Years Later in the Light of Peter Enns's Book, *Inspiration and Incarnation*," *Themelios* 32, no. 1 (2006): 18-43; "A Surrejoinder to Peter Enns on the Use of the Old Testament in the New," *Themelios* 32, no. 3 (2007): 14-25; and "A Surrejoinder to Peter Enns's Response to G. K. Beale's *JETS* Review Article of His Book, *Inspiration and Incarnation*," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 1 (2007): 16-36. The first four chapters of Beale's *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008) are essentially edited reprints of these articles, including Enns's responses; (2) D. A. Carson, "Three More Books on the Bible: A Critical Review," *Trinity Journal* 27NS (2006), 1-62; (3) Leonard Coppes, "*Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, A Review, *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 17 (2006): 291-300; (4) Norman L. Geisler, "A Review of Peter Enns', *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2005)" (August 2009), http://www.normgeisler.com/articles/Bible/Inspiration-Inerrancy/2009-ReviewOfBookInspirationAndIncarnationPeterEnns.htm (accessed 22 January, 2017); (5) Paul Helm, "*Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament,*" A Review (April 2006), http://www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/inspiration-and-incarnation-evangelicals-and-the-problem-of-the-old-testament.php (accessed 9 February, 2017); (6) Bruce K. Waltke, "Revisiting *Inspiration and Incarnation*," *Westminster Theological Journal* 71 (2009): 83-95; "Interaction With Peter Enns," *Westminster Theological Journal* 71 (2009): 115-28.

from Enns, resulting, essentially, in a published dialogue series. Carson, in a single lengthy review, critiqued Enns's handling of the incarnation analogy, his treatment of history and myth, and the 'problem' of theological diversity. Carson also devoted a good deal of space to Enns's third issue–hermeneutics–an issue that had occupied Carson's own thinking for several decades.

Solid reviews came also from Bruce Waltke and Norman Geisler. Waltke, as an exegetical theologian, confined his efforts to a critique of Enns's treatment of particular texts. Geisler approached the task from his stance as a Christian apologist, charging Enns with displaying a postmodernist subjectivism, with demonstrating an "Openness View" of God, and with a failure to reckon with an error-less God in his presentation of the incarnation.

The present research has, for the most part, a different focus. The major published reviews have critiqued Enns on his specific challenges to conservative evangelical bibliology. But even if one grants the soundness of these refutations, the basic issues that underlie Enns's thesis reach deep and appear to expose weaknesses in the conservative evangelical bibliology. These, it is claimed here, have not been adequately addressed. Exposing these weaknesses (where they might exist), and offering suggestions for new directions, are the primary aims of this thesis.

Furthermore, Beale, Carson, Waltke, and Geisler all write from an inerrantist perspective; Geisler most conspicuously so. There is likely to be some benefit in evaluating Enns from a conservative *non*-inerrancy position, as here. Minus such an evaluation, the major reviews might give the impression that the legitimate, default alternative to Enns's thesis is inerrancy. In addition, the aforementioned reviewers belong to various Protestant branches (mostly Reformed) of Christianity. The present researcher, by contrast, writes as a Seventh-day Adventist: neither Reformed, nor inerrantist, yet accepting Scripture in all its parts as the infallible Word of God.

In line with the purpose here to uncover primary issues outstanding in evangelical bibliology, it seems fitting to undertake this research by way of a comparative study. A comparison would serve to bring areas of dispute into sharper focus; moreover, close attention to contrary views has the potential to expose new paths of investigation that might prove fruitful. In light of the fact that Enns's views seem, in places, to diverge from the traditional evangelical position, there is potential value in comparing and contrasting this writer with a representative inerrantist theologian.

The conservative approach (to any biblical subject) is, by its very nature, one of articulation, defence or apology rather than one of challenge to existing views. Hence, while the choice of a representative progressive theologian has here fallen upon one who has issued challenges to the conservative view, the choice of a representative *conservative* theologian must be done on a different basis. The conservative theologian is more likely to expend considerable effort in enunciating the overall 'orthodox' position and responding to opposing viewpoints. And indeed, in recent decades, a number of contemporary theologians have offered systematic theologies from a conservative perspective.[21]

One of these is contemporary Reformed theologian John Frame who, prior to his systematic theology, penned a significant study on Scripture. Forming the fourth volume of his Theology of Lordship series, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* runs to well over 600

[21] Millard Erickson lists fifteen "evangelical" works that constitute systematic theologies published from 1968 to the time of his own contribution (1983/2013), some (such as those of Grenz and Jenson) less conservative than others (see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013], 50n8). Too recent to appear on Erickson's list are the systematic theologies of John Frame, writing from an inerrantist perspective (2013) and Anthony C. Thistelton (2015). Mention could also be made of Norman R. Gulley's massive three-volume systematic theology (2003/2011/2012). Although Gulley is a Seventh-day Adventist theologian, and might not be considered an evangelical by some, he is nevertheless a member of the Evangelical Theological Society; certainly his treatment of the Word of God in his *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003) evinces a strongly conservative position on this aspect of theology. It is noteworthy that most of these recent systematic theologies were written from an inerrantist perspective, those of Grenz and Jenson being significant exceptions. The systematic theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (1991) should also be mentioned, a fairly rare example of a systematic theology written from a non-evangelical perspective—at least in the English environment.

pages and is likely the most thorough modern systematic outline of the subject.[22] This, his major statement on the topic,[23] postdates Enns's *Inspiration*; indeed, Frame's previously-unpublished review of Enns's 2005 book is included as an appendix in this volume. Like Enns, Frame hails from a Reformed, evangelical background, receiving training at both conservative (Westminster) and non-parochial (Princeton and Yale) institutions. Unlike the much younger Enns, Frame has remained consistently conservative, espousing a solidly orthodox, inerrantist view of the nature of Scripture.[24]

Frame's work is, to date, the most thorough contemporary presentation of an evangelical understanding of Scripture; and it offers an approach to the topic that differs very substantially from that of Enns.[25] Frame may be considered a fitting counterpart by which to compare and contrast the work of Peter Enns vis-à-vis their approach to understanding aspects of the bibliological issue of inspiration.

It is recognised that the two theologians under consideration here are writing from different disciplines within the field of theology; Enns from biblical studies and Frame from systematics. Their likely difference in approach to the topic would suggest caution in comparing them. Yet they are, at least in places, dealing with the same issue: in what sense is

[22] John M. Frame. *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010); hereafter, *Doctrine*.

[23] Frame's 179-page treatment of the doctrine of the Word of God in his *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), must be considered essentially an abbreviation and distillation of the much larger discussion found in *Doctrine*. Frame earlier published a smaller one-volume introduction to systematic theology which includes two chapters that relate to the word of God. They constitute an easily accessible précis of that which is much more fully worked out in *Doctrine.* See his *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2006).

[24] Fuller biographical details of John Frame will be provided here in Chapter 3, "John Frame: An Orthodox Reformed Doctrine of Scripture."

[25] Additionally, Frame claims that his book is "a regression to an older way of treating the doctrines of revelation and Scripture, mainly by reading what Scripture has to say about them," in contrast to "the current trend among evangelicals, which is to find value in the liberal tradition and to discuss these subjects not from Scripture itself, but by surveying historical and contemporary options." This "older way," Frame claims, "is the way in which B. B. Warfield typically dealt with these issues" (*Doctrine*, 332, 333). It is unlikely Frame is comparing his method with that of other *conservative* evangelicals, but with that of the progressives. Certainly these statements highlight the contrast that one might expect to see in the respective approaches of Enns and Frame.

the Bible the Word of God? While each may seek to answer that question through a different set of problems or sub-questions, they must ultimately articulate an understanding that can be assessed vis-à-vis that of the other. It is the case that Enns, while presenting his argument *through* Old Testament and ancient Near East materials, in his *Inspiration* brings these materials *to* the systematic theology table. In the concluding chapter ("The Big Picture") Enns commences with the question, "What is the Bible, and what are we supposed to do with it?"[26] In the same chapter he suggests that his purpose in writing this book was to offer a "*synthesis*…for people who have very good and difficult questions about the Bible but who may not have a theological paradigm from which to work through some of these questions."[27] This "big picture" orientation and the desire to provide a synthesis, a theological paradigm, on what is ultimately the topic of biblical inspiration connects Enns's work with systematic theology. This provides a basis for comparing aspects of his work with the concerns of a systematic theologian like John Frame. Furthermore, although both theologians bring certain presuppositions to their task (presuppositions which, to some degree, may be a function of their respective fields) it is these very presuppositions that form part of the research question here: namely, the inductive methodology adopted by Enns and the deductive approach preferred by Frame.[28] Those presuppositional methodologies have a direct bearing on how one approaches the broad topic of biblical inspiration.

This study is, then, a Hegelian approach: a Seventh-day Adventist comparing and evaluating two theologians from opposite ends of the evangelical spectrum and suggesting a *via media* for some significant issues in evangelical bibliology.

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[26] *Inspiration*, 167.

[27] Ibid., 168 (emphasis supplied).

[28] The inductive/deductive approaches of Enns and Frame will be closely examined in Chapter Four, "Comparison and Evaluation." The terms will be explained at that point.

3. Purpose of the Study

The following research will offer a case study of two opposing positions in contemporary evangelical understandings of inspiration. The views of progressive evangelical theologian Peter Enns as contained in his *Inspiration* will be compared and contrasted with the views of conservative evangelical theologian John Frame in his *Doctrine of the Word of God*.[29] The purpose of this study is to: (1) delineate the respective views of these two theologians on biblical inspiration; (2) understand the basic presuppositions that drive them towards their respective positions; (3) expose their most significant differences; (4) offer an assessment of the strengths of their respective bibliologies, with particular focus on aspects relating to the incarnational analogy and the inductive-deductive methodologies; and, emerging from these analyses, (5) suggest paths that future research might fruitfully explore, following alternative approaches to the doctrine of Scripture that neither theologian has articulated.

4. Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The research here will focus on selected aspects of inspiration. Particular reference will be made to the three specific areas of contention explored by Peter Enns in his 2005 publication *Inspiration.* This research does not have as its aim to respond, point by point, to every detail of these challenges as presented by Enns. Doing so would constitute little more than an extended book review. Rather, the aim is to expose the essence of his position and his underlying presuppositions. In particular, this research will seek to evaluate Enns's major premise: that the incarnational analogy is a hermeneutical key that can bring clarity to the

[29] While attention will be focused primarily on these two works, it will at times be necessary to refer to other of their works for clarification, elucidation, or expansion of their views.

biblical doctrine of inspiration, specifically to the three challenges that he raises in *Inspiration*.

Neither will it be possible to present every aspect of Frame's theology of Scripture. Yet enough detail will be presented here to grasp his overall approach to bibliology, along with specific details that relate especially to the aspect of inspiration. As with Enns, this research will seek to understand any presuppositions that undergird Frame's general approach to Scripture. The incarnational analogy, so important in Enns's schema, must also be considered in connection with Frame's work. Does he regard it as a valid analogy for understanding the doctrine of inspiration? If so, in what ways is his application of the analogy similar to or different from Enns? If Frame finds little use for the analogy, why is this so?

Finally, this research is interested in exploring how any discovered weaknesses in either theologian's schema might be suggestive of areas for further research. Significant attention will be given to this objective.

5. Significance of the Study

Three considerations suggest significance for the study offered here. First, current controversies demand a contemporary critique. It is, at the time of writing, nearly three decades since Peter van Bemmelen presented his dissertation comparing the bibliological views of two late-nineteenth century theologians. His subjects, Warfield and Sanday, were writing more than one hundred years ago. Yet the issues that exercised *their* minds appear still to be alive and vigorously debated by today's evangelical theologians. As Frame pithily observes, "the question of a divinely authored text will not go away."[30] If the assessments of Geisler and Roach, and of Sexton[31]–that the traditional understanding of the doctrine of

[30] *Doctrine*, 343.

[31] For Geisler and Roach, see n. 15, above; for Sexton, see n. 2, above.

Scripture is currently experiencing new challenges–are correct, it is perhaps timely for a further comparative study to be offered with the purpose of elucidating the major controverted theological positions in the current evangelical context. This research will, however, differ from that of van Bemmelen in significant ways. First, it will treat *contemporary* theologians, and will thus speak more directly to current incarnations of these longstanding issues. Second, this research will focus on a limited number of stated topics that do not entirely overlap with those teased out by van Bemmelen in his research. Third, where the debate in Warfield's day was between evangelicals and liberals, today it is intra-evangelical. This does not necessarily alter the content of the issues involved, but it does suggest a different perspective by which the respective presuppositions may be compared. Finally, it is intended here not only to assess the relative strengths of the two theologians being studied, but to offer definite alternatives to the theological ideas discovered in their respective works.

A second significance of the present research lies in the fact that scholarly challenges to fundamental Christian beliefs have the potential to disturb students who become exposed to such ideas. This is not necessarily harmful to the students, since exploring new ideas and facing challenges to their beliefs is part and parcel of seminary-level training. But it is also important that young students be supported with the availability of material that can help them to assess divergent views. Some seminarians have noted the distress of students who struggle with these issues, unsure of where to turn for guidance.[32] However difficult the task may be, it behoves Christian scholars to make every effort to maximise understanding of theological issues and minimise dissension that has the potential to create disunity and, for some, disenchantment with Christian beliefs.

[32] Enns himself suggests that for some, "reading the Bible has already become a serious theological problem–perhaps even a crisis." He mentions, in addition, "significant cognitive dissonance for Christians who love and want to hold on to their Bibles, but who also feel the weight of certain kinds of evidence" (*Inspiration*, 15).

Finally, the suggestion that conservative evangelicalism simply has not yet grappled seriously with certain of the implications of more recent scholarly research is a serious charge. If true, it implies on the part of conservative evangelicals a failure either to understand fully the issues or to accord them due acknowledgment. A close examination of these challenges (and, importantly, the presuppositions behind them), along with similar scrutiny of a contemporary defence of the traditional understanding, has the potential to gauge the accuracy of this charge.

6. Presuppositions of the Researcher

If Cornelius Van Til is correct, the acquisition of knowledge can only proceed with certain basic presuppositions, whether acknowledged or not.[33] Here, the researcher proceeds from what might be characterised as a conservative Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Scripture. The broad features of this position are formulated in the denomination's official statement of fundamental beliefs.[34] It is a non-inerrantist platform that accepts Scripture as being given by divine inspiration and which is "the infallible revelation of [God's] will."[35] The Seventh-day Adventist official position on Scripture does not employ the terms "inerrant" or "inerrancy."

7. Methodology

With the foregoing in mind, what remains is to outline the basic structure of the remainder of this paper and the contents of the chapters.

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[33] In McGowan, *Divine Authenticity of Scripture*, 32.

[34] "28 Fundamental Beliefs," http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html. The first of these fundamental beliefs relates to "Holy Scriptures."

[35] From #1 of "28 Fundamental Beliefs." See previous footnote.

Chapter One, “Historical Background,” will briefly survey theological interest in the doctrine of Scripture from the time of the Reformation to the present. The aim is to provide a broad understanding of the influences that have shaped evangelical thinking on the subject, particularly the forces that have set the stage for the 150-year battle for the Bible. It is with this setting in mind that the works of Enns and Frame will be examined in the two subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Two, “Peter Enns: Challenges to the Traditional View,” the essential aim is to provide a detailed outline of the contents of his *Inspiration*. Prior to that, however, after presenting significant biographical details of the author, the chapter will briefly survey his earlier published books and articles with the purpose of determining the degree of connection between *Inspiration* and those earlier works. Can it be seen, for instance, that Enns’s 2005 book was an outgrowth of his earlier thinking, or does it represent a significant shift in his understanding of Scripture?

Chapter Three, “John Frame: An Orthodox Reformed Doctrine of Scripture,” will similarly commence with biographical details in order to understand the significant influences that have likely shaped his thinking. The remainder of the chapter will focus almost exclusively on his *Doctrine of the Word of God.* Although Frame has written many other books and articles, it will be shown that in this volume the completeness of his thought on the nature of Scripture is presented. The book is too large for a detailed sketch; but it will nevertheless be presented in sufficient detail to allow an appreciation of his driving concerns, of his expressed presuppositions, of the unique unifying structure with which he undergirds his theology of Scripture, and of those details that are particularly relevant to the focus of this research.

Chapter Four, “Comparison and Evaluation,” is the heart of this research. Here, the overarching concerns of each author will be laid bare. The chapter will focus on two elements

common to both authors. Those two elements are the incarnational analogy as it relates to a doctrine of Scripture and the basic method–in the one case inductive, in the other deductive–that each brings to their theological task. Focusing on these two elements will both allow a critical analysis of their respective systems and how they hold together as a unified structure and will provide a springboard from which to propose alternative ways of expressing the doctrine of inspiration. The proposals offered at the conclusion of this chapter will serve also as suggestions for further research.

A final chapter, the "Conclusion," will summarise the findings of Chapters One through Four and suggest an underlying philosophy by which to approach the doctrine of inspiration.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

Theological discussions take place within a historical context, a broad grasp of which is conducive to a proper understanding of the relevant theological issues. In order to rightly understand and evaluate the views of Peter Enns and John Frame, it will be necessary to consider the theological milieu in which these two evangelical theologians are writing.[1] That milieu is, narrowly, the late twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Yet, in respect to the doctrine of Scripture, the current theological debates are but a continuation of a 'battle for the Bible' that has characterised the conservative branch of Christianity since the late 1800s. The broad sweep of the so-called 'Bible wars' from that time forward must therefore be considered. At the same time, the conflict has its roots even earlier in Protestant history, mandating some reference to foundational concepts discoverable in that period.[2]

The two authors whose works are the focus of this dissertation both write from an evangelical perspective.[3] Consequently, it is the *evangelical* historical background

[1] Their particular confessional backgrounds need also to be appreciated. Consideration of those details will be deferred to the two following chapters dealing specifically, and in turn, with these two theologians.

[2] Space constraints allow only the most cursory consideration of the Reformation period in order that proper attention may be accorded the modern context in which Enns and Frame are writing. Footnote references will serve as pointers to the literature that expounds more fully upon the Reformation material.

[3] The term 'evangelical', with its cognates, has been variously applied and understood over the last one hundred years or more. A historical survey well beyond the space limitations of this paper would be necessary to reveal the development and application of the term. Helpful perspectives can be found in D. G. Hart, "No Creed but the Bible, No Authority without the Church: American Evangelicals and the Errors of Inerrancy," in *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture: Historical, Biblical,*

that is the primary focus here. Specifically, this will involve consideration of: the roots of the evangelical movement within the broader Protestant movement; the external influences that engendered a distinct conservative form of Protestantism existing alongside an increasingly liberal mainstream; the internecine evangelical discussions of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as they related to the doctrine of the word of God; and the new directions for theology being suggested for the postmodern context.

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and Theoretical Perspectives, ed. Carlos R. Bovell (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011); Naselli and Hansen (eds.), *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, Counterpoints series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011); Craig D. Allert, *A High View of Scripture? The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 17-22; James C. Livingston and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Twentieth Century*, vol. 2 of *Modern Christian Thought*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 387-88; Donald W. Dayton, Gary Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). For a British perspective, see David W. Bebbington's acclaimed study, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993). Bebbington famously suggests four common characteristics of evangelicalism: conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism. "Together," Bebbington writes, "they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism" (3). Bebbington's descriptors have been widely accepted, though not without qualifications by some: see, for example, Brian Harris, "Beyond Bebbington: The Quest for Evangelical Identity in a Postmodern Era," *Churchman* 122, no. 3 (2008). Inasmuch as the focus of this dissertation is with matters of bibliology, Bebbington's common characteristic of "biblicism" should be acknowledged here. Evangelicals generally share a "high view" of Scripture. Thus Jack Rogers states simply that "evangelicals believe that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God" ("The Church Doctrine of Biblical Authority," in *The Authoritative Word: Essays on The Nature of Scripture*, ed. Donald K. McKim [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983], 197). That this "high view" is variously understood, however, is starkly demonstrated in the two evangelical theologians who are the subject of the present study.

2. The Wider Background

2.1 The Protestant Reformation

Modern evangelicalism is, by and large, a Protestant phenomenon,[4] with roots traceable back to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.[5] Although, as Gary Dorrien points out, "historically and theologically, conservative Protestants have no more right to an exclusive claim over the term *evangelical* than to the word *Christian*" (since other forms of Christianity may also affirm the *euangelion*–the message of good news), the reformers claimed to be recovering the gospel message of salvation by faith through grace which, "[in the judgment of Luther and Calvin] was obscured, if not fatally subverted, by the paganizing tendencies of the Catholic Church of their time."[6]

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[4] Stanley J. Grenz claims that most evangelical historiography begins with the Reformation (*Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006], 25). The 'Protestantism' of evangelicalism is clearly evident in the title of the 1994 document "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (the full text of the document is reproduced in *First Things* [May 1994]: 15-22). The document was prepared by fifteen evangelical and Catholic scholars in the United States and endorsed by twenty-five leaders from both sides. An extended discussion of the impact of this ecumenical statement, and especially of evangelical reaction to it, may be found in Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950-2000* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 221-49. The text of the document is reproduced in *First Things* (May 1994): 15-22. It is acknowledged that Roman Catholic theologians, too, have done work on matters relating to biblical revelation and inspiration. Prominent among these are Raymond E. Brown, Avery Dulles, and Bruce Vawter. Notwithstanding the 1994 ecumenical document "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," Protestant evangelical theology appears to proceed with minimal dialogue between Catholic and evangelical theologians.

[5] Marcus J. Borg, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously but Not Literally* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 7. So also D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1; James C. Livingston and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, who note that the term, in the sixteenth century, referred to both "Catholic writers and reformers who called for a return to the beliefs and practices of New Testament Christianity–in contrast to those developments in the medieval Church that were considered unbiblical" (*The Twentieth Century*, 387). More recently, historians have tended to speak of "reformations," in recognition of the existence of the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Reformation, the Radical Reformation, and the Second Reformation (confessionalisation) (Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 4th ed. [Malden, MD: Blackwell Publishing, 2007], 44).

[6] Gary Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* (Louiseville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 4.

Of the several points of dispute between Catholics and Protestants in the early years of the Reformation, the inspiration of Scripture was not one, since "both groups firmly believed the historic position of the church."[7] This point has been widely acknowledged.[8]

What is less agreed upon is whether the mainline reformers held to a view of Scripture essentially identical to the inerrantist view that today characterises fundamentalists and many evangelicals. Lutheran scholar Sverre Aalen's claim that "broadly speaking, Luther 'presupposed' the inspiration of Scripture" may provoke little disagreement.[9] But scholars are divided as to what, exactly, Luther meant when he asserted that Scripture "has never erred," that even the phrasing of the biblical words are divine, and similar statements.[10]

In the judgment of the present writer, three closely-related points may be noted. First, the historical context in which Luther was writing differed greatly from that of modern theologians: the latter write within a context of modernity (and

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[7] Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 64.

[8] So Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, "The Inspiration of Scripture in the English Reformers Illuminated by John Calvin," *Westminster Theological Journal* 23, no. 2 (May 1961): 129; James I. Packer, "'Sola Scriptura' in History and Today," in *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium on the Trustworthiness of Scripture*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis, MS: Bethany Fellowship, 1974), 44; Donald Guthrie, "Biblical Authority and New Testament Scholarship," *Vox Evangelica* 16 (1986): 7-8; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Inerrancy of Scripture," [n.d.], http://www.theologynetwork.org/biblical-studies/getting-stuck-in/the-inerrancy-of-scripture.htm [accessed 23 January, 2016]); George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), ix. Paul J. Acthemeier suggests that the nature of the Bible occupied the minds of the earliest Christian thinkers but came to be a central issue at the time of the Reformation (*The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1980], 22).

[9] Sverre Aalen, "Bible, Inspiration of," in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), 1:236.

[10] These, and others statements from Luther's pen, are cited in John Warwick Montgomery, "Lessons from Luther on the Inerrancy of Holy Writ," in Montgomery, 67-68. (References to the standard Weimarer collection are, respectively: WA. 34I, 347; WA. 40 III, 254; WA. 7, 315).

postmodernity), while Luther's concerns were more with the relative authority–and, in this sense, errancy or inerrancy–of Scripture versus popes and councils. Given such disparity of context, great caution is needed in applying his statements to a modern setting. Secondly, and conversely, it is methodologically unacceptable to demand of Luther's utterances a modern precision on a doctrinal point that, in his time, was not contested. Roman Catholic scholar James T. Burtchaell, not himself an inerrantist, asserts that "for centuries this doctrine [that the Bible must be guaranteed free from any error] lay dormant, as doctrines will: accepted by all, pondered by few." Both the Reformers and Counter-Reformers, he insists, "persevered in receiving the Bible as a compendium of inerrant oracles dictated by the Spirit."[11] Thirdly, it is not self-evident from these bare statements that Luther was addressing the precise issue of inerrancy in respect to the closest details of geography, history, chronology, science, etc.–the very points of dispute among some modern theologians. It is *possible* that he was, but any degree of certainty on this point would require an extensive analysis of his writings that lies beyond the scope of this paper.

These observations are self-evidently applicable to others of the magisterial reformers such as Calvin, Zwingli, and Melanchthon. Whatever differences they exhibited in their understanding of biblical doctrines, they were alike in their commitment to the authority of Scripture and wrote from within the same historical context. There seems no reason not to apply the same considerations also to the radical reformers.[12]

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[11] James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C., *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration since 1810: A Review and Critique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 1, 2.

[12] There is not space here to discuss the intricacies of the radical Reformation movement vis-à-vis the mainline Reformation. Helpful perspectives can be found in Michael G. Baylor's introduction to *The*

2.2 The Confessional Period

Ironically, however, while the radical reformers in general held to a high view of Scripture, the extremists among them, due to their tendency to exalt the Spirit over the Scriptures, in effect brought a challenge to the mainstream understanding of Scripture. For, as van Bemmelen points out, "though formally professing the authority of Scripture, they in reality made human reason the criterion by which the statements of Scripture were to be judged."[13] This challenge, along with the emergence of Enlightenment ideas[14] and the Protestant-Catholic dispute over authority,[15] constituted a part of the environment in which the Lutheran Reformed dogmaticians in the seventeenth century undertook to enunciate a detailed doctrine of Scripture.[16] Their

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Radical Reformation, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, trans. from the German and ed. Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), especially xii-xv; Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation*, The Penguin History of the Church, ed. Owen Chadwick (London: Penguin, 1964), 188-210; W. L. Emmerson, *The Reformation and the Advent Movement* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983); Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought, Vol.3: From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1975), 77-92; J.D. Weaver, "Anabaptism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 54-57; George Hunston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadephia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962); D. F. Wright, "Reformation, Protestant," in Elwell, 995-97.

[13] Peter Maarten van Bemmelen, *Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 27; Gonzalez (*History of Christian Thought*, 78) similarly makes the distinction "between those whose final authority was the Bible, and others whose claims were based on the Spirit or on reason."

[14] See next section, below.

[15] Philip Schaff suggests that the Protestant scholastics had "substituted an infallible Bible for an infallible papacy." Thus, if the *Bible* were not infallible, there existed no viable alternative to the papacy's claim to be the only absolute authority. See Schaff's *The Creeds of Christendom, With a History and Critical Notes, Vol. 1: The History of the Creeds*, 6th ed. (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1919), sec. 61, 480, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1.ix.ii.xi.html (accessed 21 October, 2015).

[16] John D. Woodbridge suggests that "in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the doctrine [of "complete biblical infallibility"] was not being created: [rather,] a large number of Europeans experienced the trauma of trying to uphold it in the face of criticism sweeping in from many different directions" (*Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982], 99).

formulations were significant in that they established, at least in part, a Protestant "orthodoxy." In their work, by one assessment, "dogmatic claims were safeguarded through an emphasis on the divine inspiration of Scripture, a concern that eventually led Lutheran theologians (even as their Reformed counterparts[17]) to formulate the notion of the verbally inerrant Bible, a pivotal point of orthodox theology."[18]

2.3 The Enlightenment

By some assessments, the Enlightenment marks the beginning of the modern period, to which it bequeathed "three key clusters of ideas": Reason, Nature, and Progress.[19] Most relevant to the discussion here is the first of these, for it was through the elevation of reason, in particular, that the previously-unquestioned authority of Scripture was challenged.[20] Pelikan notes that the application of Enlightenment principles to Christian tradition and doctrines pitted man's autonomous thinking against church authority and, ultimately, the authority of Scripture itself.[21]

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[17] Van Bemmelen states that "the evidence seems to suggest that there was no significant difference in regard to the doctrine of inspiration between Lutheran and Reformed scholars." *Issues*, 29n1.

[18] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Lutheranism" (n.d.), under "Confessionalization and Orthodoxy," http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/352073/Lutheranism (accessed May 30, 2015). See also Aalen, "Bible, Inspiration of," 237; Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?" *Concordia Theological Monthly* 36, no. 8 (September 1965): 577-79.

[19] Colin Brown, "Enlightenment, The," in Elwell, 377.

[20] Theological liberalism's general philosophical debt to the eighteenth century Enlightenment has been thoroughly and frequently recounted. See, for example, the first chapter of McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled: The Failed Strategy of Modern Evangelicalism* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2004), 3-13; Packer, "Contemporary Views of Revelation," in Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1958), 91-93; *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "theological liberalism" (n.d.), http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/590847/theological-liberalism (accessed May 30, 2015). Helpful background information may also be found in the introductory chapter of Gary Dorrien's *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion: 1805-1900* (Louiseville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

[21] *Church and Dogma*, 60.

It was not that previous generations had eschewed rational approaches, either in the study of nature or of theology. Among the Greek philosophers, the proper use of reason was regarded with favour;[22] similarly, reason had a prominent function in the methodologies of the medieval scholastics.[23] What, then, was different with the Enlightenment? An important clue may be gleaned from Dorrien:

> Before the modern period, all Christian theologies were constructed within a house of authority. All premodern Christian theologies made claims to authority-based orthodoxy. Even the mystical and mythopoetic theologies produced by premodern Christianity took for granted the view of scripture as an infallible revelation and the view of theology as an explication of propositional revelation.[24]

Enlightenment rationalism, applied to religion, radically adjusted the ground-rules for doing theology:[25] it became possible–indeed, for many, desirable–to approach all of theology independent of the strictures of religious authority, including the authority of the Bible.

It was, of course, inevitable that the desire for "a superior, more rational view of everything"[26] would impact religious thought, for in the Enlightenment ethos there remained no *a priori* reason to exempt religion from the "everything." Pierard adds that the "rejection of religious belief based on authority alone" became one of the

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[22] G. R. Habermas, "Rationalism," in Elwell, 985.

[23] T. J. German ("Scholasticism," in Elwell, 1066) explains that "Aristotle's views helped give scholasticism a systematic structure, but Platonism also played a large part in the enterprise." Thomas Aquinas, in particular, "attempted to merge Greek rationalism and Christian revelation in the thirteenth century;" see Wikipedia, "Rationalism," under "History" sec. "After Aristotle,"6http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationalism#Plato_.28427.E2.80.93347_BCE.29 (accessed 30 April, 2016).

[24] Dorrien, *Liberal Theology*, xv.

[25] So profound and lasting was its impact that, according to Bernard Ramm, "the Enlightenment was a shattering experience for orthodox theology from which it has never fully recovered" (*After Fundamentalism: The Future of Evangelical Theology* [New York: Harper & Row, 1983], vii).

[26] Brown, "Enlightenment," in Elwell, 379.

hallmarks of theological liberalism.[27] The ethos of intellectual autonomy was further evidenced in Darwinism, which gained increasing acceptance from the middle of the 1800s. Darwin's evolutionary schema ultimately obviated the need for a creator God. Additionally, liberalism adopted a stance of anti-supernaturalism along with critical approaches to biblical study.[28] As a result of these influences, "theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries questioned and then abandoned the view of inspiration that the church had held from its inception."[29]

By the mid-nineteenth century, then, the forces of history had brought to Christianity three philosophical adjustments: the autonomy of reason, the non-necessity of believing in a creator God to account for the natural world, and the application of the concept of evolution to the history of religious thought. Individually, and taken together, they inevitably resulted in a reassessment of Christianity's orthodox beliefs. The movement that embraced these new visions of Christianity came to be known as theological liberalism.

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[27] Pierard, "Liberalism, Theological," in Elwell, 683.

[28] Speaking to the matter of critical biblical studies, Donald Guthrie ("Biblical Authority," 8) explains: "Rationalism in biblical studies proceeded on the assumption that the Bible must be treated on the same level as any other literary work. It was regarded *a priori* as a purely human book. Any notion of divine authority was *ipso facto* excluded."

[29] Allison, *Historical Theology*, 74; see also 69. The treatment offered here of the Enlightenment and its impact upon theology has been necessarily brief. It is recognised, however, that the major events and movements of history are seldom, if ever, the result of single causes, but rather of a complex interweaving of social, political, cultural, and intellectual factors. In the case of the Enlightenment, Daniel J. Treier has pointed out that humanist learning, political upheaval, religious rivalries, revolts and wars, and Protestant fragmentation all played a part, such that "violence and skepticism set the context for Enlightenment rejection of churchly claims to divine revelation, in favor of appeals to universal reason" (Treier, "Scripture and Hermeneutics," in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012], 68).

2.4 Theological Liberalism

Of the many theologians who helped shaped liberalism–Schleiermacher, Baur, Ritschl, Harnack, Bultmann, and others–space constraints dictate that only the first can be given attention here. While the passage of time has seen the modification or even abandonment of the outstanding views of these theologians, the influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher has remained. His foundational importance for the liberal mindset, both past and present, is neatly, if incompletely, expressed by Packer: "The positive principle that gives liberalism its basic identity is Schleiermacher's view of religion as a sense of God that is caught rather than taught and can be put into words in more than one way."[30] Schleiermacher's redefinition of the essence of religion thus made religion "radically subjective." Significantly, his "revision of Christian theology had its most lasting impact on the issue of authority. No external authority, whether it be Scripture, church, or historic creedal statement, takes precedence over the immediate experience of believers."[31]

In such a system, an infallible Bible was thus unnecessary, since it was through man's feelings, affections, and emotions that God was to be known.[32] And while the basic experiences recorded in Scripture were the same in any age, they were

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[30] James I. Packer, "Encountering Present-Day Views of Scripture," in *The Foundation of Biblical Authority*, ed. James Montgomery Boice (London & Glasgow: Pickering & Inglis, 1979), 67. For more on this aspect of Schleiermacher's legacy, see W. A. Hoffecker, "Schleiermacher," in Elwell, 1064-65; Rolland McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled*, 7 Iain Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, 11-12. The essence of Schleiermacher's concept of Christianity is found in his *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. MacIntosh and J. S. Stewart (London/New York: T & T Clark, 1999). His understanding of the place of Scripture is found especially on pp. 586-611.

[31] Ibid., 1065. See also Guthrie: "It was basic to [Schleiermacher's] position that no external authority could dictate in religious matters and hence the divine authority of the Bible was ruled out" ("Biblical Authority," 9).

[32] McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled*, 7.

"expressed in various concepts and frameworks at different periods of history." The work of theologians was to "search out the abiding experiences that underlie biblical categories and express them in ways appropriate to the present times."[33]

In summary, the Enlightenment had directly challenged the prevailing biblical worldview: the mind replaced the Church and its Bible as the primary source of authority. The irony is that, in its reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, liberal theology's refocusing on the heart and experience, and its seeming appreciation of the numinous, served similarly (if unwittingly) to undermine confidence in the sacred documents of the Christian church.

Thus, by the late nineteenth century, theological liberalism had become the nemesis of an increasingly embattled Christian orthodoxy whose major defenders were to be the founders of modern evangelicalism and fundamentalism.[34] Significantly, although liberalism began in Europe–Germany in particular–the counter-charge from

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[33] D. K. McKim, "Revelation and Scripture," in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, ed. William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 761.

[34] Of the two terms, evangelicalism is the older, with roots traceable back at least to the eighteenth century (see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*). The term 'fundamentalist' and its cognate 'fundamentalism' came into currency around 1920, following the publication of *The Fundamentals* several years earlier. See outlines in Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958), 28-29, and Joel A. Carpenter, "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929–1942," *Church History* (March 1, 1980), 64. While fundamentalism is an "elusive" concept (and evangelicalism "almost impossibly elusive"), that the former is a subset of the latter is evident from Dorrien's term "fundamentalist evangelicalism" (*Remaking of Evangelical Theology*, 9, 3). The fundamentalist movement derives, he states, "from the modernist-fundamentalist conflict of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries." As to its primary characteristic, "the most appropriate definition of *fundamentalism* still focuses on its commitment to a list of literally interpreted 'fundamental' doctrines that are founded on a doctrine of precise biblical inerrancy" (3, 10). From a *theological* point of view Dorrien is probably correct. Nevertheless, his definition misses the point that fundamentalism is also driven by an *ecclesiological* motif–that of separation from apostates. "Separatism remains the central distinguishing feature of self-proclaimed fundamentalists in the United States," notes Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3. In his contribution to *Four Views on The Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, fundamentalist Kevin T. Bauder devotes almost his entire chapter to establishing this one point; see "Fundamentalism," in Naselli and Hansen (eds.), *Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, 19-49. James I. Packer in his classic *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958), 24-29, argues the case for using the two terms fundamentalism and evangelicalism synonymously.

orthodoxy came largely from American academia.[35] The reason for this is likely that "by the end of the [nineteenth] century it was difficult to find any institution of advanced theological training in the British Isles where the doctrine of the plenary inspiration and infallibility of the Bible was maintained"; in North America, such institutions could still be found.[36] Few, if any, would disagree with Allison that "by far the most formidable defence of the historic Protestant view on this issue came from the nineteenth-century American scholar Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield."[37]

3. The Nineteenth Century–The 'First Wave'

3.1 B. B. Warfield

The assaults upon traditional theology had advanced in distinct phases: first came the exaltation of reason in the Enlightenment "Age of Reason," then theological liberalism. By the time Warfield's voice was being heard in defence of biblical orthodoxy in the late 1800s, a third challenge–Darwinism–had made its presence felt in the church. Indeed, Darwinism had by this time been embraced by a large number of Christian universities and seminaries in America and, especially, in Europe. Warfield's own Princeton University–even Warfield himself–had evinced an openness to the

[35] Although there was a reaction from both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, it is only the latter, as evangelicals, that are relevant to this paper. See n. 4, above.

[36] Van Bemmelen, *Issues*, 106.

[37] Allison, *Historical Theology*, 75. Similarly, Warfield "was far and away the ablest mind defending Calvinist orthodoxy in the United States in the 1880s and 1890s." David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1999), 16.

scientific theories of Charles Darwin, while nevertheless evidencing a wariness of the atheistic philosophy that tended to accompany those theories.[38]

In his important recent compendium of Warfield's corpus, Fred Zaspel writes: "It is not overstating the case at all to say that the doctrine and character of Scripture were *the* issue of Warfield's day. This was Warfield's own assessment, and it was the assessment of his archrival, Charles Briggs."[39] Warfield produced nearly one hundred articles and book reviews on the subjects of inspiration and the biblical canon.[40] Although it is not necessary here to attempt a detailed overview of Warfield's bibliology and its many nuances, two points need to be noted. First, Warfield's basic view–the plenary inspiration of the Bible, and inerrancy being an unavoidable corollary of the authority of Scripture and of the nature of its divine Author–remains influential among fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals today.[41] Additionally, the thrust of his exegesis of key biblical texts is still lauded as among the finest available. His assertion "What the Bible says, God says," and his speaking of a

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[38] For background to the academic environment at Princeton (University and Seminary) in which context then-current evolutionary views were discussed, see Peter J. Wallace, "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield and the Darwinian Controversy" (n.d.), http://www.peterwallace.org/warf.htm (accessed 30 May, 2015). See also discussions in Fred G. Zaspel, "B. B. Warfield on Creation and Evolution," *Themelios* 35, no 2 (2010): 198-211; Jay Richards, "The Evolving Debate Over Origins," *Touchstone* 14, no. 8 (October 2001), http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=14-08-044-b [accessed 6 November, 2015].

[39] Fred G. Zaspel, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 111.

[40] Zaspel, *Theology*, 114. Van Bemmelen (*Issues*, 199-202) devotes some space to outlining periods in Warfield's publishing career, and their essential characteristics.

[41] This is commonly acknowledged. Examples may be found in William J. Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 15; Carlos R. Bovell, preface to *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture: Historical, Biblical, and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Carlos R. Bovell (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), xvii; Craig Allert, "Issues in Forming a Doctrine of Inspiration," in Bovell, 273. It may also be noted that, according to Paul D. Feinberg, Warfield was only one among a number of Princeton theologians who could be cited as "modern formulators and defenders of the full inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture" (Paul. D. Feinberg, "Bible, Inerrancy and Infallibility of," in Elwell, 158).

"concursive" action of the Spirit to describe the dynamic relationship between God and men to produce the Scriptures have become an established part of evangelical vocabulary.[42]

A second point to note is that Warfield insisted that the inerrancy position he affirmed was the understanding of the Christian church from the beginning, and that liberal views were a departure from that understanding.[43] It was a point that Warfield went to great lengths to demonstrate by an analysis of Christian literature through the ages.[44] It is, of course, a vital point. While the veracity of it cannot *establish* the correctness of the theology–this, as Warfield was careful to maintain, must be established on *biblical* grounds–it nevertheless would constitute a powerful testimony in favour of his thesis.[45]

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[42] Warfield's dictum, "What Scripture says, God says" was repeated in a number of locations in his writings and in different forms. The concept was based upon Gal 3:8 and Rom 9:17, and is introduced in his "'It Says:' 'Scripture Says:' 'God Says,'" *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 10 (1899): 472-510. Warfield claims to have introduced the term "concursive operation" (see his *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig [London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1951], 94). The term is so defined: "By 'concursive operation' may be meant that form of revelation illustrated in an inspired psalm or epistle or history, in which no human activity–not even the control of the will–is superseded, but the Holy Spirit works in, with and through them all in such a manner as to communicate to the product qualities distinctly superhuman" (*Ibid*., 83).

[43] He states that "this church-doctrine of inspiration was the Bible doctrine before it was the church-doctrine." Cited in Allison, *Historical Theology*, 75.

[44] Zaspel, *Theology*, 119; see also 119-125. While not denying Warfield's emphasis on the historic witness of the church, van Bemmelen points out that "more effort was exerted by Warfield to demonstrate that the so-called high doctrine of inspiration was the authentic doctrine of the Westminster Confession than that it was the general doctrine of the Church in all ages." *Issues*, 205.

[45] Not surprisingly, in light of this, Warfield's contention was attacked from the start–by Warfield's contemporary Charles Briggs (see Zaspel, *Theology*, 122) and, in the latter part of the twentieth century, by Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim in *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979). A number of inerrantist authors have faulted Rogers and McKim in their use of the historical evidence; many are in agreement that John Woodbridge's book-length response (*Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal*) demonstrates the weaknesses of their proposal. See, for example, D. A. Carson, "Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Grenz's *Renewing the Center*," in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 44; A. B. Caneday, "Is Theological Truth Functional or Propositional? Postconservatism's Use of Language Games and Speech-Act Theory," in Erickson, Helseth and Taylor,

3.2 The Battle for the Bible since Warfield

Warfield lived and wrote at a time when the various forces of modernism (the Enlightenment, theological liberalism, and Darwinism) coalesced; the modern battle for the Bible must be seen to have begun at this time. For Sexton, that beginning is to be seen especially in the Warfield-Briggs debates, climaxing in 1893.[46] This period, he suggests, constitutes the first of three "waves" in the inerrancy wars. The second wave, he contends, was connected with the publication of Harold Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible* in 1976 and the third with Peter Enns's *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* in 2005.[47]

Not all would agree with Sexton's schema; yet few would argue with the importance of the events he has selected. For example, Geisler and Roach similarly note "major eruptions" in the modern controversy. As with Sexton, they locate the first two waves at the time of Warfield and Lindsell, respectively, but suggest "a major disruption" at the dawn of the twenty-first century, with the discontent over Clark Pinnock's limited inerrancy views, and a further "new challenge" from the younger

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152n69; Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology*, 77; John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 4 of *A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburgh, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 166; Millard J. Erickson, "Biblical Inerrancy: The Last Twenty-Five Years," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 4 (December 1982): 388.

[46] Jason S. Sexton, "How Far Beyond Chicago? Assessing Recent Attempts to Reframe the Inerrancy Debate," *Themelios* 34, no. 1 (April 2009): 28. Jason B. Hunt states that it was Briggs who was "the first to offer prominent opposition" to the Princetonian formulation of inerrancy. See his "Bavinck and the Princetonians on Scripture: A Difference in Doctrine or Defense?" *JETS* 53, no. 2 (June 2010): 317. Todd Mangum, "The Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy, the Inerrancy of Scripture, and the Development of American Dispensationalism," in Bovell, 50, concurs that "it was in their opposition to Briggs that Hodge and Warfield first developed their mature defense of biblical inerrancy."

[47] Sexton, Ibid., 28-30. Publication details of Lindsell and Enns are: Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976); for publication details for Enns, see n. 1 (above).

evangelicals "in the morning of the twenty-first century."[48] J. Merrick (with Stephen M. Garrett) observed in 2013 that "all indications are that evangelicalism is once more poised to 'battle over the Bible' and focus afresh on the doctrine of inerrancy." Significantly, in a footnoted comment they offer Enns's *Inspiration* as one of three examples of the renewed debate within evangelicalism.[49] Robert Price notes tersely: "Evangelical Christians have never stopped waging a 'battle for the Bible' against some enemy or other." The identity of the "villain," he claims, simply changes with the times.[50] Price is not at all sympathetic to evangelicalism, and his tone may here be a little derisive, but one may readily grant the basic point that, periodic flare-ups notwithstanding, evangelical interest in the question of biblical authority is more constant than it is sporadic. Two facts seem beyond dispute: the first is that the scholarly discussions over inerrancy, now spanning some 150 years, show little sign of abating; the second is that the arena of the debate has moved, becoming intra-evangelical more than evangelical versus liberal.

4. The Twentieth Century–The 'Second Wave'

4.1 Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism

By the end of the nineteenth century, conservative biblical scholarship was pitted against a theological liberalism that, while originating in Germany, was finding

[48] Norman L. Geisler and William C. Roach, *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 12-13.

[49] See their introduction to *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett, Counterpoints series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 9-10, 10n3.

[50] Robert M. Price, *Inerrant the Wind: The Evangelical Crisis of Biblical Authority* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2009), 13.

increasing acceptance in the mainline Protestant denominations of the United States. Universities and colleges that had once been the intellectual arm of the denominations from which they had sprung yielded ground to the liberal cause, eventually, in many cases, losing altogether their right to be known as *Christian* institutions.[51] At the same time, as Dorrien writes,

> a new kind of evangelicalism was emerging barely in time to fight off the spiritual subversion of a well-positioned enemy. … [There was a] factional struggle to seize control over denominational mission boards, seminaries, and administrative offices that were being lost to modernist forces.[52]

Equally important, if not more so, was the *theological* answer to the liberal challenge. In Dorrien's view, "the answer that emerged from what came to be called the fundamentalist movement was that biblical authority cannot be secured at all apart from the affirmation of biblical inerrancy."[53]

The terms 'fundamentalist' and 'evangelical' are somewhat elusive, and have already been referred to here.[54] In this paper, interest lies chiefly in the *theological* issue of biblical inspiration as debated by evangelical scholars. In this context, essentially there are on the one hand evangelicals (fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist) who insist on upholding the dogma of biblical inerrancy. Others, who

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[51] The story of the "revolution" that occurred within American higher education in the latter part of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth is told by George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) and by Jon H. Roberts and James Turner in *The Sacred & the Secular University* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[52] Dorrien, *Remaking of Evangelical Theology*, 14.

[53] Ibid., 6. Dorrien's implication that the emphasis on inerrancy was a reaction to the liberal challenge is essentially echoed by Christopher M. Hays: the "modern debate about inerrancy is (among other things) a *reaction to* the rise of historical criticism" ("Towards a Faithful Criticism," in *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism*, ed. Christopher M. Hays and Christopher B. Ansberry [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013], 2).

[54] See nn. 3, 34, above.

likewise consider themselves to be within the evangelical camp, argue against a strictly inerrantist view while nevertheless affirming, in varying degrees, that the Bible is the authoritative word of God. These two basic distinctions will suffice here, and evangelicals will thus be referred to as either conservative (inerrantist) evangelicals or progressive evangelicals.[55]

The inerrancy 'doctrine' was effectively accorded near-official status as a tenet of conservative Christianity in 1910, following the publication of *The Fundamentals.*[56] A number of the essays in *The Fundamentals* were devoted to a defence of Scripture against German higher criticism.[57] The fundamentalists desired separation not from liberal doctrine only but also from liberal organisations, resulting in a number of new fundamentalist institutions.[58] It is hard to avoid the conclusion that there was, during this period, a self-conscious awareness that Protestant Christianity was polarising on the basis of liberal and conservative ideologies, with little of any consequence occupying a middle ground.

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[55] See also nn. 60, 81, below.

[56] This was the case in the United States. Elsewhere, the conflict over inerrancy has not so defined evangelicalism. See Treier, "Scripture and Hermeneutics," 87. *The Fundamentals* was a series of twelve volumes published between 1910 and 1915, and addressed a variety of topics of interest and concern to evangelicals in the context of the liberal threat. A brief, but useful, introduction to fundamentalism (and to other contemporary theologies) may be found in David L. Smith, *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology: Tracing Trends and Discerning Directions in Today's Theological Landscape* (Grand Rapids, MI: BridgePoint Books, 1998), 11-26.

[57] C. T. McIntire, "Fundamentals, The," in Elwell, 475. See also Todd Mangum, "The Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy, the Inerrancy of Scripture, and the Development of American Dispensationalism," in Bovell, 69; and David L. Smith, *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology: Tracing Trends and Discerning Directions in Today's Theological Landscape* (Grand Rapids, MI: BridgePoint Books, 1998), 11-26. Jacob Shatzer provides brief analyses of several of the essays that constituted "The Fundamentals" in "Theological Interpretation of Scripture and Evangelicals: An Apology for *The Fundamentals*," *Pro Ecclesia* XXII, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 94-102.

[58] Such institutions included Westminster Theological Seminary, the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), Bob Jones College (now University), and several others. See McCune, Ibid., 23-26.

Yet the sharp divide between the conservative and liberal branches of Christianity did not last. Whatever clear-cut distinctions may have existed between evangelicalism (or fundamentalism) and liberalism in the early part of the twentieth century had all but vanished by the century's end. The poles were still discernible; but there were now, so to speak, temperate zones occupied by neo-evangelicals, progressive evangelicals, post-conservatives, post-liberals and neo-orthodox.[59] Of most relevance to the present study is the fact that the inerrancy issue–indeed, the whole broader issue of biblical authority–was no longer one being fought on the liberal-conservative front: it was an internecine evangelical battle that began mid-century and has continued unabated to the present.[60] In order, however, to trace the tenor of these disputes, it is necessary to be aware of the genesis and existence of neo-evangelicalism vis-à-vis fundamentalism.

4.2 Neo-evangelicalism

"The rise of new evangelicalism," writes Rolland McCune, "is traceable through a series of intricately interwoven issues and events reflecting dissatisfaction

[59] McCune, somewhat flippantly, perhaps, makes mention of "new, young, social, feminist, right, left, [and] middle-of-the-road" evangelicals (*Promise Unfulfilled*, 189). There is no need to identify exact positions; one is simply confronted with the obvious fact that evangelicalism, by the 1970s (the context for McCune's statement), was sporting a coat of many colours.

[60] For this reason, as already stated, this paper will sometimes speak of 'conservative evangelicals,' by which is meant (neo-)evangelical inerrantists, and sometimes of 'progressive evangelicals,' indicating evangelicals who have rejected strict inerrancy. In so doing, it is recognised that some evangelicals whose understanding of bibliology represent a significant departure from a strictly orthodox inerrancy, have preferred, for whatever reason, to be regarded still as inerrantists. Of such are, most famously, Clark Pinnock and Robert Gundry. Where reference is made to 'progressive evangelicals' (or simply 'progressives'), a clear distinction is to be maintained vis-à-vis those who belong to the classical 'liberal' school. The former generally continue to identify themselves with the evangelical movement and churches.

with fundamentalism."[61] Especially important to the new evangelical[62] cause was Fuller Theological Seminary. Since its founding in 1947, it had become "the symbol as well as the center of the new evangelical program to recover theological orthodoxy."[63] The "new evangelical program"–and Fuller's raison d'être, to a great extent–was about reforming fundamentalism "from its separatist and sometimes anti-intellectual stance of the 1920-1940 era."[64] The early faculty shared a tradition in the conservative wing of Presbyterianism, "one of the rare parts of fundamentalism where high-level intellectual life had been greatly valued." That made it certain that they would be keen "to revive the evangelical intellectual enterprise."[65] However unintended, this very endeavour would before long result in challenges not only to fundamentalist theology

[61] McCune, 29. McCune suggests four issues that were "crucial" in this development: first, the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 1942 (29, 33); second, the perception on the part of the new evangelicals that fundamentalism, in its reaction against modernism, had failed to discharge its humanitarian obligations to that society (34-36); third, the perception that fundamentalists were lacking in scholarship and intellectual training (37); fourth, the issue of evangelist Billy Graham's counter-fundamentalist policy of working in cooperation with groups that fundamentalists considered apostate (45).

[62] The term "new evangelical" was, according to most commentators, coined by Harold J. Ockenga in 1947 (the year of the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary). See R. V. Pierard and W. A. Elwell, "Evangelicalism," in Elwell, 408; Stanley Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); and many others. Iain Murray (*Evangelicalism Divided*, 26) notes the opinion of some that the term may have been coined rather by Carl Henry.

[63] Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition (*New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 17, summarising the assessment of leading historian of fundamentalism George Marsden. Marsden himself (*Reforming Fundamentalism*, 9) characterises Fuller as the "intellectual center" of new evangelicalism, while Iain Murray (*Evangelicalism Divided*, 20) affirms that "the 'new evangelicalism' was the name first employed to describe what was proposed at Fuller." It should also be noted that along with Fuller, the founding (in the United States) of the National Association of Evangelicals (1942) and *Christianity Today* (1956) "were significant expressions of the 'new evangelicalism'." See Pierard and Elwell, "Evangelicalism," 408.

[64] Wikipedia, "Fuller Theological Seminary," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuller_Theological_Seminary (accessed 6 June, 2015). Note that Marsden (*Reforming Fundamentalism*, xii) refers to the founders of Fuller "as part of a party of 'reforming fundamentalists.'" The low intellectual status of fundamentalism is rightly recognised in the above Wikipedia citation as particularly applicable to the period between 1920 and 1940.

[65] McCune, 31.

but also contribute to the destruction of the unity of the early Fuller 'program' and of neo-evangelicalism itself.[66]

Separatism and militant dispensationalism excepted, the new evangelicals at Fuller were not (at first) of a mind to abandon traditional fundamentalist theology, least of all the inerrancy doctrine.[67] Yet it was impossible to 'do theology' in an academic environment, especially if hoping to win recognition by the wider scholarly community, without at least interacting with the all-conquering liberal and neo-orthodox theologians. Subsequent history would demonstrate the risks that such interaction held for evangelical orthodoxy.

In his 2001 presidential address to the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), Darrell Bock sought to absolve evangelicals of the accusation that the goal of their theological efforts was to gain academic acceptance. "If we wanted that kind of acceptance," he stated, "then the easiest thing to do would be to deny inerrancy."[68] His disclaimer may or may not be fitting for evangelicals in the twenty-first century; the evidence suggests it could *not* be applied, without serious qualification, to the first generation of neo-evangelicals.[69]

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[66] The indispensable, book-length account of the Fuller story is that of George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (see n. 8, above). A personal perspective on Fuller's gradual shift from an institution that required staff to assent to the inerrancy doctrine to one that did not is found in David A. Hubbard, "Evangelicals and Biblical Scholarship, 1945–1992: An Anecdotal Commentary," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 3 (1993): 5-7. Hubbard, president of Fuller from 1963-1993, presided over the 1971 revision of Fuller's doctrinal statement.

[67] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 170-71.

[68] Darrell L. Bock, "The Purpose-Driven ETS: Where Should We Go? A Look at Jesus Studies and Other Example Cases," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 1 (March 2002): 21.

[69] Gerald R. McDermott claims it is still a danger in the twenty-first century: "evangelical theologians need to beware the peculiarly academic sort of ambition that seeks acceptance and recognition by our liberal colleagues. We want their approval, and so we are tempted to write and teach what will be more consistent with the academy's moral and theological sensibilities" ("Evangelical Theology at the Crossroads," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 38, no. 2 [2014]: 250-64. 264).

In the first place, two of the founding institutions of neo-evangelicalism–the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and Fuller–had their genesis in the idea that the anti-intellectualism of fundamentalism needed to be addressed.[70] A second reason why Bock's disavowal of contemporary neo-evangelicalism's conscious attempts to gain academic approval cannot easily be applied to early neo-evangelicals may be found in the case of Edward J. Carnell. Carnell was, from 1954-1959, Fuller's president.[71] While all of Fuller's founders "accepted Machen's dictum that the crisis of modern Christianity was, above all, a crisis of intellectual credibility and respect,"[72] it was Carnell, most of all, who rose to the challenge of putting evangelicalism on the theological map. He joined the Seminary with a "burning desire to make fundamentalism intellectually and culturally respectable."[73] Yet his literary efforts failed to win the acceptance of the mainstream theologians that he desired.[74] Indeed, when his later literary efforts provoked questions among some conservatives about his orthodoxy, colleagues Wilbur Smith and Charles Woodbridge "repeatedly complained that he was too eager to gain respect from modernists."[75]

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[70] See the discussions in Dorrien, *Remaking of Evangelical Theology*, 49, 56, and McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled*, 42.

[71] Carnell's role as reluctant president of Fuller Seminary is explored by Marsden (*Reforming Fundamentalism*, 172-92). A full-length biography is Rudolph Nelson's *The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind: The Case of Edward Carnell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[72] Dorrien, *Remaking*, 49.

[73] Ibid., 56. Carnell was the "young apologist of the new Evangelicalism in the immediate post-World War II years" (Livingston and Fiorenza, *The Twentieth Century*, 390).

[74] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 180-81; Seth Dowland ("The Cost of Prestige: E. J. Carnell's Quest for Intellectual Orthodoxy," in Bovell, 73) describes the reaction from various quarters: "Fundamentalists blasted him. Evangelicals found his work defending biblical inspiration weak. And liberals thought his position on Scripture laughably naive."

[75] Dowland, 84.

Carnell's literary endeavours serve to show how difficult it was for evangelicals to achieve scholarly recognition beyond the borders of fundamentalism while at the same time maintaining the "linchpin doctrine of fundamentalist and conservative orthodoxy–verbal inerrancy."[76] Of the several teachings in Carnell's *Orthodox Theology* that fundamentalists found disturbing, those relating to inspiration were especially unwelcome. He was, quite simply, ambiguous[77]–on a subject that, to the fundamentalists, was as perspicuous as it was vital. The difficulty for Carnell was typical of that faced by other evangelical scholars: it was that the *phenomena* of Scripture–the actual biblical data–could not be taken seriously without risking the charge of heresy from the far right. If Carnell had made that very point in *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* his concerns were reiterated by his presidential successor at Fuller, Dan Hubbard, who wrote of the "basic fear [of evangelical biblical scholars] that their findings, as they deal with the text of Scripture, will conflict with the popular understanding of what inerrancy entails."[78]

4.3 Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible* and the Aftermath

By the early 1960s, a shake-up in personnel at Fuller left inerrantists such as Harold Lindsell as either in the minority or without jobs.[79] Yet it was not until 1976 that Lindsell's now-infamous *Battle for the Bible* brought the details of these

[76] McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled*, 60.

[77] Ibid. Regarding Carnell's ambiguity on this subject, see also D. G. Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 141.

[78] Cited in Robert K. Johnston, *Evangelicals at an Impasse: Biblical Authority in Practice* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979), 17.

[79] Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*, 142.

internecine disputes to a wide public readership.[80] By that time, it had long been clear that not only could a distinction be drawn between fundamentalists and non-fundamentalist evangelicals (that is, the neo-evangelicals) but also between conservative and more 'progressive' neo-evangelicals.[81] If Lindsell's publication could, on that basis, be deemed somewhat anachronistic, it nevertheless made waves in the evangelical world. In the first place, as already noted, it made very public the ills affecting evangelicalism. It also may have stirred up resentment among the then-current Fuller staff. The result, in Marsden's words, was "full-scale civil war."[82]

In light of these factors, Sexton's designation of Lindsell's *Battle for the Bible* as the "second wave" in the inerrancy wars sits well enough with the facts.[83] Hart goes so far as to suggest that "in fact, Lindsell's book may have started a controversy where none had existed, except at Fuller Seminary a decade earlier."[84] Further, "between 1976 and 1986, the publishers of evangelical books kept themselves busy with a series of titles that debated the merits of Lindsell's case for inerrancy."[85] Lindsell himself

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[80] For publication details, see n. 47, above. It was, however, only Chapter 6, "The Strange Case of Fuller Theological Seminary," that dealt exclusively with the situation at Fuller. D. G. Hart refers to the 'battle for the Bible' as a "showdown [that] had … been building for over a decade" (5) and notes that problems with the inerrancy doctrine "were nowhere more evident than at Fuller Seminary" ("No Creed but the Bible, No Authority Without the Church: American Evangelicals and the Errors of Inerrancy," in Bovell, 7).

[81] The latter distinction arose largely, if not entirely, out of disagreement over the inerrancy issue. Robert K. Johnston suggests Fuller Theological Seminary as being at the center of the "new direction" that progressive evangelicalism was taking ("Orthodoxy and Heresy: A Problem for Modern Evangelicalism," *Evangelical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 [1997]: 13, 24).

[82] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 279.

[83] So Geisler and Roach (cf. n. 48, above); Roger E. Olson, "Tensions in Evangelical Theology," *Dialog*, 42, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 80.

[84] Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*, 145. Hart repeated this suggestion several years later in "No Creed," in Bovell, 8.

[85] Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*, 145. Donald W. Dayton, writing soon after its publication, noted "the rush of theologians and church leaders to dissociate themselves from *The Battle for the Bible*"

insisted that the inerrancy issue was, in fact, the demarcation between evangelicals and non-evangelicals.[86] He evidently felt vindicated in this judgment when Oxford scholar James Barr likewise subsequently pronounced inerrancy the doctrinal linchpin of evangelicalism.[87] Yet in so saying, Barr chose to downplay crucial distinctions between evangelicalism and fundamentalism. For Barr, whatever distinctions could legitimately be drawn between evangelicals and fundamentalists in certain of their beliefs and practices, the overriding consideration was that the two groups shared a similar mindset regarding Scripture's authority. On this point, they were as one. That assessment is now hopelessly inadequate in light of the wide spectrum of current evangelical views of Scripture. Nevertheless, Barr's judgment serves to highlight an important point: the study of evangelical views of inspiration cannot be undertaken independent of a consideration of the history of evangelicalism itself and of how the term evangelical (and those terms closely connected with it) is to be understood.

It *is* to be admitted that the "common clarion call" in at least the four major streams that constitute evangelicalism is–historically, at least–"Back to the Bible."[88] In this, Barr's point, just noted, was not without some validity. For conservative neo-evangelicalism, despite its separation from fundamentalism in the early 1940s, *for a*

("'The Battle for the Bible': Renewing the Inerrancy Debate," *Christian Century* [November 10, 1976], 980). Indeed, even as committed an inerrantist as Carl Henry took issue with Lindsell's "somewhat reactionary elevation of inerrancy as the superbadge of evangelical orthodoxy" ("Reaction and Realignment," *Christianity Today* 20 (July 2, 1976), 30.

[86] Roger E. Olson, "When Did Evangelicals Start to Go Wrong (Right)?" the Patheos blog, entry posted May 11, 2011, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2011/05/when-did-evangelicalism-start-to-go-wrong-right/ (accessed 16 March, 2016).

[87] Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*, 144.

[88] Stone, *Boundaries of American Evangelicalism*, 28. Stone lists, in a table, "subcultural evangelical groups" (*Boundaries*, 36), and, citing James Davison Hunter, discusses more fully four traditions (Baptist, Holiness-Pentecostal, Anabaptist, Reformed-Confessional) that constitute the diversity of evangelicalism (26-28).

time remained essentially fundamentalist in its approach to Scripture. Thus the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), founded in 1949, has a bare two-sentence doctrinal statement: the second sentence pertains to a belief in the Trinity, the first to the Scriptures, viz. "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs."[89] Yet even in this conservative body, unanimity of thought on evangelicalism's "linchpin" doctrine has been difficult to maintain. Millard Erickson's comment that "an examination of the contents of JETS and BETS[90] reveals that inerrancy and related topics have received a great deal of attention"[91] is in itself revealing. Inerrancy is hardly a settled issue even among evangelicals. It is, of course, a point that Lindsell was making.[92]

Despite the criticism that his book attracted from within the evangelical community, Lindsell has hardly been alone in bewailing the wavering on what was once deemed an identifying mark of evangelicalism. Almost without question, the most significant and enduring conservative evangelical response to progressive challenges to the traditional stance on inerrancy has been "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" (CSBI), a 19-point affirmation signed by over 300 evangelical leaders at an

[89] See the ETS website, section "ETS Constitution," http://www.etsjets.org/about/constitution#A3.

[90] Respectively, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* and *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, the predecessor of JETS (the name change occurring in 1969). Erickson's comment refers to the 25 years prior to 1982, and therefore extend back to the earliest issues of BETS, which was founded in 1958.

[91] Erickson, "Biblical Inerrancy," 387.

[92] Complicating the issue, as Vanhoozer notes, is the fact that "there are various definitions [of inerrancy], and caricatures, in circulation" ("Augustinian Inerrancy: Literary Meaning, Literal Truth, and Literate Interpretation in the Economy of Biblical Discourse," in Merrick and Garrett (eds.), *Biblical Inerrancy*, 204).

international summit held in Chicago in 1978.[93] After more than three decades it remains the standard reference by which this doctrine is understood by inerrantists.[94]

Despite the existence of such a document, considerable equivocation on the inerrancy doctrine continues to plague neo-evangelicalism, even within the ranks of the ETS itself.[95] Beale has claimed that in 1978 (the time of the signing of the Chicago Statement) there was "a broad consensus among American evangelical scholars about the inerrancy of Scripture" but that, at the time of writing (2008), "there [was] afoot an attempt to redefine what is 'an evangelical view of scriptural authority.'"[96] Beale focused especially on challenges raised by Peter Enns, since these are, he noted, "somewhat typical of the kind of debates that are emerging in the beginning of this century within the so-called evangelical scholarly community."[97]

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[93] The complete statement has been reproduced in full many times. It may be viewed online at http://www.churchcouncil.org/ICCP_org/Documents_ICCP/English/01_Biblical_Inerrancy_A&D.pdf.

[94] J. Daniel Hays, "Inerrancy and Evangelical Old Testament Scholarship: Challenges and the Way Forward," in Bovell, 111.

[95] Geisler and Roach's *Defending Inerrancy* is a written response to perceived evangelical equivocation over the inerrancy doctrine. Several years earlier, inerrantist Gregory K. Beale had already signalled the crisis within the evangelical camp. See his *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008). Beale is scarcely alone in perceiving a "crisis." However, where he locates the crisis particularly in the idea of biblical inerrancy, Vanhoozer discerns a wider "present crisis in biblical interpretation." See his "What is Theological Interpretation of the Bible?" in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 21. (The *Dictionary* will hereafter be referenced as *DTIB*.) See also further discussion on Vanhoozer and "theological interpretation of the Bible," below. William J. Abraham–more recently and less delicately–has simply proclaimed biblical studies a "mess;" see his foreword to *Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, by Bovell (ed.), xiv.

[96] Beale, 19. Beale was, perhaps, retrospectively optimistic in claiming a "broad consensus" for even as far back as 1978. The murmurings among the Fuller staff vis-à-vis possible errors in the Bible began in the 1950s, coming to a head at committee discussions on a day in December 1962 that came to be known as "Black Saturday." Marsden (*Reforming Fundamentalism*, 208-215) provides an account of the proceedings.

[97] Beale, 23. The first four chapters of Beale's book are essentially edited reprints of the debates between him and Enns published in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (2006): 287-312; *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 1 (2007): 16-36; *Themelios* 32, no. 1 (2006): 18-43; and *Themelios* 32, no. 3 (2007): 14-25.

Beale's sentiments here recall Sexton's suggestion that Enns's 2005 *Inspiration*, and the controversy surrounding it, signalled a "third wave" in the modern inerrancy debate.[98] As with Lindsell, Enns's publication did not introduce new concepts, nor did it alter the course of the debate: it simply re-ignited existing tensions. Indeed, Sexton suggests that Enns's 2005 work (or, perhaps, the subsequent argumentation that ensued) "threw a rock at the hornet's nest."[99] Nor should it be thought that the issues raised by Enns comprise the totality of the questions facing evangelicals in their doctrine of Scripture. Well before the dawn of the twenty-first century, evangelical minds had become much exercised over the issue of hermeneutics, over post-conservative challenges to traditional approaches to understanding truth and reality, and over the more general issue of biblical authority. It is of note that Enns appears not to identify himself specifically with any of these lines of challenge; nor, except when pressed, does he directly present himself as in opposition to inerrancy.[100] Not in spite of, but *because* of this, it is necessary to consider briefly twenty-first century evangelical discussions relating to bibliology in order that the issues raised by

[98] Sexton, "How Far Beyond Chicago?" 30.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Neither in his 2005 *Inspiration* nor his 2012 *Evolution of Adam* does Enns directly tackle the question of inerrancy. Indeed, one may discern a studied attempt to avoid even using the term. Note the following, which is almost certainly an indirect reference to inerrancy: "For recent generations of evangelicals, this tendency ["a defensive approach to the evidence"] has its roots in certain developments that occurred in biblical scholarship during the nineteenth century and made headlines in the so-called modernist/fundamentalist controversies around the turn of the twentieth century … The effects of these developments can still be felt today. Much of the evangelical theological landscape of the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries was dominated by a 'battle for the Bible'" (*Inspiration*, 14). In 2014, however, Enns contributed a chapter to Merrick and Garrett's *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* (see n. 49, above). The nature of this publication demanded a clear depiction of each author's views. Enns's chapter is entitled, "Inerrancy, However Defined, Does Not Describe What the Bible Does" (83-116). The idea suggested by the title is expressed repeatedly throughout the chapter.

Enns and the conservative reaction, especially as exemplified by Frame, may be rightly apprehended.

5. The Twenty-first Century–The 'Third Wave'

Addressing the issue of recent developments in the doctrine of Scripture, inerrantist Donald Carson wrote in 1986 that "the most difficult period [of history] to comprehend, in some ways, is the most recent. We do not yet have the advantage of distance, and the twists in the debate are many and intricate."[101] Nevertheless, he discerns a number of trends, some of which are suggestive of a context in which Enns has propounded his views.[102] For instance, Enns's approach to understanding Scripture is inductive and concerned with the phenomena of the Bible rather than with its propositional statements regarding inspiration. The question of literary genre is crucial to his view on the way the NT writers cited the OT via their so-called 'interpreted Bible' and use of *pesher* techniques.[103] Furthermore, his particular use of the incarnational analogy seems, on the surface, to be incompatible with the evangelicals'

[101] D. A. Carson, "Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture," in *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 56. In *Biblical Interpretation: Past & Present* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), Gerald Bray, too, notes that "the current scene is particularly complicated; never before has there been so much effort devoted to the study of the Bible, with so many different ends in view. Modern scholarship is less united in its aims now than it has ever been" (584).

[102] Carson ("Recent Developments," 55-110) tackles eight trends: revisionist historiography, focus on the phenomena of the Bible, debates over various terms, uncritical attitudes towards literary and other tools, sensitivity to 'propositions' and 'literary genre', the new hermeneutic and problems of epistemology, discounting the concursive theory, and the diminishing authority of Scripture in the churches. For a divergent analysis of current trends in evangelicalism, see McDermott in "Evangelical Theology at the Crossroads": 250-64.

[103] Enns, *Inspiration*, 122, 128-32, 152.

concursive theory as described by Carson.[104] The first and third of these three issues will be addressed when submitting Enns's work to closer analysis in Chapter Four ("Comparison and Evaluation"), below. However, one very important trend indicated by Carson–that connected with hermeneutics–may be expanded upon at this point, since its significance to current biblical studies can hardly be overestimated.[105]

5.1 Hermeneutics and Postmodernism

Hermeneutics is the theory of [biblical] interpretation,[106] or *how* to determine what the Bible means.[107] The definitions are terse, perhaps, but unpacking them has proved challenging. Not surprisingly, then, hermeneutics had by the end of the twentieth century become an independent theological discipline. Its recent development seems to have gone hand in hand with developments in interpretation theory, so that hermeneutics now interconnects with such subject areas as philosophy,

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[104] Carson, "Recent Developments," 105. Carson's definition reads, "God in his sovereignty so superintended the freely composed human writings we call the Scriptures that the result was nothing less than God's words and, therefore, entirely truthful."

[105] Writing at the end of his tenure as Fuller's president, and just seven years after Carson's piece, David Hubbard singled out "the polymorphous topic of hermeneutics" as one that would require special attention in the years ahead. "The lack of consensus on how to read the biblical texts …" he suggested, "is nudging us toward anarchy." See his "Evangelicals and Biblical Scholarship," 15-16.

[106] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Exegesis and Hermeneutics," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson and Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 52. Bernard Ramm is rather more nuanced: "Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation." Cited in Iain Provan, "'How Can I Understand, Unless Someone Explains It To Me?' (Acts 8:30-31): Evangelicals and Biblical Hermeneutics," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 17, no. 1 (2007): 2.

[107] James I. Packer, "Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority," *Themelios* 1, no. 1 (1975): 3. Anthony C. Thistelton elaborates, employing the metaphor of "horizons" to describe the viewpoints of the original authors and the readers. He states, "the goal of biblical hermeneutics is to bring about an active and meaningful engagement between the interpreter and text, in such a way that the interpreter's own horizon is re-shaped and enlarged" (*The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* [Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1980], xix).

literature, the social sciences, and the arts.[108] It is now possible to identify three distinct areas of focus in the field of biblical hermeneutics. According to F. F. Bruce and J. J. Scott, these involve "(1) the meaning of the text itself, [that is,] the intent of the author; (2) the personality and/or the experience of the author at the moment of writing; and (3) the self-understanding of the reader."[109] Scholars working in this field have generally been drawn to one of these areas above the other two,[110] but it seems clear that hermeneutical investigations in the contemporary scene cannot proceed without conscious awareness of the complexities of the wider discipline. Nor–and here lies the particular relevance for the present research–can the work of contemporary theologians be properly assessed without having some acquaintance with work in this field.

It is also clear that the new hermeneutics overlaps with postmodern philosophical presuppositions.[111] For whereas the task of hermeneutics seeks to serve the quest for truth–what any text, given its intended audience (whether implied or real), might mean–postmodernism challenges the very concepts of truth:[112] "It adopts an all-pervasive relativism which asserts that truth is that which is 'true' for the interpreter or

[108] F. F. Bruce and J. J. Scott Jr, "Interpretation of the Bible," in Elwell, 614. So also Bray, *Biblical Interpretation*, 10.

[109] "Interpretation," 614.

[110] For example, E. D. Hirsch to the first, Schleiermacher to the second, and Bultmann to the third. See Bruce and Scott, Ibid.

[111] According to Robert E. Webber, postmodern philosophy arose in the 1990s (*The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002], 98). But history, as Heath White points out, "doesn't come with sharp edges." He nevertheless suggests, in harmony with Webber, that the modern period "lasted, roughly, until sometime in the late twentieth century" (*Postmodernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian* [Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006], 12). The main point to bear in mind here is that certain philosophical assumptions pervade academic enquiry at this time, and need to be considered when evaluating current theological proposals.

[112] In order to maintain the flow of thought, it will be necessary at this point to briefly examine postmodernism's impact on contemporary theology before considering further developments in the field of hermeneutics.

his/her community and holds to a pluralism in which even apparently contradictory truth claims may be 'true'."[113] This assessment, and those that follow here, suggest that the postmodernist is somewhat suspicious of hermeneutics and, consequently, of biblical theology, convinced that "every attempt to describe 'what it meant' is in fact only an assertion of *what it means to me*, or worse, *what we will it to mean*." All of which must lead to the acknowledgment of the real issue, which for Vanhoozer, is "the question of authority and the locus of the word of God."[114]

Similarly, Bruce and Scott sum up their discussion by suggesting that serious questions emerge as a result of

> the attraction of some evangelicals to some modern theories and methods. Not of least importance is that which asks about the possibility of maintaining the view that the Bible is the trustworthy word of God if the intent of the human and divine authors is not the ultimate objective of interpretation.[115]

In reference again to Bruce and Scott's categorisation of three areas of focus in hermeneutics, it may be suggested that the third–the self-understanding of the reader–is especially important to the post-conservative theologian. "For postmoderns, the way one reads, and the meaning one finds, is thought more to reflect the *reader's* interests,

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[113] Bruce and Scott, "Interpretation of the Bible," 615. In similar vein, Vanhoozer (*DTIB*, 21) notes: "Biblical interpretation in postmodernity means that there are no independent standards or universal criteria for determining which of many rival interpretations is the 'right' or 'true' one;" note also Craig G. Bartholomew ("Postmodernity and Biblical Interpretation," *DTIB*, 603), who states that much postmodern literary theory, through its close scrutiny of "author, reader, text, and their interrelationships," (see main text, above) has called into question the very possibility of determinate and true readings of texts. As a result, there is now "considerable disagreement over where to anchor textual meaning, if anywhere." Its application to biblical studies has (among other things) "introduced a smorgasbord of new approaches to reading biblical texts, and raised all sorts of foundational question about biblical interpretation so that biblical studies has become fragmented and pluralistic" (604).

[114] Vanhoozer, "Exegesis and Hermeneutics," 55. William J. Larkin similarly notes that "biblical authority is central to the gospel, but to the postmodern mind unintelligible, if not inimical." See his "Approaches to and Images of Biblical Authority for the Postmodern Mind," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 8 (1998): 129.

[115] Bruce and Scott, "Interpretation of the Bible," 615.

aims and context than those of the author."[116] Thus Marcus Borg wishes to see in modern Christianity a "re-visioning" of the Bible. "What is needed in our time," he writes, "is a way of seeing the Bible that takes seriously the important and legitimate ways in which we differ from our ancestors."[117] Borg's approach leads him to articulate beliefs that are strongly reminiscent of two of the three areas where Peter Enns believes evangelicalism ought to be challenged. Borg expresses the need (1) to re-evaluate the historicity of Adam and Eve and the Fall, and to understand these as late, foundational stories written to express Israel's convictions about God and the world[118]; (2) to carefully define "myth" and apply that definition to the Genesis creation stories[119]; and (3) to recognise the theological diversity to be found in the wisdom literature ("the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible does not speak with one voice on these issues").[120] These ideas clearly connect with the first two issues that Enns presents in *Inspiration*. On the other hand, where Enns speaks of the influence of Second Temple literature and hermeneutical techniques on Paul's NT writings (the third of his issues in *Inspiration*), Borg prefers to speak of Paul as a "Jewish Christ-Mystic."[121] The foregoing is not meant to imply that Enns would agree with all that Borg presents. Nor is it to suggest that Enns and Borg arrive at their conclusions from similar presuppositions. It is, nevertheless, necessary to note the similarities and to

[116] Vanhoozer, "Exegesis and Hermeneutics," 55.

[117] Marcus Borg, *Reading the Bible Again*, 18.

[118] Ibid., 61-63, 66.

[119] Ibid., 71.

[120] Ibid., 160.

[121] Ibid., 237.

raise the possibility that Enns's work connects, to some degree, with postmodern theological agendas.[122]

Clearly, postmodern philosophies impinge upon theology, which, when undertaken from a postmodern perspective, is often termed post-conservatism or post-liberalism.[123] Most significant for the purposes of the present research is post-conservatism's approach to Scripture. Here, the figure of Stanley Grenz, the most important theologian of the so-called "younger evangelicals," looms large.[124] Two points may be mentioned.[125] Grenz argues that the traditional evangelical emphasis on

[122] Enns in one place aligns himself in opposition to what he regards as evangelicalism's modernist worldview (*Inspiration*, 108). This may imply a conscious leaning towards postmodernism. Geisler claims that "Enns … embraces a post-modern form of subjectivisim in interpreting Scripture." See Norman L. Geisler, "A Review of Peter Enns', *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2005)" (August 2009), under "Objectivity and Interpretation," http://normangeisler.com/category/peter-enns/ (accessed 9 October, 2016). Some of Geisler's evidence for this claim is weak. For example, that Enns finds the grammatical-historical approach insufficient, is hardly a pointer to a postmodern viewpoint; alternative methodologies, such as the historical-critical, were advocated long before the rise of postmodernism. Geisler may be on firmer ground when alluding to Enns's suggestions that Christian interpretation is a community activity, not timeless but to be undertaken within each generation's historical context. This, Geisler claims, is neo-Barthian (under "Objectivity and Interpretation").

[123] According to Justin Taylor, postconservatism is alive and well in evangelicalism, being a movement within evangelicalism that seeks to "revision the theology, renew the center, and transform the worshipping community of evangelicalism, cognisant of the postmodern global context within which we live." It seeks a middle course between conservative-traditionalism and liberal-progressivism ("An Introduction to Post-Conservative Evangelicalism and the Rest of This Book," in Erickson, Helseth and Taylor, 18).

[124] Gary L. W. Johnson, introduction to *Reforming or Conforming? Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 20. Grenz's writings "continue to provide the theological and philosophical identity for the [postmodern] movement" (20). His untimely death in 2005 prompted one prominent theological journal to devote a dedicatory issue to his memory; see *The Princeton Theological Review*, 12, no. 1 (Spring 2006). Other prominent post-conservative thought leaders include Roger E. Olson, Robert E. Webber, and Brian McLaren–all concerned to retain an evangelical "center" while moving beyond the doctrinal focus of conservative evangelicalism. These three, along with Grenz, are set forth by Taylor as important representative voices of this sector of evangelicalism ("Introduction to Post-Conservative Evangelicalism,"18-26). Mention should also be made of John R. Franke, whose proposals echo those of Grenz in some areas (such as the Holy Spirit being the ultimate authority in the church; see Franke, "Recasting Inerrancy: The Bible as Witness to Missional Plurality," in Merrick and Garrett, 271).

[125] These are gleaned from Taylor's summary of Grenz's thought as found in *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*; see Taylor, "Introduction to Post-Conservative Evangelicalism," 25.

propositional revelation is the product of an outdated modernist mindset. Instead of being creed-based, the essence of evangelicalism, he believes, is really spirituality-based. Connected with this idea is his proposal that Scripture cannot be the sole authority for theology: the theological heritage of the church and the thought-forms and issues of our historical-cultural context must also be considered in the theological endeavour.[126] Importantly, in all these–whether in the traditional expressions of theology throughout church history or in the thought-forms and issues of any particular culture–it is the Spirit, operating in both sacred and secular spheres, who is the source of truth.[127] While acknowledging the Bible as "the primary voice in theological conversation … the ultimate authority in the church is the Spirit speaking through Scripture."[128]

This is the crucial point for evangelical theology. Grenz's insistence that the authority of the Bible is to be found not in the text itself but in the Spirit speaking through the Scriptures[129] strikes at the very heart of the evangelical doctrine of Scripture. For evangelical theology has traditionally focused on the importance of the

[126] In *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), Grenz (with John R. Franke) highlights the "classic Protestant scholastic approach to theology," as exemplified in the works of Charles Hodge and Carl Henry. Henry, he claims, "asserts that the sole foundation of theology rests on the pre-supposition that the Bible, as the self-disclosure of God, is entirely truthful in all that it teaches and that the truth of God that it contains is presented in propositional form." The fault he finds with this approach is that "by limiting the scope of theological reflection to the exposition of the biblical text, evangelicals have been able to sidestep the thorny issues surrounding the roles of tradition and culture in theology" (14). The biblical teachings, while always to be considered normative, are nevertheless to be contextualised; this, indeed, is the theological task rather than the defence of "a timelessly fixed orthodoxy" (16).

[127] Kwabena Donkor, "Postconservatism: A Third World Perspective," in Erickson, Helseth and Taylor, 204-05.

[128] Grenz, cited in Carson, "Domesticating the Gospel," 36.

[129] Taylor, "Introduction to Post-Conservative Evangelicalism," 25.

"words" of Scripture, as evidenced in any evangelical systematic theology.[130] Representative is Wayne Grudem, who notes that of all the forms of the Word of God (Jesus Christ, God's decrees, His words of personal address, His words through the prophets, and His words in written form), it is only God's words as found written in the Bible that can form the basis for a systematic theology: only they are "available for study, for public inspection, for repeated examination, and as a basis for mutual discussion."[131]

Grenz's antipathy towards propositional revelation did not deter him from attempting his own systematic theology. It is noteworthy that in his *Theology for the Community of God*,[132] Grenz treats the doctrine of Scripture entirely in connection with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.[133] Note his claim that "to understand the authoritative function of the Bible, we must return to the pneumatological context in which all aspects of our discussion concerning Scripture properly lie."[134]

As revolutionary as Grenz's approach may be, there is no reason to reject it on that basis. From a biblical perspective, it is, after all, the *Spirit* who speaks to the

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[130] One of the conclusions of the present research is that, while the evangelical commitment to the primary authority of Scripture in matters of doctrine is upheld, conservative evangelical bibliologies are to be faulted for failing to adequately emphasise the Holy Spirit's role in the process of inspiration. One result of a near-exclusive focus on the *text* of Scripture as the locus of inspiration has, ironically, been a *lower* view of inspiration that could prove insufficient to safeguard orthodox doctrine. This concept receives attention here in Chapter Four, "Comparison and Evaluation."

[131] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 50.

[132] (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans/Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2000.)

[133] *Theology*, 379-404 (Part 4, "Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," Chapter 14, "The Spirit and the Scriptures").

[134] Ibid., 402. Compare also Grenz's programmatic discussion in his seminal *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 113-117, especially 114, where he criticises traditional systematic theologies for separating bibliology from pneumatology.

churches (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, etc.) and the *Spirit* that spoke through the prophets (1 Pet. 1:10f). Certainly, the approach adopted in his systematic theology is eloquent witness to the fact, as noted by Donkor, that Grenz's pneumatology runs through his whole methodological program."[135] It is testimony, also, to the progressive nature of his theological method. More recently, Andrew T. B. McGowan proposes to relocate the doctrine of Scripture in systematic theology "to its true theological *locus* within the doctrine of God, more precisely as an aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit." He reasons that doing so will emphasise that this doctrine is an aspect of God's self-revelation.[136] It is tempting to wonder if Grenz's radical proposal may, indeed, find some acceptance even among conservative theologians who have never identified themselves with the post-conservative mood.[137]

5.2 Kevin Vanhoozer: Pointing a Way Forward for Evangelicals?

Among the contemporary theologians who have attempted to find a way forward for an evangelical understanding of Scripture, Kevin Vanhoozer merits special mention.[138] His interest and expertise in the postmodern climate in which contemporary theology is now conducted is evidenced by his editorship of *The*

[135] Donkor, "Postconservatism," 204.

[136] McGowan, *Divine Authenticity of Scripture*, 12.

[137] Two Reformed theologians, Cornelius van der Kooi and Gijsbert van den Brink, in their recent *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), have situated their Doctrine of Scripture as Chapter 13, following the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Chapter 12). Whether this indicates a new direction in conservative bibliology is, perhaps, too early to say.

[138] Vanhoozer's own works provide a source of information regarding others likewise attempting a new path in this field. See, for example, the fifth chapter ("God's Mighty Speech Acts") of his *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 127-158.

Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology.[139] His most significant contributions to theology, however, have been in the area of hermeneutics, an area of study that he evidently considers to be hugely important. "Questions about textual meaning and interpretation," he asserts, "… lie at the centre of debates concerning the nature and method of biblical theology."[140]

Responding to claims that contemporary theology has yet to achieve a satisfactory reformulation of the doctrine of Scripture, Vanhoozer posits a concept of "divine speech acts"[141] as the way forward for this besieged doctrine. The problem, of course, is multi-faceted, but it would seem that for Vanhoozer the various issues may be subsumed in the one critical point of contention: "What sense can it make to refer to Scripture as 'God's Word written'?"[142] He refers to this as the problem of the "identity thesis"–"the belief that Scripture *is* the Word of God."[143] "The task of a doctrine of Scripture," he argues, "is to explain how the church can confess that the Bible is the Word of God."[144]

The issue arises from "the ruinous dichotomy between historical-actualist and verbal-conceptualist models of revelation, that is, the dualism between 'God saying'

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[139] Kevin J. Vanhoozer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[140] "Exegesis and Hermeneutics," 52.

[141] Vanhoozer's use of speech-act theory draws upon the work of Juhl, Thiselton, and Wolterstorff. See Stephen E. Fowl, "The Role of Authorial Intention in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies & Systematic Theology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 72.

[142] Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 148.

[143] Ibid., 133.

[144] Ibid., 148.

and 'God doing'."[145] In other words, while some schools of thought have stressed that revelation consists of the mighty *acts* of God, to which Scripture bears witness, others have emphasised the propositional nature of God's spoken (and subsequently written) words, those words themselves qualifying as revelation. The latter position is regarded by theologians attracted to the former view as approaching, if not entailing, bibliolatry, for it appears to equate (or at least confuse) words written down by human beings with God himself. In addressing this impasse, Vanhoozer contends that speech-act theory can provide a union between these two emphases, for "the category *speech act* acknowledges that saying too is a doing, and that persons can do many things by 'saying'."[146]

It is too early to tell if Vanhoozer's proposal will prove capable of allowing evangelicals to transcend the impasse in biblical interpretation. As Richard Briggs has also observed, for all the insights speech-act theory may offer in the question of "how God is involved with the production of Scripture,"[147] it is not transparently clear how this helps in the *practical task* of interpreting particular passages of Scripture.[148]

There is, in Vanhoozer's assessment, a "present crisis in biblical interpretation– the confusion not only over what the Bible means but also over how to read it [since postmodernism results in a virtual hermeneutical anarchy in which "each interpretative community does what is right in its own eyes"[149]]."[150] Yet Vanhoozer is aware that a

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[145] Ibid., 131.

[146] Ibid., 130.

[147] Vanhoozer, Ibid., 131.

[148] "Speech-Act Theory," in *DTIB,* 765.

[149] Vanhoozer, "What is Theological Interpretation of the Bible?" *DTIB*, 20.

general hermeneutic cannot be thrust upon the Bible, for "there are properly theological questions, such as the relationship of the OT and NT, that require more than what is typically offered in a general hermeneutic."[151]

5.3 Theological Interpretation

Attempting to address this particular challenge, Vanhoozer, along with a number of other scholars, has urged a return to a *theological* interpretation of the Bible. This approach to biblical interpretation has become known as "theological interpretation of Scripture" (TIS) or "theological interpretation of the Bible" (TIB).[152] Allison defines TIS as "a family of interpretive approaches that privileges theological readings of the Bible in due recognition of the theological nature of Scripture, its ultimate theological message, and/or the theological interest of its readers."[153] In David Steinmetz's analysis, TIS involves "'recovering the past' by imitating elements of precritical exegesis."[154] Not that a return to the precritical era is contemplated; the clock of history cannot be rewound. Rather, what appears to be envisioned is a *post*critical methodology; that is, theological interpretation undertaken with an awareness of, and appropriate engagement with critical tools.[155] Gerald Bray, after

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[150] Ibid., 21.

[151] *Ibid*, 19. Vanhoozer credits Francis Watson for this thought.

[152] Vanhoozer uses both, as in *DTIB* (see previous footnote) and "Ten Theses on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture," *Modern Reformation*, 19 no. 4 (July/August 2010). The *Journal for Theological Interpretation* (established in 2007) evidently opts to avoid choosing between the two!

[153] Allison, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture," 29.

[154] Cited in Allison, 31. Similarly, Treier: what unites advocates of the TIB "movement" is "criticism of historical criticism–at least its hegemony and effects on the church" ("Scripture and Hermeneutics," 92).

[155] Ibid.

noting that "modern scholarship is less united in its aims now than it has ever been," avers that "any new synthesis will have to be theological, as well as purely academic." The basic issue, he claims, "is whether the supernatural can be taken into account as a contributory factor in human history. …The practical denial of that idea, more than anything else, has determined the course taken by so much critical scholarship in modern times."[156] Though not employing the phrase "theological interpretation," Bray's comments clearly align with at least that aspect of the TIS emphasis.

If the idea of interpreting the Bible theologically sounds rather 'old hat', that is because it is. In his generally negative review of TIS, Donald Carson notes repeatedly that many careful scholars, including some in the older field of biblical theology (he cites Adolf Schlatter and Gerhardus Vos), bring to their exegetical work the same concern to respect the theological sweep and thrust of Scripture's message as that advocated by TIS scholars.[157] While finding much to applaud in the movement, Carson gives voice to a number of additional concerns. Perhaps the most serious is his observation that, in the laudable attempt to bring biblical and theological studies closer together, TIS downplays the influence of confessional backgrounds. The problem then

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[156] Bray, *Biblical Interpretation*, 584, 585; compare Vanhoozer's comments in "What is Theological Interpretation?" 20, as to the need to read the Bible "as the word of God." The works of a number of scholars who have written in the field of TIS are listed in "Theological Interpretation of Scripture," *Theopedia* (n.d.), http://www.theopedia.com/Theological_interpretation_of_Scripture (accessed 6 March, 2016). Gregg R. Allison, in his "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction and Preliminary Evaluation," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 14, no. 2 (2010): 29, credits Vanhoozer as a major contributor to the development of TIS. Vanhoozer's own major publishing venture in this area has been in editing *DTIB* (see n. 95, above).

[157] D. A. Carson, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, But …," in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. R. Michael Allen (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 187-207. A more favourable evaluation of TIS and its usefulness (with some qualifications) to evangelicalism may be found in Charlie Trimm, "Evangelicals, Theology, and Biblical Interpretation: Reflections on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20, no. 3 (2010): 311-30.

becomes: closer to *whose* theology?[158] Carson's final comment gives further cause for concern: "I am inclined to think that what is most valuable in TIS (and much is), is not new; what is new in TIS varies from ambiguous to mistaken, *depending in part on the theological location of the interpreter*."[159] For if, as Carson notes earlier in his piece, the "supporters [of TIS] can be found among at least four groups: Roman Catholics, confessional evangelicals, Barthians, and chastened liberals,"[160] and if all these can happily wed their biblical studies to their own confessional stances, there then remains the strong possibility that TIS will fail to avoid the very community-mediated subjectivity that it finds disturbing in post-conservatism.

6. Summary

The preceding survey has been necessarily brief and intentionally selective. Its purpose was to outline, in broad strokes, the development of evangelical understandings of Scripture–in particular, the root and fruits of contemporary contention–from the time of the Protestant Reformation until the present.

Several key ideas have been exposed. First, the Protestant reformers appear to have felt little need to defend the authority of Scripture–except vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic magisterium–since that authority was, to a large degree, unquestioned in their period. Second, issues in connection with biblical inspiration by and large emerged as a result of scholarly methodologies and philosophical preoccupations of the enlightenment ('modern') period. Protestant scholastics and confessionalists

[158] Carson, "Theological Interpretation," 193-96, 204.

[159] Ibid., 207 [emphasis supplied].

[160] Ibid., 204.

increasingly attempted to define biblical inspiration in light of those challenges. Third, serious disagreements in respect to biblical inspiration were, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, largely between liberal and conservative churchmen but have, since around the middle of the twentieth century, become an internecine evangelical debate. Finally, the evangelical "battle for the Bible" has seen an increasing polarisation of views such that, despite enormous scholarly endeavour, consensus seems unlikely in the foreseeable future.

It remains now to relate the foregoing to the two theologians who are the focus of this study. To begin with, that which John Frame and Peter Enns have in common ought to be kept in mind: both are contemporary theologians, both profess to be evangelicals, and both have produced their major literary efforts from within the Reformed confession. That their respective approaches to the doctrine of Scripture differ so markedly, notwithstanding these commonalities, should be seen as characteristic of contemporary evangelicalism and illustrative of the conclusions offered above.

It is of interest to note, however, that neither theologian explicitly identifies himself with any of the current 'movements' within evangelicalism. In the case of Frame, initial acquaintance with his work would suggest that he is content to operate within the parameters of Reformed orthodoxy, although it will quickly become apparent that he does not allow his confessional background to be a straightjacket for his own creative theological exploration. Enns, similarly is difficult to categorise (in respect to his approach to Scripture), but for a quite different reason. Those who have contributed most to the scholarly work in hermeneutics and bibliology, whether from a conservative or a post-conservative position, are generally systematic theologians.

Enns is not. It would not be unfair to state that he is, in this field, an ‘outsider,’ an OT specialist endeavouring to contribute to an alien discipline from a perspective of his own. It is, of course, not *necessary* to categorise a theologian as belonging to any particular ‘school’ or trend; the theologian may, indeed, prefer *not* to be so categorised. Nevertheless, no author can lay claim to an independent thought world; understanding the broader thought world in which he or she exists, and the potential influences upon that writer, ought to yield insights into that which they propose and to alert their readers to potential strengths and weaknesses of their position.

CHAPTER TWO

PETER ENNS: CHALLENGES TO THE TRADITIONAL VIEW

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the major theological themes present in Peter Enns's *Inspiration & Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament.*[1] These fall into several categories and will be treated in separate sections in this chapter. The first section will provide biographical details of Peter Enns and an introduction to the basic issues of *Inspiration.* The second section will deal with matters of methodology. This will be followed by a very brief consideration of Enns's published works prior to *Inspiration*, then a synopsis of the several chapters of *Inspiration* before undertaking a more detailed presentation of the selected themes prominent in Enns's work.

1.1 Peter Enns: Publications and Professional Career

A proper understanding of a theologian's work is likely to be enhanced by having an appreciation for the educational, confessional and professional backgrounds from which he writes. There is often also value in having an awareness of the immediate historical context from which a particular work emerged. Here, that context concerns the work that is his most significant to date: *Inspiration and Incarnation*.

[1] (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005; hereafter, *Inspiration*). Note: Since the commencement of this dissertation Baker published a second edition of Enns' *Inspiration* (2015). No changes to the text were made, besides the addition of a Preface written by the author. All references in this dissertation are to the original edition.

Biographical information about Enns is available on both his websites and on Wikipedia.[2] His basic degree was from a college that claims to embrace "an evangelical spirit rooted in the Anabaptist, Pietist and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian Church,"[3] while his doctoral degree in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations was earned from Harvard University in 1994.[4] In the same year, Enns was appointed Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Hermeneutics at Westminster Theological Seminary. He has also taught courses at five other universities or seminaries, including Harvard, Princeton and Fuller. Despite the earlier educational background–evangelical, but non-Reformed–Enns's appointment at Westminster committed him to doing theology from a Reformed perspective.[5] Though no longer connected with Westminster, Enns claims still to write from within that tradition.[6]

Enns resigned from Westminster in 2008, after lengthy controversy that followed the publication of his 2005 *Inspiration*.[7] Following his resignation from Westminster, Enns began writing on the website of the Biologos Foundation, "a community of evangelical Christians committed to exploring and celebrating the

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[2] Enns's two websites are: http://peterennsonline.com/ (his personal website) and http://iandibook.com/ (the official website for his 2005 publication *Inspiration*). In addition, he blogs regularly on http://www.patheos.com/blogs/peterenns/. Enns himself directs readers to Wikipedia for further biographical information.

[3] The college is Messiah College. See their website, http://www.messiah.edu/about/index.html.

[4] Enns's dissertation was, "Exodus Retold: Ancient Exegesis of the Departure from Egypt in Wis 10:15-21 and 19:1-9" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1994).

[5] In the "Preface" to *Inspiration* Enns acknowledges the influence of "[his] own theological tradition," one that is "represented by [his] colleagues at Westminster Theological Seminary, past and present, and the wider tradition of which that institution is a part (9). That is, a Reformed tradition.

[6] See http://peterennsonline.com/about/ (accessed 10 September, 2016).

[7] See details in "Peter Enns" (Wikipedia contributors, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Enns [accessed 9 September, 2016]) and in Sarah Pulliam's report for *Christianity Today* ("Westminster Theological Suspension, " *Christianity Today*, June, 2008, 17-18).

compatibility of evolutionary creation and biblical faith."[8] This association ended in 2011, evidently because the organisation was not able to accommodate Enns's more progressive views.[9]

As of mid-2013, Enns is the author, co-author or editor of more than a dozen books, mostly scholarly in nature. A search of EBSCO reveals some sixteen peer-reviewed articles and more than twenty reviews dating from 1995 onwards. During his association with Biologos, Enns contributed over 100 posts. He remains an inveterate blogger.

A consideration of Peter Enns' work reveals three points of note. First, he is prolific, on average producing (as sole or part author) one book every 18 months, in addition to articles and blogs. Second, his more recent work has attracted significant attention and generated a fair amount of controversy. And third, while much of his work is in Old Testament studies, it is clear that he is very often concerned with relating these studies to issues of hermeneutics and bibliology. Additionally–and somewhat related–he evinces a considerable interest in questions relating to issues of science and faith–as evidenced not only by his connection with Biologos, but by the subject matter of his last two books[10] and elsewhere. This, too, feeds into his evident determination to make a significant contribution to the current evangelical "conversation" in the doctrine of Scripture.

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[8] From the Biologos home page: http://biologos.org. (accessed 10 September, 2015).

[9] Enns, "Did Paul Believe in the Bible?" The Peter Enns Blog, entry posted 25 November, 2011, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/peterenns/2011/11/did-paul-believe-in-the-bible/#comment-683 (accessed 14 June, 2016).

[10] These are: *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say About Human Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2012) and (co-authored with Jared Byas) *Genesis for Normal People: A Guide to the Most Controversial, Misunderstood, and Abused Book of the Bible* (e-book: Patheos Press, 2012).

As an Old Testament scholar, Enns has authored, edited or contributed to publications largely within that field, more especially relating to the books of Genesis and Exodus and the biblical Wisdom literature. His numerous articles demonstrate similar emphases. A more pastoral concern is evident in his *Invitation to Genesis*,[11] a discipleship Bible study, and *Telling God's Story: Year One* (and a companion parents' guide),[12] aimed at an elementary-through-high school readership.

It was, however, his 2005 *Inspiration* that caught the attention of the evangelical scholarly world, its challenges being perhaps too pertinent and too sharply delineated to be ignored. With this volume, Enns synthesised certain problems and proposed solutions that had been advanced in his earlier publications.[13] Three specific issues were brought to the fore in *Inspiration*. These Enns summarises in one word for each: uniqueness, integrity, and interpretation.[14] Enns proposed these as issues that "have not been handled well in evangelical theology."[15] The first of these regards the relationship between the Old Testament and other ancient Near Eastern literature. The author poses a group of questions that reveal his concerns: "Why does the Bible in places look a lot like the literature of Israel's ancient neighbors? Is the Old Testament

[11] *Invitation to Genesis*, Disciple Short Term Bible Study (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006).

[12] *Telling God's Story: Year One* (Charles City, VA: Olive Branch Books, 2010). *Telling God's Story* is published in three formats: *Student Guide and Activity Pages*, *A Parents' Guide to Teaching the Bible*, and *Instructor Text and Teaching Guide*. All three carry the same publishing details.

[13] On his personal website, http://peterennsonline.com/articles-and-essays/ (accessed 10 September, 2016), Enns has provided links to "representative essays and articles" he has written. As representing his earlier thoughts on the topics treated in *Inspiration*, note especially "Wisdom of Solomon and Biblical Interpretation in the Second Temple Period" (2000), "Matthew and Hosea: A Response to John Sailhamer" (2001), and "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse" (2003): these, and others, are accessible through the above website.

[14] *Inspiration*, 16.

[15] Ibid., 15.

really that unique? . . . If the Bible is the word of God, why does it fit so nicely in the ancient world?"[16] The second issue proposed by Enns is what he calls "theological diversity" in the Old Testament. By this he means "contradictions, or at least large differences of opinions."[17] His treatment of this subject is no mere recitation of well-known difficulties, but a careful presentation of numerous examples of "diversity" as found in the biblical wisdom literature, in Chronicles, in the Law, and, perhaps most surprisingly, in the Israelites' *developing* understanding of monotheism vis-à-vis polytheism. Enns's third issue relates to the way in which the New Testament authors handle Old Testament texts–in ways, he suggests, that are "odd" or apparently out of context.[18] Enns suggests these surprising uses of the OT in many cases simply demonstrate the typical exegetical techniques and interpretive traditions of the Second Temple period.[19]

Each of these three major issues is the focus of its own chapter in *Inspiration* and form the heart of the book. He allows no suggestion that these challenges are new, only "that evangelical biblical scholarship has not engaged many of these issues responsibly on an academic level." He means that evangelicals must not only do research in these areas, but "engage the *doctrinal implications* that work in these areas raises." It is a statement that hints at the significance of the author's proposed endeavour.[20]

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[16] Ibid., 15-16.

[17] Ibid., 16.

[18] Ibid., 16.

[19] Ibid., 131-32.

[20] Ibid., 13. Note also: "Neither the issues addressed in this book . . . nor the perspective from which I view them are novel" (167).

As suggested by the title of *Inspiration and Incarnation*, Enns sees value in the oft-cited incarnational analogy: as Jesus is 100 percent God and 100 percent human, so we must think about the Bible. The analogy, he avers, "is a proper starting point" for discussing the issues raised in the book.[21] It is not that Enns makes any attempt to explore the theological nitty-gritty of the analogy; rather, his intent seems merely to iterate the point that the word of God is a very human document.[22] Thus, just as Jesus "completely assumed the cultural trappings of the world in which he lived . . . so, too, with the Bible." "The human marks of the Bible," he writes, "are *everywhere, thoroughly integrated* into the nature of Scripture itself."[23]

Seven years after *Inspiration* Enns published *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say About Human Origins*.[24] In the "Introduction" Enns refers to his earlier *Inspiration* and reiterates the importance of the incarnational analogy. Again, the divine aspect is acknowledged. He notes first, "as Jesus, the Word, is of divine origin as well as a thoroughly human figure of first-century Palestine, so is the Bible of ultimately divine origin yet also thoroughly a product of its time."[25] But the acknowledgment of the divine simply prepares the way for the 'corrective' that Enns is keen to establish: "I only mean to make the point that we should expect of Scripture the same sort of embrace of the human that Jesus himself willingly took on, even to the

[21] Ibid., 17.

[22] This has been noted by others, among them, Beale, *Erosion of Inerrancy*, 39-41, 54, etc.; Carson, "Three More Books on the Bible: A Critical Review," *Trinity Journal* 27NS (2006), 30. Its significance will be closely examined here in Chapter Four, "Comparison and Evaluation."

[23] *Inspiration*, 17 18.

[24] (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012).

[25] *Evolution of Adam*, xi.

point of emptying himself of his divine prerogative and becoming our brother."[26] That is, though divine in nature, the Jesus that is revealed is a predominantly human Jesus; similarly for Scripture. *Evolution of Adam*'s kinship with *Inspiration* is apparent, exploring again two of the latter's themes: the relationship between the OT and other ancient Near Eastern texts and the way in which the NT authors handle OT texts.[27] In comparison with *Inspiration*, *Evolution of Adam* demonstrates a more rigorous attempt to apply his concepts to a particular theological issue.[28]

The two Enns publications just referred to contain the substance and fullest explications of his understanding of Scripture. Enns is an OT scholar and not a systematic theologian; it would therefore not be fair to expect him to treat the subject of the word of God or inspiration as a systematician might. Yet Enns has clearly moved into an area that is of intense interest to the systematician. His proposals involve much more than mere exegesis or even hermeneutics (although they certainly entail both). What Enns has proposed clearly impacts, and arguably undermines, the

[26] *Evolution of Adam*, xii.

[27] As mere pointers to this similarity one may note, besides these central themes, certain key words, terms and concepts: the New Testament writer's "interpreted Bible" (*Evolution of Adam*, 113; *Inspiration*, 122, 143); the power of certain texts or understandings to "calibrate," "reorient" or "adjust" our thinking (*Evolution of Adam*, 32, 35, 41, 42, 46, 79, 95, 98, 144; *Inspiration* 135); Enns's characterisation of the NT's use of the Old as seemingly "shoddy" (*Evolution of Adam*, 113), "creative" (*Evolution of Adam*, 81, 87, 98, 102, 110, 113, 145; *Inspiration*, 156), "playing fast and loose with the text" (*Evolution of Adam*, 100), "unappealing" (*Inspiration*, 115), "odd" (*Inspiration*, 115, 116, 157), a "misuse" (*Inspiration*, 117; implied), or involving "tainted exegetical techniques" (*Inspiration*, 132), "interesting maneuvers" (*Inspiration*, 150), "eisegesis" (*Inspiration*, 152) and "faulty hermeneutics" (*Inspiration*, 157); suggesting that readers of the NT might find such exegetical techniques "troubling" (*Inspiration*, 137) or something to "frown upon" (*Inspiration*, 142). More significant, but to be expected, is Enns's use of many of the same examples to illustrate his thesis (compare *Inspiration*, 132-51 and *Evolution of Adam*, 103-16).

[28] While the material in *Evolution of Adam* somewhat overlaps with that in *Inspiration*, the constraints of space preclude embracing *Evolution of Adam* in this study to any significant degree. It is in *Inspiration* that Enns's full schema is detailed, *Evolution of Adam* adding little of significance to his earlier proposals. Nevertheless, where *Evolution of Adam* provides additional insights to the concepts discussed here in connection with *Inspiration*, these insights will be noted.

traditional evangelical understanding of inspiration and the doctrine of Scripture. In this may be seen the reason for such widespread interest in, and (from some quarters) negative reaction to his work.

1.2 Methodology

As noted above, *Inspiration* has as its purpose to explore three particular themes: the OT and other literature from the ancient world, theological diversity in the OT, and the way in which the NT authors handle the OT.[29] Each of these issues is accorded a separate chapter in *Inspiration* and for that reason invites description and analysis as discrete themes. Two of these issues will be considered under the chapter names assigned them in *Inspiration*, although with slightly abbreviated terminology, viz., "Theological Diversity" and "Old Testament in the New."

The third issue,[30] "the OT and other literature from the ancient world," will be considered under the heading of "Biblical History and Historiography."[31] For Enns, this particular issue is summarised in the one word "uniqueness," as noted above. Yet it is clear that the discussion centres around matters connected with biblical history. Of the three groups of texts that Enns considers in the relevant chapter of *Inspiration*, two are specifically tagged as history-related.[32]

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[29] *Inspiration*, 15-16.

[30] In *Inspiration* this "third issue" is treated first.

[31] That it is historiography and not merely biblical *history* (as, for example, the historical narratives of Genesis and Kings-Chronicles) that Enns is concerned with is evident from his discussion of historiography (section title "Is Good Historiography Objective or Biased?" [*Inspiration*, 59-66]; an earlier, much briefer, section is similarly titled: "Group 3–Israel and Its Kings: Is Good Historiography Objective or Biased?" [43-45]).

[32] They are discussed under the section headings "Group 1–Creation and the Flood: Is Genesis Myth or History?" and "Group 3–Israel and Its Kings: Is Good Historiography Objective or Biased?" (39, 43).

It is evident from the title of *Inspiration* that in addition to the three major issues, the incarnation holds an important place in Enns's schema. Considering the incarnation analogically, he contends, has the potential to illuminate the major issues he raises. Nevertheless, the incarnational analogy is not systematically treated in any detail in this work; rather, potential insights from the analogy are, for the most part, suggested (usually only briefly) in the concluding remarks of the three main chapters and again in the final chapter, "The Big Picture." Consequently, Enns's treatment of this aspect of his theology differs from the treatment accorded the three major issues. Where the latter each receive one chapter, consideration of the incarnational analogy is scattered throughout the book (with additional allusions to it in *Evolution of Adam*). Furthermore, Enns views the incarnational analogy not as an issue to be grappled with–in contrast to the three major issues–but as a theological environment in which to approach these issues.[33] It seems appropriate, then, to defer presenting Enns's scattered thoughts on this theme until the "Comparison and Evaluation" chapter of this dissertation. Within that context, one may fittingly consider the manner in which Enns attempts to employ the analogy as a "paradigm" within which to work[34] and the degree to which he has achieved his purpose.

Thus, the presentation of the three major issues of *Inspiration* will proceed under three headings: (1) Theological Diversity; (2) Old Testament in the New; and (3)

[33] *Inspiration*, 73. Enns uses the phrase "theological environment" in connection with diversity: "as we look at examples of diversity … I will make suggestions along the way as to how an incarnational approach can foster a better theological environment for handling diversity;" it would seem fair, however, to understand this as typifying his approach to all three of the issues in *Inspiration*.

[34] Ibid., 168.

Biblical History and Historiography.[35] Enns's ideas will be presented with sufficient analysis to allow a grasp of their logic and interconnectedness, while a more critical evaluation will be supplied below in Chapter Four, "Comparison and Evaluation."

2. Enns's Publications Prior to *Inspiration & Incarnation*

Some justification exists for undertaking a survey of Enns's published articles predating *Inspiration*, with the aim of determining a likely evolution of thought from the author's earlier works to the more mature publications. Such an undertaking, however, would greatly lengthen the present research and would not provide any meaningful contribution to the stated aim of the research. What may be observed, however, is that it is clear that Enns's interest in the issues that pervade *Inspiration* is easily detected in his earlier articles.[36]

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[35] Note that the first of these, "Theological Diversity," is treated second in *Inspiration*. It is handled first here partly because it is, at least in Enns's schema, less complex than the other two. More significantly, the first and third issues both receive additional treatment in *Evolution of Adam* and are there presented as related pillars that support the major argument of that book. It makes sense to deal with those two issues successively here.

[36] See, for instance, "Creation and Re-Creation: Psalm 95 and its Interpretation in Hebrews 3:1–4:13," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 255-80. This earliest of Peter Enns's articles predates by one year the earning of his PhD degree from Harvard University in 1994. It is listed as the earliest of his published articles in his resumé (2007), available at http://peterennsonline.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/CV%20current.pdf. "Creation" is clearly concerned with one of the three major themes of his *Inspiration*: the Old Testament and its interpretation in the New Testament. The theme of the NT writers' use of the OT appears again in Enns's 1996 article, "The 'Moveable Well' in 1 Cor 10:4: An Extrabiblical Tradition in an Apostolic Text," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 6 (1996): 23-38. The title of Enns's "Wisdom of Solomon and Biblical Interpretation in the Second Temple Period" clearly suggests a kinship with one of the major interpretive thrusts of *Inspiration* and *Evolution of Adam*: that some of the phenomena of Scripture that conservative evangelicals often find troublesome are to be understood as examples of interpretive practices common in the Second Temple period (in *The Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke*, ed. J .I. Packer and Sven K. Soderlund [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan: 2000], 212-25, http://peterennsonline.com/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2007/12/0310227283_enns.pdf [accessed 22 May, 2016]). In "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse," Enns announces his intention to enter the fray of evangelical bibliological discussions and the field of systematic theology (*Westminster Theological Journal* 65, no. 2 [Fall 2003]: 263-87). More specifically, the article is in large degree anticipatory of *Inspiration*. This is so not only in respect to NT interpretation of the OT–the primary area of focus for "Apostolic Hermeneutics"–but in respect also to the non-uniqueness of the OT

In one of the earliest articles, "The 'Moveable Well'" (1996), one may find not only a sophisticated treatment of Second Temple hermeneutics and its influence upon apostolic writings but even a clear understanding that this phenomenon by which the Scriptures have been mediated through the hermeneutical customs of the time is somewhat analogous to the incarnation of Jesus Christ.[37] Moreover, Enns refers readers of *Inspiration* to this early article for a more in-depth treatment than he provides in *Inspiration.*[38] "The 'Moveable Well'" is one of the two pre–*Inspiration* articles that develops one or more of the *Inspiration* themes or key ideas in detail; the other is "Apostolic Hermeneutics." In the latter, it is worth noting how all three of the *Inspiration* themes appear, somewhat proleptically, in an article that purports to deal with just one of them. It suggests that Enns views these three points of interest as connected. Evangelical understandings of each of them betray "preconceived notions concerning (1) the nature of historiography and (2) the relationship between general and special revelation."[39] Excluding "The 'Moveable Well'," "Apostolic Hermeneutics" is clearly anticipatory of *Inspiration* to a far greater degree than any of Enns's previous articles; it is his penultimate presentation of the several ideas that had occupied his attention for a decade.

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and theological diversity in the Old Testament. These three comprise the triad of themes with which *Inspiration* is chiefly concerned.

[37] Aside from a passing reference in his 2003 "Apostolic Hermeneutics" (287), there is no further mention of the incarnational analogy until *Inspiration*–nine years later. There is probably no reason to attempt to infer anything significant from this fact; it is enough to observe that Enns expressed in writing a number of themes over a period of years before attempting to bring them together in one volume with *Inspiration*.

[38] Indeed, the slightly-over-two-page treatment in *Inspiration* is merely a summary of that which was expounded in considerable detail nine years earlier.

[39] "Apostolic Hermeneutics," 264.

Thus *Inspiration* may be regarded as the work towards which, consciously or unconsciously, Enns had been moving from the time of his post-graduate studies. Attention will now be directed to an investigation of that work.

3. *Inspiration & Incarnation*: Brief Synopsis

At less than two hundred pages, *Inspiration & Incarnation* is not a large book. But it is focused clearly on some specific issues. A brief "Preface" announces the twofold purpose of the book:

> The aim of this book is not novelty but synthesis. My focus is twofold: (1) to bring together a variety of data that biblical scholars work with every day for readers who do not have firsthand familiarity with these data and (2) to look at these data with a clear view toward discussing their implications for an evangelical doctrine of Scripture.[40]

This statement clearly identifies the author's target readership as being lay readers rather than scholars. While the presentation of the material is largely consistent with this purpose–the eschewal of footnotes, for example–there is evidence that Enns is, at least in part, addressing a scholarly audience.[41] The Preface further provides the usual acknowledgments, and offers a very personal affirmation of faith and the need for honesty while asking important questions. The first chapter, "Getting Our Bearings," orients the reader to the issues of concern, in particular to the three themes that will form the heart of the discussion and to the importance of the incarnational analogy for understanding the issues. These he sums up as issues that deal with the Bible's

[40] *Inspiration*, 9.

[41] Problems or ambiguities arising from Enns's statement regarding his intended readership have been noted by a number of reviewers. See, for example, Beale, "Myth, History, and Inspiration: a Review Article of *Inspiration and Incarnation* by Peter Enns," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (2006): 312; Carson, "Three More Books," 267.

uniqueness, *integrity*, and *interpretation*. Although others could have been brought into the discussion, each of these, the author claims, presents "challenges to traditional, evangelical views about Scripture."[42] There is a *need* for doctrinal adjustments. The second to fourth chapters form the heart of the work, treating each of the three major themes in turn.[43] A concluding chapter, "The Big Picture," summarises the major ideas of the book, reiterates the value of the incarnational analogy (chiefly with respect to the first of the three major themes) and offers suggestions for *how* evangelicals should "carry on this conversation": that is, with humility, love, and patience.[44] The final twenty-odd pages consist of a "Glossary" (annotated and extraordinarily helpful for the lay reader), "Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Writings", and "Index of Subjects."

Having presented the outline of Enns's presentation in *Inspiration*, it is now necessary to examine more closely the three specific challenges that form the heart of his thesis.

4. The Challenge of Theological Diversity[45]

Diversity is an innocuous term: no negative connotations adhere to its normal range of usage. On the contrary, in many contexts it may be considered to indicate something positive or desirable. In the third chapter of *Inspiration*, however, it is immediately apparent that theological diversity in the Old Testament is presented as a

[42] *Inspiration*, 16.

[43] Chapter Two: "The Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Literature;" Chapter Three: "The Old Testament and Theological Diversity;" Chapter Four: "The Old Testament and Its Interpretation in the New Testament."

[44] *Inspiration*, 171-72.

[45] In commencing a fuller discussion of the three issues in *Inspiration*, this second issue will here be treated first, for reasons already stated (n. 35, above).

source of difficulty. Even before the time of Christ, according to Enns, Jewish interpreters had acknowledged such difficulties. "Much Jewish interpretation," Enns writes, "is concerned to address problems of biblical interpretation." These "problems" arise, in the first place, from "inherent ambiguities in the Hebrew language;" but (more pertinent to Enns's program) "other difficulties arise from points of tension that exist between parts of the Old Testament itself."[46]

Enns explains precisely what he means by "diversity": "I mean the Old Testament's different perspectives or points of view on the same topic."[47] The explication, as with the word itself, contains little suggestion of *difficulty* or *problem*. Clearly, however, the whole chapter–indeed the whole book–is predicated on the idea that this diversity, along with certain other biblical phenomena, poses significant challenges to traditional views of inspiration. In Enns's view, they are challenges that evangelicals have largely failed to address. Specifically, the issue of theological diversity challenges traditional expectations of Scripture's integrity and trustworthiness.[48] The third chapter of *Inspiration*, then, highlights examples of diversity as found in wisdom literature, in the two books of Chronicles, in the Law, and in the OT's understanding of God. These will be addressed here in turn.[49]

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[46] *Inspiration*, 71.

[47] Ibid., 73.

[48] Ibid., 16.

[49] It will not be possible within the limits of space here to present every example and text that Enns employs to establish his points. It is in any case not necessary. The purpose of the present chapter section is merely to provide indicators as to the direction of the author's argument.

4.1 Diversity in the Wisdom Books

After offering several examples of diversity in the book of Proverbs,[50] Enns notes that the contrasting ways in which certain themes are presented in Proverbs point to the need to use discretion in the handling of those themes. It is not a question of "*whether* they are correct," he writes, "but *when.*"[51] The idea that the diversity to be found in Proverbs presents us with challenge or difficulty is, however, entirely absent; Enns suggests no more than the ideas of complexity, contrast and difference.[52]

With respect to Ecclesiastes, Enns notes "tensions" that have been recognized "as far back as the early medieval period." These tensions occur on two levels: "(1) diversity within the book itself and (2) diversity between the teachings of this book and mainstream Old Testament theology."[53] Yet Enns provides but *one* example of tension in this first level (7:3/8:15) and a possible two on the second (2:10 which "seems to be quite at odds with Numbers 15:39," and 1:18 and 7:16 which are suggested as evincing a sentiment one would never find in Proverbs).[54]

The one example of tension that Enns identifies within the book of Ecclesiastes is between Eccl. 7:3 and 8:15:

> Sorrow is better than laughter,
> because a sad face is good for the heart. (7:3)

[50] Enns notes the contrast in proverbs dealing with foolishness (Prov. 26:4 and 26:5) and riches or wealth (10:15, 18:11, 10:16, 11:4, 11:28, 11:28 and 19:4).

[51] *Inspiration*, 76.

[52] Ibid., 74-75.

[53] Ibid., 77.

[54] Ibid., 77-78.

> So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun. (8:15).

It is noteworthy that Enns offers no comment on these texts–neither exegesis, nor context, nor attempt to elucidate precisely where the conflict lies: he simply presents them and then moves on to the next example which, in distinction to the first, is stated to illustrate tension between Ecclesiastes and other portions of the Old Testament:

> I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;
> I refused my heart no pleasure. (2:10)

Enns claims that "on the surface at least this seems to be quite at odds with Numbers 15:39":

> You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes.

Again, Enns offers no explanation of either of these texts, merely the comment that the apparent need of earlier Jewish and Christian interpreters to address "these specific issues … highlights the problem."[55]

Enns's third example is put forward as demonstrating a tension between the view of wisdom portrayed in Ecclesiastes and that found elsewhere in the Wisdom literature, specifically in Proverbs:

> For with much wisdom comes much sorrow;
> the more knowledge, the more grief. (1:18)
>
> Do not be overrighteous,
> neither be overwise –
> why destroy yourself? (7:16)

Enns begins by asserting that "one will not find such sentiments in Proverbs," by which he seems to imply that Ecclesiastes presents a rather less enthusiastic

[55] Ibid., 77.

endorsement of wisdom than Proverbs does. Yet the reader is not encouraged to run with that idea, for the author then immediately adds, "but the matter is really much more complicated than this." On the one hand, Proverbs itself has diversity in its presentations of truth; while on the other, Ecclesiastes itself "appeals to wisdom" in its investigation of life. In truth, both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes acknowledge "the ups and downs of life, the complexity of living a good life in a harsh world." Is there, then, any real tension? Perhaps, because the way in which Proverbs "hammers home again and again that 'wisdom works' … is a very different kind of opinion to what is expressed in Ecclesiastes 1:18 and 7:16." Wisdom does not "*guarantee*" a desirable result; besides, the wise and the unwise will all die, anyway, so that "*ultimately*" nothing is to be gained by being wise.[56]

Enns concludes his section on Ecclesiastes by discouraging any attempt to harmonise the diversity and differences that are to be found in these books. The point is repeatedly emphasised: "the point here is not to iron them [the difficulties] out;" "diversity should not be thought of as a problem to be explained away;" "to respect the diversity of the Old Testament is to respect it the way God has given it to us." Importantly, Enns justifies this procedure by appeal to the incarnational analogy: "If we employ the incarnational analogy, we can see that the Bible reflects diversity because the human drama in which God participates is likewise diverse."[57]

In Job, Enns finds diversity of another kind. It is that, in Job, the relationship between deeds and their consequences is less clear, less certain than elsewhere in the

[56] Ibid., 78-79.

[57] Ibid., 80.

OT, less clear even than another Wisdom book: Proverbs.[58] Nowhere here does Enns suggest a "problem," however. Indeed, he says,

> It is not that the book of Job disagrees with, say, Deuteronomy or Proverbs. … [T]he diversity of Job is not that it counters Deuteronomy, but that it adds a real-life dimension to the question of human activity and its consequences.[59]

4.2 Diversity in Chronicles

Where Enns finds in the biblical wisdom books thematic contrasts (either within one particular book or between different books) or diverse applications of wisdom, diversity in Chronicles is found to be of a different kind. In stating, "what makes Chronicles so challenging is that it presents an alternate history of Israel from that found in Samuel–Kings,"[60] Enns indicates at the outset a particular viewpoint: for "alternate"[61] conveys quite a different sense to *complementary*. He expands:

> The writer of Chronicles has a different immediate audience to speak to: postexilic Israelites. Therefore the book presents a different interpretation of events leading up to Israel's exile that gives hope and covenantal meaning to those returning to the land.[62]

In contrast, "the purpose of Samuel–Kings, at least in part, was to *explain the exile to an exilic audience.*" The contrast may not appear great, at first glance, but Enns sees significance in it. "Chronicles is a different matter: Here Israel's history is written from the point of view of those who have *returned* to the land after being released from

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[58] *Inspiration*, 80-81.

[59] Ibid., 82.

[60] *Inspiration*, 82.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., 82-83. His choice of the word "interpretation" is significant; its use would appear to be at odds with 2 Pet. 1:20 ("no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation"). The point is, admittedly, debatable, depending (in part) upon whether one understands the word "prophecy" in this text to refer exclusively to the words of the prophets or to the entirety of the Scriptures. A consideration of this question connects with other elements of Enns's schema, for which reason a closer consideration of this issue must be deferred until the discussion offered in Chapter Four, "Comparison and Evaluation."

Babylon."[63] Enns then lists, with brief comment, four of Chronicles' "differing emphases." They are: (1) that "Chronicles greatly diminishes the sins of David;" (2) that "Chronicles emphasizes the unity of God's people;" (3) that "Chronicles strongly emphasizes the temple and Solomon's role in building it;" and (4) that "Chronicles emphasizes a theology of 'immediate retribution'."[64]

The basic point, Enns concludes, is that "there is considerable theological diversity between the two accounts of Israel's history." Their divergences are a product of their differing purposes. "However much we might struggle with this," he adds, "it is important to understand that God himself is pleased to allow this tension to stand. To acknowledge this freely is the proper starting point for any further discussion."[65]

4.3 Diversity in the Law

That there should be diversity in the law might be thought surprising, suggests Enns, since (as some might think) inconsistency here, more than anywhere else in Scripture, would imply that God is inconsistent.[66] The Ten Commandments provide the first exhibit inasmuch as the biblical record presents two versions, one in Exodus 20 and the other in Deuteronomy 5. While the preamble and commandments 1–3 and 6–9 are identical, the fact that there are, elsewhere, a few instances of difference even in wording is, for Enns, worthy of note–"one might well wonder why there are *any* differences between the wordings of the commandments"–despite his admission in the

[63] Ibid., 83-84.

[64] Ibid., 84.

[65] Ibid., 85.

[66] Ibid.

previous paragraph that "the differences in the fifth commandment are certainly inconsequential." Beyond this, one should observe differences in the way the commandments are introduced and the motive for keeping the Sabbath.[67]

Importantly, "the problem with the Ten Commandments is that we are not talking about ancient Israelite historians writing to encourage their community, but the biblical claim that God himself is revealing his law to his people." Why should we regard this as a problem? Because, as his following sentences suggest, the implication is that "God seems to be perfectly willing to allow his law to be adjusted over time."[68] Indeed, as with the differing histories of Chronicles and Samuel-Kings, the law seems to have a situational dimension: different times produce different purposes.[69] Thus, while the law states that the LORD punishes the children for the sins of their fathers to the third and fourth generation (Ex. 20:5-6/Deut. 5:9-19), the prophet Ezekiel consciously addresses "his own context, where the second commandment was being abused," speaking "in a way that relativizes the letter of that commandment."[70] The diversity that Enns sees here is that "even the Ten Commandments are open to diverse handling depending on the situation being addressed."[71]

There follow four further sub-sections in which Enns offers additional examples of diversity in the law: "Slaves"; "Passover"; "Sacrifice"; and "Gentiles".

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[67] Ibid., 86-87.

[68] Ibid., 87.

[69] Ibid., 87-88.

[70] Ibid., 88-89.

[71] Ibid., 89.

Enns's discussion of these need not be described in detail at this point,[72] except to observe that the author suggests one example might be "somewhat unsettling," while another is a "problem;" and differences between some demonstrate a "dynamic quality" within the Old Testament or a "tension."[73] He concludes the section on law by reaffirming an earlier point: "diversity in the Old Testament exists, even on the level of the legal data."[74]

4.4 God and Diversity

Speaking to the commonly accepted idea that God is uniformly understood as the *only* god in the Israelite understanding, Enns insists that "the Old Testament paints a more varied portrait of God." "Israel's understanding that Yahweh alone is God must be understood within the context of the polytheistic cultures of the ancient Near East."[75] A number of biblical texts are cited that describe Yahweh as being *greater than* the gods of the surrounding nations. Enns rejects the supposition that, in such poetic language, "gods" was not to be taken literally. Instead, "for the comparison to have any real punch, both entities must be *presumed* to be real." Admittedly,

> … Isaiah, Jeremiah, and 1 Kings seem to make a very different point–that other gods do not exist–and even certain psalms take up that point [but] that should not drive us to dismiss the witness of these other psalms as being of secondary importance.[76]

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[72] Note that Enns himself admits, at the conclusion of the section on diversity in the Law: "Although we have looked at many laws in detail, we should not get lost in those details. We must take a step back and view the big picture: diversity in the Old Testament exists, even on the level of the legal data" (97).

[73] *Inspiration*, 90-96.

[74] Ibid., 97.

[75] Ibid., 98.

[76] Ibid., 99.

The diversity must be allowed to stand: "we must … be willing to compose as diverse a portrait of God as the biblical data demand."[77]

A number of texts are adduced in support of the author's argument. When Joshua exhorts Israel to choose whom they will serve–the gods of their forefathers or of the Amorites or whether to follow his example in serving Yahweh–he is exhorting them to serve Yahweh *alone*. "Joshua's point here is not that there *are* no other gods, but that Yahweh *alone* is worthy of worship."[78] The exodus plagues, being "declarations of war against the power structure of Egypt … bear witness to Egypt and Israel that Israel's God is not just mightier than Pharaoh, but mightier than the gods that Pharaoh and his people serve."[79]

Enns makes a similar point with the first of the Ten Commandments, which "says not 'There *are* no other gods' but 'You *shall have* no other gods.'" Likewise, the phrasing of the second commandment "seems to imply that idols can be real rivals of Yahweh, so much so that he would be *jealous* if Israel were to worship them."[80] Enns's accommodationist stance[81] is evident in his ensuing comment that

> … the Israelites of the exodus were living in the infancy of their national existence amid a polytheistic world. They were taking their first baby steps toward a knowledge of God … At this point in the progress of redemption, however, the gods of the surrounding nations are treated as real.[82]

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., 99-100.

[79] Ibid., 100.

[80] Ibid., 101-02.

[81] Note Enns's comment later in the same chapter: "*for God to reveal himself means that he accommodates himself*. To be understood, he condescends to the conventions and conditions of those to whom he is revealing himself" (Ibid., 109).

[82] Ibid., 102.

There is diversity not only in how the Old Testament presents God in respect to the gods of the nations, but there is diversity also in how God himself appears to act. Although Enns entitles this sub-section "Does God Change His Mind?" his broader point is that "in various places in the Old Testament, God acts more as a character in the story. [Indeed] … he acts more humanlike than godlike."[83] Thus, when God intervenes to stop Abraham from slaying his son, He declares, "Now I know that you fear God." The point, for Enns, is that "*in this story*, God did not know until after the test was passed."[84] In the narrative of Genesis 6:5-8 concerning the cause of the flood, God is presented as *reacting* to the wickedness described in the preceding verses. A third example is found in the incident of the golden calf and the larger narrative of Exodus 32-34. On two occasions in this narrative God states an intention–first, to wipe out the entire nation, and second, to decline to accompany the people any further on their journey–but, following Moses' intercessions, changes his mind.[85] Enns labours the point that whatever the truth about God is in reality, "the Old Testament *portrays* God as a being who can be acted upon, a being whose actions are in a meaningful sense of the word contingent upon what his people do." Again, "the issue I am addressing is how the Old Testament *describes* God," and "I feel bound to talk about God *in the way(s) the Bible does*, even if I am not comfortable with it."[86]

Enns suggests, obliquely, that it is a mistake to attempt to harmonise or theologise the above data. For example, "any attempt to force the God *of Genesis 6*

[83] Ibid., 103.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 104-05.

[86] Ibid., 105-06.

into a mold cast by certain theological commitments or to reconcile this description to other biblical passages simply amounts to reading past this story."[87] Again,

> the Bible really does have authority if we let it speak, and not when we–intentionally or unintentionally–suspend what the Bible says about God in some places while we work out our speculations about what God is 'really' like, perhaps by accenting other portions of the Bible that are more amenable to our thinking. God gave us the Bible so we could read *it*, not so we can ferret our way *behind* it to see how things really are.[88]

Two corollary ideas conclude the author's presentation in this section. The first is that resisting the urge to harmonise allows the diversity of Old Testament thought to remain. "God reveals himself *throughout* the Old Testament. There is no part that gets it 'more right' than others. Rather, they get at different sides of God. … There are diverse portrayals of God in the Old Testament."[89] The second corollary is that God's method of speaking to us in ways that we can understand–as in speaking of God changing his mind–is "in keeping with the incarnational analogy;" and, indeed, "the *entire* Bible, through and through, has that human dimension."[90]

Having laid out the evidence, Enns concludes his chapter with summary thoughts under the heading, "What Does Diversity Tell Us about Scripture?" He repeats the suggestion that some of the foregoing data could be "unsettling for some;" that these tensions do not just *appear* to be a problem: *that* they exist "is a matter of simple observation;" and that, in fact, "such tensions demonstrate to us … how fully

[87] Ibid., 104.

[88] Ibid., 106.

[89] Ibid., 106-07.

[90] Ibid., 106.

God participates in history, that he *incarnates* himself throughout Israel's history." The diversity, then, is to be expected.[91]

It is, indeed, the incarnational analogy idea that dominates the remaining two pages of the chapter. The potentially embarrassing "messiness of the Old Testament"–by which Enns appears to mean the problematic tensions–"tell us that God is very real to his people and very near."[92] Thus the tensions that arise from the diversity of the Old Testament receive their redemption in the incarnational analogy. As God, in Christ, enters the messiness of history to save us, so He is to be found in the messiness of the written word. "To put it this way," Enns concludes, "is to turn the entire debate on its head: the diversity of Scripture–and the tensions that this diversity introduces–bears witness to God's revelation rather than detracts from it."[93]

4.5 Summary

The Old Testament frequently presents different perspectives or points of view on the same topic. Enns finds such diversity in the wisdom books, between the history as given in Samuel-Kings and the alternate account in Chronicles, in Israel's laws, and even in the Old Testament's varied portrayals of God. In Enns's view, the urge to harmonise these divergent perspectives ought to be avoided. Rather, this diversity ought to be gladly accepted as witness of God's willingness to fully participate in history. That is, God is seen to have incarnated himself throughout Israel's history.

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[91] Ibid., 108.

[92] Ibid., 110. The phrase "messiness of the Old Testament" is used also on the previous page. Note, too, "messiness of history" (111).

[93] Ibid., 111.

5. The Challenge of the Old Testament in the New

In the opening pages of the chapter, the New Testament use of the Old Testament is variously described by the author as (potentially) "unappealing," "odd" (twice), and (by implication) a "misuse."[94] The phenomenon is troubling for some Christians because of the assumption that context and authorial intention ought to be the basis for sound interpretation. Instead, however, the New Testament writers seem quite often to have different notions of what constitutes "a proper handling of the Old Testament."[95]

Evangelical scholars have commonly addressed the issue in one of several ways. One way has been to insist that the NT writers have, in fact, been faithful to the intention of the OT authors. Another has been to claim that the NT writers were *not* trying to be faithful to the intention of the OT authors; rather than "interpreting" the OT text, they were "applying" it. A third way has been to note that in applying, rather than interpreting, the OT text, the NT authors were operating within their apostolic authority: they were inspired.[96] Enns's purpose in this chapter is to argue an alternative

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[94] Ibid., 114-16. See n. 27, above, for further examples of Enns's use of negative terms to describe this phenomenon.

[95] Ibid., 114.

[96] *Inspiration*, 115. Enns's description of these three points is only slightly fuller than the description given here. The additional subtlety he provides is not material to the presentation given here, the purpose of which is to uncover the essence of *Enns's* views and the flow of his argument. Subsequent to the writing of *Inspiration*, Enns contributed a chapter to a multi-author publication on this very topic; see his "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal: A Christotelic Approach to the New Testament Use of the Old in Its First-Century Interpretive Environment," in Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (eds), *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Counterpoints series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008). Enns's co-contributors were Walter C. Kaiser Jr and Darrell L. Bock. Kaiser's view corresponds to the first approach noted above. Bock's view corresponds *somewhat* to the second; indeed, in *Three Views* Enns affirms that Bock's argument is "nuanced" (159). Additionally, Bock's understanding of whether or not the NT presents contemporary interpreters with hermeneutical models for how it handles the OT differs a little from the description of the second view as given by

view. Before providing his detailed arguments, however, he states his conclusions "up front." They are, in full:

> 1. The New Testament authors were not engaging the Old Testament in an effort to remain consistent with the original context and intention of the Old Testament author.
> 2. They were indeed commenting on what the text *meant*.
> 3. The hermeneutical attitude they embodied should be embraced and followed by the church today.[97]

The additional comment that follows is vital: "To put it succinctly, the New Testament authors were explaining what the Old Testament means *in light of Christ's coming*."[98] Enns does not here elaborate on this; its significance becomes apparent only as his argument proceeds.

5.1 Second Temple Literature and Hermeneutics

Enns's disagreement with the three evangelical approaches to the issue under consideration in this chapter lies in their failure to "engage the New Testament in the context of the hermeneutical world in which the New Testament writers lived."[99] Enns agrees with modern scholarship (including evangelical) that the grammatical-historical approach to biblical interpretation is useful: "the words of the text … must be understood in their original grammatical … and historical contexts."[100] But, he insists, the scholar must also be aware of the *hermeneutical* world in which the NT writers

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Enns in *Inspiration*. To the question, "Can we do what the apostles did?" Bock answers, "My argument is that we do it even when we claim we do not" (147).

[97] *Inspiration*, 115-16.

[98] Ibid., 116.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid., 117.

lived and wrote.[101] The Second Temple period is the historical context, and the Jewish writings of that period constitute the hermeneutical context. That ancient interpretive world consists not only of Second Temple literature but of the Old Testament itself, and it is with the latter that Enns begins his analysis.

The OT chronicler's engagement with the books of Samuel-Kings is briefly mentioned. The book of Chronicles as a whole is one example of ancient biblical interpretation. But "most relevant" for the emphasis Enns wishes to make at this point is Daniel's "handling of Jeremiah's prophecy [of the seventy years of Babylonian captivity]."[102] Through the illumination provided by the angel Gabriel, Daniel finds "the deeper meaning contained in Jeremiah's words, meaning that Jeremiah himself neither intended nor could be expected on his own to understand."[103]

Though not in itself an example of inner-biblical interpretation, Enns understands the risen Christ's words to his disciples (Luke 24:44-48) as establishing "a hermeneutical foundation for how the Old Testament is now to be understood by Christians."[104] For Enns, the crucial observation is Christ's claim that his suffering and rising from the dead on the third day were written in the Scriptures. The "pressing question" is: where specifically does the Old Testament say this? To try and locate such a prediction in one text–Hos. 6:2, he notes, is sometimes suggested–"borders on

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[101] Enns refers to this as the "hermeneutical-historical" context, in contrast to the grammatical-historical context. See *Inspiration*, 117; also "Fuller Meaning," 174.

[102] *Inspiration*, 117-18. For further examples, Enns refers the reader to Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

[103] *Inspiration*, 119. Whether or not Enns has correctly understood this passage from Daniel 9, the significance of his point must not be overlooked: that there is a *gap* between the meaning of the original biblical text (in this case, Jeremiah's prophecy) and subsequent commentary on it, whether that commentary is found within the biblical canon or in extrabiblical Second Temple literature.

[104] Ibid., 119.

the absurd." It is not that the Old Testament is replete with prophecies of such details of Christ's life; rather, "[Christ] is saying that *all* Scriptures speak of him in the sense that he is *the climax of Israel's story*."[105]

Enns's discussion of biblical interpretation in Second Temple literature is considerably lengthier, though necessarily selective. He chooses to focus on one example from the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon[106] and one from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Of special interest for Enns is the tenth chapter of Wisdom of Solomon. Here the author, Pseudo-Solomon, recounts the early history of the children of Israel, with an emphasis on God's protecting care. In the process, he "lists a who's who of major Old Testament people … and devotes a few comments to each."[107] In Pseudo-Solomon's commentary, as described by Enns, Adam, Cain, Abraham, Lot, Jacob and Joseph all receive mention. Their interest lies in the fact, first, that Pseudo-Solomon provides details that are either not found in the biblical record or which appear to contradict the biblical record.[108]

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[105] Ibid., 120.

[106] Wisdom of Solomon "was written in Greek sometime between the latter part of the first century BC and early part of the first century AD" (*Inspiration*, 121).

[107] Ibid., 122.

[108] For example, Adam is "delivered from his transgression" (Wis. 10:2), an interpretation that, according to Enns, "does not intersect well with the Christian doctrine of original sin" (*Inspiration*, 123); the earth was flooded because of Cain; Abraham is implied to be a contemporary of the tower of Babel episode; Lot is said to be a righteous man (Enns admits that this is, in fact, "justifiable biblically" from 2 Pet. 2:7 (125); the point, however, is that Pseudo-Solomon "come[s] down on one side of an interpretive issue for which two sides exist" (125); Jacob is protected from Esau and his men lying in wait for him, a "preexisting interpretive tradition" found in an earlier Second Temple text, *Jubilees* (125); Joseph is accused not only by Potiphar's wife but by others, possible reference to a roughly contemporary Second Temple tradition, *Life of Joseph*, that "puts into the mouth of Potiphar's wife the accusation that Joseph not only made advances on her but had a track record of doing the same with her maidens" (126); and three cases of extra-biblical details added to the Exodus story, and which bear witness to pre-existing interpretive traditions.

Additional interest lies in the fact that Pseudo-Solomon's retelling of the biblical story bears witness to "an *interpretive tradition* about the biblical story that by his time had already become part of the common understanding of that biblical story."[109] It is a point that Enns makes repeatedly in the ensuing discussion. The point is, in fact, crucial to Enns's basic thesis for the chapter: that there are "similarities between the New Testament's use of the Old Testament and that of other Second Temple texts, both in terms of the interpretive *methods* used and the interpretive *traditions* adopted."[110]

Before providing examples from the NT that demonstrate this thesis, Enns offers one further example of Second Temple hermeneutics and a brief summary of the argument to that point. His example of Second Temple hermeneutics is drawn this time from the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Qumran pesher on Habakkuk (1QpHab) demonstrates "three meanings for one [biblical] passage, and not one of them in the least concerned with whether it adheres to the meaning intended in the book of Habakkuk."[111] Distinct from Pseudo-Solomon's commentary, the Qumran text's departures from the original biblical meaning appear to emerge from the Qumran community's consciousness of living in the eschaton.[112] They were the people of the end time: for them, "biblical interpretation was not a means of discovering ancient meaning but of using the Bible to validate the present self-understanding of the Qumran community." Enns is thus able

[109] Ibid., 122.

[110] Ibid., 128.

[111] Ibid., 130-31.

[112] Ibid., 129.

to apply an earlier point (noted above), viz., "it is safe to say that the interpretation of Habakkuk 1:5 in 1QpHab is not an exercise in grammatical-historical exegesis."[113]

In summing up the lessons gleaned from Second Temple literature, Enns reasserts the main points. First, Second Temple biblical interpreters at times manipulated the text to suit their purposes; such may be referred to as interpretive *methods*.[114] Second, the interpreters wrote within, and adopted, existing interpretive *traditions*. Third, they were not motivated to reproduce the intention of the original human author, but operated on "very different standards from those of modern interpreters."[115]

5.2 Second Temple Hermeneutics in the New Testament

With the caveat that the NT does not *precisely* reflect the preceding examples, Enns asserts that the NT is "a Second Temple interpretive text."[116] As such, we may expect it "to behave in a way that would make it recognizable to its contemporaries, rather than expecting it to conform to our own twenty-first century expectations."[117] Enns discusses a number of examples to illustrate just how the NT writers "behave" in

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[113] Ibid., 131.

[114] The term "exegetical *techniques*" is also employed, on the same page, but this would seem to be subsumed under the alternative term "interpretive methods" (see *Inspiration*, 131). As noted below, the ensuing discussion is presented under two, not three, headings: "Apostolic Hermeneutics as a Second Temple Phenomenon: Interpretive Methods" (132-42) and "Apostolic Hermeneutics as a Second Temple Phenomenon: Interpretive Traditions" (142-51).

[115] Ibid., 131.

[116] Ibid., 131. In "Fuller Meaning," Enns enlarges upon this caveat: "This is not to say that their interpretive comments are wholly determined by their Second Temple context. It is, however, to acknowledge that how the NT authors approached the task of biblical interpretation (their methods) and how they understood certain OT episodes (their traditions) boldly bear the unmistakable stamp of their historical setting. But more important than this bare observation … is the fact that this very process is one that also bears the stamp of God's imprimatur" (202).

[117] *Inspiration*, 131-32.

this respect. The examples are offered in two sections that differentiate between interpretive methods and interpretive traditions.[118]

These methods and the traditions constitute two dimensions of what Enns refers to as "apostolic hermeneutics."[119] In respect to the first, Enns wishes to demonstrate that apostolic interpretive methods do not always conform to the modern grammatical-historical exegetical methodology.[120] Regarding interpretive traditions, the existence of these traditions bears witness to "what constituted Paul's 'interpreted Bible'."[121] In most cases, the traditions are attested in Second Temple literature, though whether those references pre-date the NT writings is, in Enns's presentation of the material, not always clear.[122]

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[118] For reasons of space, Enns's treatment of the several texts he advances in support of his argument cannot be fully delineated here. Brief details follow. In respect to interpretive methods, Enns discusses: (1) Matthew's well-known citation of Hos. 11:1 (Matt. 2:15), an example that Enns had treated in detail in his earlier "Matthew and Hosea" (2001; see n. 13, above); (2) Paul's handling of Isa. 49:8 (2 Cor. 6:2), so different from "modern, scientific exegesis" (*Inspiration*, 135); (3) Paul's use of the word "seed" in Gal. 3:16, 29, where "Paul seizes the grammatical ambiguity of the word, in good Second Temple fashion, and uses it to make a profound point about Christ and his people" (Ibid., 137-38); (4) Paul's use of Isa. 59:20 in Rom. 11:26-27, where Paul amends the text to suit his interpretive purpose; (5) and the citation of Ps. 95:9-10 in Heb. 3:7-11, also treated earlier by Enns in his "Creation and Recreation: Psalm 95 and its Interpretation in Hebrews 3:1–4:13," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 255-80. In respect to interpretive *traditions* lying behind particular NT texts, Enns presents seven examples. All of these had been treated in two previous articles. The first six examples–"Jannes and Jambres," "Noah, the Preacher of Righteousness," "The Dispute over Moses' Body," "Jude and 1 Enoch," "Moses' Egyptian Education," and "The Law Was Put into Effect through Angels"–were each briefly discussed in "Apostolic Hermeneutics" (2003; see n. 36, above), with the last of these six receiving a much fuller treatment in his later "Fuller Meaning" (185-197 in Berding and Lunde; see n. 96, above). The final example–"Paul's Moveable Well"–was the subject of an entire article, "The 'Moveable Well'" (1996; see n. 36, above). In "Fuller Meaning," Enns selects just three of the examples referred to in his earlier works: Abraham's seed, the law put into effect through angels, and Matthew's citation of Hos. 11:1. Each of these are there treated in more depth than in *Inspiration*. Enns's treatment of the foregoing texts is intended to demonstrate that that the New Testament writings, in places, exhibit similarities with the interpretive *practices* and interpretive *traditions* of Second Temple literature.

[119] *Inspiration*, 132, 142.

[120] Ibid., 132.

[121] Ibid., 143.

[122] Enns cites a total of twelve different extrabiblical sources for these seven traditions. They are: (1) for Jannes and Jambres: the Covenant of Damascus (5:17-19) and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Ex. 1:15; (2)

For Enns, it is a moot point. His comment in respect to Jude's statement regarding Enoch (Jude 14-15) may rightly be taken to represent his approach to the other examples he provides:

> Jude did not have what we know as *1 Enoch* in front of him. The entire work grew from before the time of Christ until the early medieval period. … The real issue is not that we have a canonical author citing a noncanonical text authoritatively. The more important issue is the *traditions* about Enoch that were in circulation and to which early interpreters–including Jude–had access.[123]

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for Noah, the preacher of righteousness: Josephus's *Antiquities* 1.3.1. §74, the *Sibylline Oracles* 1.125-95, and a portion of the Babylonian Talmud (tractate *Sanhedrin* 108a); (3) for the dispute over Moses' body: the *Assumption* (or, *Testament*) *of Moses* (as attributed by Clement of Alexandria and Origen) (4) for Jude 14-15: *1 Enoch* 1:9; (5) for Moses' Egyptian education: Philo's *Life of Moses* 1.5. §§21-24 and Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge* lines 36-38; (6) for the law put into effect through angels: *Targum Onqelos* to Deut. 33:2 and *Jubilees* 1.27-29 and 2.1; and (7) for Paul's moveable well: *Targum Onqelos* to Num. 21:16-20 and the Tosefta tractate *Sukkah* 3.11. While exact dates for many of these sources are, admittedly, difficult to establish, Enns shows little interest in providing the reader with a clear conception of their chronological relationship to the NT. In only two cases does he indicate clearly the dating of a source. These are Philo's *Life of Moses* and Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge*, apparent witnesses to the tradition of Moses' Egyptian education. Both of these, Enns claims, were written prior to the NT. One may note also the case of Clement and Origen, both from the third century CE, who attribute Jude's comment to the *Assumption of Moses*. Enns does not directly suggest a date for this work; however, the comment given in connection with his reference to it ("the extracanonical origin of Jude's comment is beyond debate" [*Inspiration*, 145]) implies a date sometime prior to the New Testament. As for the two possible sources for Paul's moveable well, Enns provides no date for the *Targum Onqelos* and offers only the comment that the Tosefta, "a compilation of rabbinic traditions that predates the Talmud … [is] relatively old and therefore closer [than the Talmud? than the Targum?] to the time of the New Testament" (150). In connection with the three sources for Noah as a preacher of righteousness (Josephus's *Antiquities*, the *Sybilline Oracles* and the Talmudic tractate *Sanhedrin*), Enns offers no more than hints: much of *Antiquities* was written "for the benefit of Josephus's Roman audience," while the *Sybilline Oracles* and *Sanhedrin* are "a bit later" (143). No clues are given as to the dating of the remaining four sources, with the exception of the pseudepigraphical *1 Enoch*. Regarding this work, Enns informs the reader that much of it has pre-Christian origins, while conceding that Jude may not necessarily have read any part of it, or even known of its existence. The lay reader, for whom Enns's book is intended, will likely struggle to achieve a clear conception of the chronological relationships of these ancient texts with the New Testament. Enns is to be faulted on this count. Nevertheless, it can be readily appreciated that the thrust of Enns's argument does not depend on knowing precisely the dates of these works, or whether even they predate the NT or not. His argument, simply, is that the NT writers were able to draw upon various biblically related traditions (presumably written or oral) that were common currency in the culture in which they thought and wrote. The strength of the *simplicity* of this line of argument is in its non-dependence upon dates or direct connection between the extrabiblical and biblical sources. The potential weakness lies in that very lack of detail, which naturally invites closer investigation, a task outside the parameters of the present research.

[123] *Inspiration*, 146. A similar point had already been made in a previous example, that of Peter's reference to Noah as a "preacher of righteousness" in 2 Pet. 2:5: "Peter refers to Noah in a way that has no explicit biblical support but is found in other ancient sources. … His allusion to Noah's preaching activity is too brief to have generated the subsequent *Jewish* interpretive activity" (144). Compare also Enns's later comment in connection with the 'moveable well'. All of the Second Temple texts cited by Enns in connection with this example post-date the apostle's writings. Perhaps *they* were influenced by Paul's brief comment in 1 Corinthians 10? Enns's denial is dogmatic: "Paul's incidental comment would

Enns sees significance in the fact that the allusions to extrabiblical details in each of these examples are "rather incidental to the surrounding context." Their very brevity and incidental nature "demonstrate the degree to which these traditions were part of the common discourse about the Bible." Enns finds cause here to invoke again the incarnational analogy, for that the NT writers should present their thoughts so to communicate with their audience is something we should expect: "it is simply another demonstration of the degree to which God's word is couched in terms familiar to the culture in which it is given."[124]

Having presented the examples, Enns concludes the chapter with three further sections in which he attempts to draw together the threads of his argument. In the section, "What Makes Apostolic Hermeneutics Unique?" Enns reiterates that the NT shares with Second Temple literature certain interpretive methods and traditions, and that "the driving force behind their Old Testament interpretations was … their belief that the eschaton had come *in Christ*."[125] Repeating his earlier suggestion that the NT writers did not (at times) arrive at their conclusions from an objective reading of the text, Enns adds that this hermeneutic may be characterised as *eisegesis* rather than *exegesis*. For evangelicals, "it is precisely a dispassionate, unbiased, objective reading

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have no meaning unless there was in existence a well-known tradition of a mobile source of water to back it up. Both Paul and the other texts are witnesses to an interpretive tradition that preceded both of them. … It is not just the words on the page but the interpretive tradition as well that made up Paul's Old Testament" (151; compare a similar comment, also in the context of the moveable well [150]). Elsewhere, Enns is less guarded. In connection with his discussion on 2 Esdras 3:7 (Adam's transgression leading to "death for him and for his descendants") and its similarity to Rom 5:12, he admits that "the direction of influence–or any influence at all–is *typically* hard to determine" (*Evolution of Adam*, 101; emphasis supplied).

[124] *Inspiration*, 142.

[125] Ibid., 152.

that is normally considered to constitute valid reading. But what may be considered valid today cannot be the determining factor for understanding what the apostles did." It may appear that the apostles were taking the Old Testament out of context; in reality, however, they were simply taking it out of *one* context and placing into *another*: the context of Christ.[126]

It is at this point that Enns introduces the term *christotelic* to describe this eschatological hermeneutic.[127] "What constitutes a Christian reading of the Old Testament is that it proceeds to the second reading, the eschatological, christotelic reading–and this is precisely what the apostles model for us." Enns believes that with this understanding, the OT is allowed to retain its "varied trajectories"–it is not flattened out–while accepting the hermeneutical methods of the NT writers, as alien as they may sometimes appear to the modern reader.[128] There is, in addition, an *ecclesiotelic* dimension to apostolic hermeneutics: "the apostolic use of the Old Testament does not focus exclusively on the *person* of Christ, but also on the *body* of Christ, his people, the church." The *ecclesiotelic* dimension, however, is suggested as an extension of the *christotelic* dimension;[129] for Enns it is the latter that is the driving force of apostolic hermeneutics.

Enns is careful not to leave the reader with the impression that the *christotelic* and *ecclesiotelic* dimensions explain the entire New Testament. "There is variety in

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[126] Ibid., 152-53.

[127] Enns had already introduced this term in his earlier "Apostolic Hermeneutics," 277.

[128] Ibid., 153-154.

[129] Ibid., 154-55. As in "Apostolic Hermeneutics," 278, Enns acknowledges his indebtedness to Richard Hays for the term *ecclesiotelic* (*Inspiration*, 164).

how the apostles handled the Old Testament … [yet] the shape of apostolic hermeneutics is best explained by bearing in mind the Second Temple world in which they thought and wrote, as well as the fundamental conviction that Jesus is the *telos* of the Old Testament. These factors are seen again and again on the pages of the New Testament."[130]

In the second of his three concluding sections ("Should We Handle the Old Testament the Way the Apostles Did?") Enns considers the role the foregoing should play in the church's use of the Old Testament today. He poses a dilemma:

> 1. If we follow the apostles, we may wind up handling the Old Testament in a way that violates some of our interpretive instincts;
> 2. If we don't follow them, we are either admitting that the New Testament authors were misguided in showing us how Jesus is connected to the Old Testament, or that their hermeneutic is theirs alone and cannot be reproduced today.[131]

Justifying the apostle's hermeneutic on the basis that they were inspired and thus had the authority to interpret as they did is immediately rejected by Enns. His counter-argument is that it is precisely because they *were* apostles that we *should* follow them. Furthermore, we cannot appeal to the apostles' apostolic authority to avoid the dilemma raised by apostolic hermeneutics. After all, the very fact that their interpretive methods and traditions were held in common with other (non-inspired) Second Temple interpreters suggests that "if anything is *not* a sign of their unique apostolic authority, it is in how the New Testament writers handled the Old Testament."[132]

The usual evangelical response to the dilemma is to deny that the apostles were practicing the faulty hermeneutics of Second Temple Judaism; rather, "the New

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[130] *Inspiration*, 155; cf. "time and time again," in the same broad context (152).

[131] Ibid., 156.

[132] Ibid., 156-57.

Testament's use of the Old Testament is essentially in harmony with grammatical-historical exegesis." However, to do so, in Enns's view, is to isolate the NT from its Second Temple context, necessitating the expenditure of considerable effort in "lining up the New Testament's use of the Old Testament with the original context of the Old Testament passage cited."[133]

Enns's preferred solution is to "acknowledge the Second Temple setting of apostolic hermeneutics but discern carefully what sorts of things can and cannot carry over to today." This is possible, he claims, by distinguishing between *hermeneutical goal* and *exegetical method*, a variation on a position advocated by Richard N. Longenecker.[134] The apostles' hermeneutical goal was the centrality of the death and resurrection of Christ; this was their christotelic hermeneutic. Here we *must* follow them.[135]

Enns is aware of a difficulty with his proposed solution:

> However much we might regard certain Second Temple interpretive methods and traditions as unworkable in our modern context we still cannot simply fill the void by adopting the grammatical-historical method as the default and exclusively normative hermeneutic for modern Christians.[136]

We must take seriously the christotelic hermeneutic of the apostles and the apostolic authority that undergirds it; nor can we ignore the evidence of Second Temple interpretive influences on the NT writings. The way through the impasse is to think

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[133] Ibid., 158.

[134] Ibid., 158. Longenecker outlines his position in *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999).

[135] Ibid. Enns notes that the inevitable result of adopting this approach undermines Longenecker's otherwise "common sense" proposal. For a christotelic (second) reading of the OT cannot be obtained through a literal (first) reading as proposed by Longenecker.

[136] Ibid., 159.

less of *method* in biblical interpretation and more of "an intuitive, Spirit-led engagement of Scripture, with the anchor being not what the Old Testament author intended but how Christ gives the Old Testament its final coherence."[137]

In his final section of the chapter ("What We Can Learn from Apostolic Hermeneutics") Enns offers a few concluding thoughts relative to biblical interpretation in general. Though not mentioning it by name, he intimates that the incarnational analogy helps us to understand the issue grappled with in this chapter: "For the apostles to interpret the Old Testament in ways consistent with the hermeneutical expectations of the Second Temple world is analogous to Christ himself becoming a Second Temple citizen." This leads to the conclusion that, this being so, we too must read and understand Scripture from within "our own historical moment."[138]

In endeavoring, within our historical moment, to "engage the Old Testament in its christotelic fullness," we must remember that biblical interpretation "is at least as much art as it is science." It is not just a matter of uncovering the meaning of the text. There are layers of meaning to be exposed.[139] Biblical interpretation is a community task that has as its purpose to "communicate the gospel in all its fullness." This is not an easy task, but despite the difficulties should be seen "more as a path to walk than a

[137] Ibid., 159-60.

[138] Ibid., 161.

[139] Ibid.

fortress to be defended." "At the end of the path is not simply the gaining of knowledge about the text, but God himself who speaks to us therein."[140]

5.3 Summary

In Enns's view, the way in which the New Testament writers handle the Old Testament often differs from contemporary hermeneutical standards. Common evangelical explanations for this phenomenon are inadequate. For Enns, the New Testament authors' approach to the Old Testament took place within a Second Temple context. That context influenced the authors' interpretive methods, such that they did not always interpret OT texts according to the original context and intention of the OT writers. The Second Temple context also provided the apostles with existing interpretive traditions through which they viewed OT events and personalities. The traditions constituted what Enns calls an *interpreted Bible*. The apostles employed these Second Temple hermeneutics to interpret the Old Testament in light of Christ's coming. Enns labels this a *christotelic* hermeneutic.

6. The Challenge of Biblical History and Historiography

The second chapter of *Inspiration* is entitled "The Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Literature," but it will here be treated under the heading, "Biblical History and Historiography." It has been noted already that the main focus of this

[140] Ibid., 162-63. The issue of interpretation again comes to the fore in the Conclusion of Enns's *Evolution of Adam*. In that final chapter he states then expounds a series of theses, the first of which is short and pointed: "Literalism is not an option" (*Evolution of Adam*, 137). A "straight" reading of the Bible, he asserts, is untenable (131).

chapter in *Inspiration* is history and historiography. The distinction between these two terms must also be noted, along with the justification for applying both to the chapter.

In this chapter, Enns deals with three groups of texts: the first relate to creation and the flood; the second to customs, laws, and proverbs; and the third to Israel and her kings. By far the greater attention is given to the first and third of these. In connection with the first group, Enns poses the question, "Does the Bible, particularly Genesis, report *historical* fact, or is it just a bunch of stories culled from other ancient cultures."[141] The issue is whether or not the Genesis narratives are *historical*. By contrast, the issue with Israel and her kings is not whether Scripture is providing history, but more the *way* in which that history is told. It is a matter of historiography.[142]

Comparison of the biblical texts with ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature serves the purpose of allowing Enns to construct a particular view of how Scripture's historical–or supposedly historical–narratives are to be approached. The resulting system also forms the foundation for the argument that Enns constructs in *Evolution of Adam*: "Israel's stories of origins functioned as statements of self-definition" rather than having "any relevance to modern debates over human origins."[143]

Enns's method in the third and fourth chapters of *Inspiration* is to first explain the nature of the problem he intends to deal with and then to present the details.[144] In

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[141] *Inspiration*, 38 (emphasis supplied).

[142] It is stated as such by Enns. The issue raised by this third group of texts is suggested in question form: "Israel and Its Kings: Is Good Historiography Objective or Biased?" (*Inspiration*, 43).

[143] *Evolution of Adam*, 59, 34.

[144] In the third chapter of *Inspiration*, Enns commences his discussion under the heading, "The Problem of Theological Diversity in the Old Testament." Following that introduction, he proceeds to examine specific examples of diversity. In the fourth chapter, his comments in the introductory section ("Do New

this second chapter, however, Enns commences immediately with the data: the ANE texts. They are considered in two groups, the first dealing with Akkadian Literature (from Assyria and Babylon), and the second with other ANE texts.[145] Each is presented with sufficient commentary to provide the reader with a grasp of their content and of their relevance to the Old Testament. There are texts that relate to the creation and flood stories of Genesis, to the Pentateuchal laws, to the covenant texts of Deuteronomy, and to the book of Proverbs. Others appear to throw light on particular OT kings and their works, such as King David, Hezekiah and his water tunnel, and Omri and his interactions with Moab; while another provides insights into the general culture of the ancient Near East.

His overview of the relevant ANE texts completed, Enns then poses three questions of such significance that they need to be quoted here in full:

> 1. Does the Bible, particularly Genesis, report historical fact, or is it just a bunch of stories culled from other ancient cultures?
> 2. What does it mean for other cultures to have an influence on the Bible that we believe is revealed by God? Can we say that the Bible is unique or special? If the Bible is such a 'culturally conditioned' product, what possible relevance can it have for us today?
> 3. Does this mean that the history of the church, which carried on for many centuries before this evidence came to light, was wrong in how it thought about its Bible?[146]

The three questions boil down to just one: "*Is the Bible still the word of God?*"[147] Nevertheless, Enns opts to maintain the three categories as he teases out the implications of the ANE texts for biblical theology.[148]

Testament Authors Misuse the Old Testament?") similarly serve to orient his readers to the subject before commencing his detailed discussion of the relevant Second Temple literature.

[145] From the available Akkadian texts Enns presents *Enuma Elish*, *Atrahasis*, *Gilgamesh*, the *Nuzi* tablets, and the *Code of Hammurabi*; representing other ANE texts are Hittite *Suzerainty Treaties*, the *Tel Dan Inscription*, the *Siloam Tunnel Inscription*, the *Mesha Inscription*, and the *Instruction of Amenemope*.

[146] *Inspiration*, 38-39.

6.1 Genesis and the ANE Texts

Enns begins with the Genesis issue. That there is *some* relationship between the Akkadian texts and their biblical counterparts is acknowledged by both conservatives and "critical scholars."[149] But what, exactly, is the nature of that relationship? If we accept that the Akkadian stories are not historically factual, "how can we say logically that the biblical stories are true … when they both look so very much alike?"[150] Put another way, if one set of texts is labelled *myth*, why not the other?

Conservative Christians tend to resist applying the term *myth* to the biblical narratives; to be worthy of the name "Bible" the Genesis narratives must be thought of as history.[151] Enns admits the term *myth* is not constructive in this issue and should be abandoned, given the long history of meanings attached to it. But since there is no scholarly consensus on an alternative, he chooses to retain it, for the purpose of his discussion. He therefore defines the term carefully: "Myth is an ancient, premodern,

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[147] Ibid., 39 (emphasis in original).

[148] Enns's presentation from this point on is not straightforward, though neither is it illogical. The three groups of texts are again considered, this time in connection with a key question for each group, viz., "Is Genesis myth or history?" (39-41), "Is revelation unique?" (41-43), and "Is good historiography objective or biased?" (43-45). The discussions are brief (approximately two pages for each) and somewhat introductory in nature. The two following sections are likewise introduced as questions ("How have these issues been handled in the past?" and "How can we think differently through these issues?" These two brief sections form an interlude before the three ANE text groups are once again considered, this time in more depth and with the apparent purpose of providing answers to the three key questions. Given the somewhat back-and-forth nature of his presentation, it would be tedious to summarise Enns's arguments section by section; it is necessary only to grasp enough of the thrust of his arguments to appreciate the conclusions he draws.

[149] *Inspiration*, 39.

[150] Ibid., 39-40.

[151] *Inspiration*, 49.

prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories: Who are we? Where do we come from?"[152]

The "prescientific" element of this definition is important to Enns's overall understanding. He draws a sharp dichotomy between the modern, scientific way of understanding and explaining our universe and the ancient, prescientific conceptions, between modern standards of truth and error and those of premodern cultures.[153] It is important to notice that this observation is, for Enns, closely tied to the concept of myth. For whether or not the Genesis narratives depend to some degree on the earlier ANE texts,[154] the concept to grasp is that "Genesis reflects an ancient Near Eastern worldview that clearly is significantly older." And that worldview–the context in which the Genesis narratives were written–"was not a modern scientific one but an ancient mythic one."[155] Thus,

> It is a fundamental misunderstanding of Genesis to expect it to answer questions generated by a modern worldview, such as whether the days were literal or figurative, or whether the days of creation can be lined up with modern science, or whether the flood was local or universal.[156]

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[152] Ibid., 50 (emphases in original). The same definition appears also on p. 40.

[153] Ibid., 40-41.

[154] Enns argues that the ANE myths are "almost certainly" older than the biblical accounts. He does so on the basis that, first, Israelite culture is itself much younger than those of its Near Eastern neighbours; second, "writing was generally restricted to established, settled kingdoms and was not found among wandering peoples" (as the Israelites were); and third, the Hebrew language as we find it in the Old Testament did not exist in the second millennium B.C. when the existing copies of the Akkadian texts were written (*Inspiration*, 50). Enns nevertheless disavows any suggestion that Genesis borrows directly from the Babylonian stories; the relationship between the two sets of texts "is not one of *textual* dependence but of *conceptual* similarity" (55).

[155] Ibid., 55. In *Evolution of Adam*, Enns informs the reader that the ANE texts *Enuma Elish*, *Gilgamesh* and *Atrahasis* serve as "genre calibration": "Placing Genesis side by side with the primordial tales of other ancient cultures helps us gain a clearer understanding of the nature of Genesis and thus what we as contemporary readers have a right to expect from Genesis" (*Evolution of Adam*, 35). What we may *not* expect from Israel's creation stories are answers to "the kinds of questions that occupy modern scientific or even historical studies" (35-36).

[156] *Inspiration*., 55.

Enns acknowledges that this understanding is hardly new. What he wishes to emphasise, however, is that understanding Genesis as being grounded in ancient myth *does not make it less inspired*; rather, "such rootedness in the culture of the time is precisely what it means for God to speak to his people." God enters *their* world at a certain time and place, as with the incarnation of Jesus. For Enns, incarnation means enculturation.[157]

6.2 Laws, Proverbs, and the ANE Texts

Enns's argument in respect to the second group of ANE texts is less involved, though scarcely less crucial to his overarching thesis. These texts "provide a basic historical backdrop for the biblical accounts of Israel's early ancestors" in respect to their customs, laws, and proverbs. They are problematic, some of them even "disconcerting," in terms of what Enns calls "moral situatedness." The similarity of many of the Mosaic laws and Proverbs of Solomon to those of neighbouring cultures challenges the assumption that the inspired materials are unique. Since the laws given at Sinai were said to be directly revealed by God, and the Proverbs set forth as wisdom *from God*, the very nature of revelation as traditionally understood is brought into question.[158] As with the previous group of texts, then, the nature of the Bible's message is revealed as "enculturated."[159] Appeal to the incarnational analogy is again implied:

> The similarities between Israel's conduct and that of the other nations does not make Israel less unique among the nations any more than Jesus' sharing in the customs and

[157] Ibid., 56.

[158] Ibid., 42.

[159] Ibid., 43.

> practices of first-century Palestine makes him less unique. Rather, both Israel's practices and Christ himself are evidence of 'God with us.'[160]

One additional element is added to this conclusion, and it is similar to one suggested in connection with the first group of texts. In both cases, Enns attempts a synthesis. If Genesis should not be expected to answer the types of questions generated by a modern, scientific worldview, what, then, *can* be expected of it? The following answer is suggested: "The question that Genesis is prepared to answer is whether Yahweh, the God of Israel, is worthy of worship."[161] Similarly, what are we to take from the 'revelation' that Israel's moral precepts, her laws and proverbs, are not unique? It is that they demonstrate Israel's claim to be connected with the one true God; they are, in effect, a declaration to the other nations: "This is the law of God who delivered us from Egypt; this is the wisdom of God who created heaven and earth. We worship him."[162]

6.3 Biblical History and the ANE Texts

If the first group of ANE texts provides reason to question the historicity of the early Genesis narratives, while the second group provides a historical backdrop to the biblical narratives, the texts in the third group "lend clear support to the basic historicity" of the monarchic period of Israel's history. "As such, these texts do not create a problem to be solved."[163] The latter is a potentially misleading statement,

[160] Ibid., 59.

[161] Ibid., 55.

[162] Ibid., 59 (emphases in original).

[163] Ibid., 43.

unless the reader is careful to note the force of the word "create." For clearly the texts do pose a problem, as Enns repeatedly affirms.[164] But the "problem … is not one *generated* solely by the ancient Near Eastern evidence … Rather, it is a problem internal to the Old Testament itself."[165] The nuances of Enns's argument need to be clearly grasped.

Enns begins by closing the door to an extrapolation that might be made from his opening affirmation. Since the texts in this third group support the basic historicity of Israel's monarchic period, may we not conclude that "Genesis and other early portions of the Bible" are likewise historical? The reasons why we may not are twofold. First, there is extrabiblical evidence for the monarchic period but not for the period of so-called primeval history (Gen. 1-11) and the period from Abraham to the end of the judges. Second, the monarchic period was essentially different from those that preceded it. Enjoying a period of relative stability and settledness as a *nation* with the various institutions of a monarchy, Israel began to develop a more "historical self-consciousness." In such a period one would expect to see "something more closely resembling … 'good' history writing by modern standards: a more or less contemporary, eyewitness account."[166]

The contemporary ANE texts bear witness, then, to the essential historicity of this period in Israel. But at least one of them does more than that. The Mesha Inscription is a "sustained literary product" that is, moreover, a "seriously *biased*

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[164] In addition to the quotation that follows in the main text, above, note also: "Simply put, the problem before us is the historical character of precisely those Old Testament narratives that seem to report historical events" (Ibid., 45).

[165] Ibid., 59 (emphasis supplied).

[166] Ibid., 43-44.

account of Mesha's reign." It is biased in favour of King Mesha of Moab. More than that, "other elements in the Mesha Inscription make it quite clear that this is not objective history writing."[167] Is this, perhaps, true of Israel's historical writing as well? On the one hand, that the biblical writers, in stark contrast to the Mesha Inscription, are willing to criticize their kings "may suggest a degree of objectivity and sobriety on their part, which could imply greater historical accuracy. Yet the fact that only *one* southern king is accorded nothing but praise in Samuel-Kings may suggest that the writer did have "an ax to grind."[168] From this observation, Enns finds reason to pose a number of questions that move the issue away from that of historicity: "What were the *ancient* conventions for writing history? What did it mean to record history? What can be called good or accurate history writing by standards that were in existence when the Bible was written?"[169] These are questions of historiography.

Enns notes how this text differs from the Tel Dan and Siloam Tunnel texts. The latter simply bear witness to historical events–they make passing reference to David's descendants and to Hezekiah's tunnel–but they are not historiography. Not so with the Mesha Inscription: it, too, bears witness to historical fact–the existence of King Omri of Israel–but its main purpose is propaganda. It is a biased account of the *significance* of Mesha's reign. It is historiography.[170]

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[167] Ibid., 44.

[168] Ibid., 44-45.

[169] Ibid., 45.

[170] *Inspiration*, 60. "Historiography refers either to the study of the methodology and development of "history" (as a discipline), or to a body of historical work on a specialized topic." Wikipedia contributors, "Historiography," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historiography (accessed 17 June, 2016). Enns's application of the term to the Mesha Inscription may, with some latitude, be accepted as consistent with the latter part of the foregoing definition. The ANE text is, in that case, the "body of historical work on a specialized topic."

Much of the remainder of Enns's treatment of this third group of texts is devoted to establishing the point that "there is *no* historiography that does not have a decidedly interpretive element."[171] And, crucially, "what is true of all historiography is also true of biblical historiography–it is not objective."[172] Nor is it the early narratives of Genesis that Enns has in mind here (he has already suggested that they belong to the category of *myth*[173]); rather, it is the so-called *historical* books of the Bible that demonstrate the essentially subjective, interpretive nature of biblical historiography.

Thus the books of 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings (Samuel-Kings), in common with all other written accounts of history, are a *literary* product, "based on *historical events* that are shaped to conform to the *purpose* the historian wants to get across." In the case

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[171] *Inspiration*, 62.

[172] Ibid., 66.

[173] At no point, either in *Inspiration* or in *Evolution of Adam*, does Enns directly state that the Creation and Flood stories are myth. But that he intends to imply something very close to this is almost beyond question. In *Inspiration*, after defining myth as "an ancient, premodern, prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories …" (40, 50), Enns draws the reader towards the idea that Israel's creation stories are myth, but stops short of stating so directly: "If the ancient Near Eastern stories are myth (defined in this way as prescientific stories of origins), and since the biblical stories are similar enough to these stories to invite comparison, does this indicate that myth is the proper category for understanding Genesis? Before the discovery of the Akkadian stories, one could quite safely steer clear of such a question, but this is no longer the case" (41). No further suggestion of myth is added. From *Evolution of Adam* one may note the following: "This vital piece of Old Testament theology [that Yahweh alone among "the crowd of less worthy gods" is worthy of worship] will be missed if we obscure the mythic context of Israel's stories of origins…" (*Evolution of Adam*, 65). The meaning of Enns's statement is not completely transparent. What does he mean by "mythic *context*"? Merely that Babylonian mythological beliefs were the environment in which Israel's theologians lived and wrote? This seems unlikely, for then it would have been sufficient for Enns to note that *a great deal of the entire Old Testament* arose within a mythic context. Limiting this context to Israel's stories of origins strongly implies a context that *inheres within* Israel's creation stories. One must exercise caution in attributing to an author meaning that goes beyond the words he uses; but Enns's statement seems able to bear substantial meaning only if "context" is taken really to mean "content." Theology, after all, must be established from Scripture's actual content rather than from an external context. This conclusion (that by "context" Enns means "content") is reinforced by the wording of the remainder of Enns's statement. The full sentence reads: "This vital piece of Old Testament theology will be missed if we obscure the mythic context of Israel's stories of origins or if we fail to see how Israel's creation theology is expressed in the context of their national life." The two clauses, "obscure the mythic context of Israel's stories of origin" and "fail to see … Israel's creation theology," would seem to be basically parallel in meaning. The mythic context of Israel's stories of origin *is*, substantially, the theology. For Enns, whether he states it clearly or not, Israel's creation stories are myth.

of Samuel-Kings, the purpose is probably to provide an explanation for why Israel went into exile.[174] It follows logically that if all written history (historiography[175]) is selective and biased, no two accounts of the same history will be identical. This is precisely the point that Enns proceeds to make. For Scripture presents not one but *two* accounts of the early days of the monarchy through to the exile: Samuel-Kings and 1-2 Chronicles. While clearly interacting with the earlier account, Chronicles "is an independent piece of historiography." It is an "*alternate* history of Israel, one that differs from Samuel-Kings because it is told from *a different perspective and for different reasons*, namely, from the perspective of those who had returned from captivity in Babylon."[176] More specifically, the chronicler, employs Israel's past for the purpose of interpreting its own *present* circumstances."[177]

Inevitably, then, differences between the two histories will be found in the recorded details. Enns offers one example, from the prophet Nathan's promise that David's descendants would sit on the throne in Jerusalem forever: 2 Sam. 7:16 and 1 Chron. 17:14. Where the early account presents Nathan's words in the *second* person

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[174] *Inspiration*, 62.

[175] At this point in the discussion Enns clearly equates "written accounts of history" with historiography. Note the similar statements on the one page: "All written accounts of history are *literary products* that are based on *historical events* that are shaped to conform to the *purpose* the historian wants to get across;" "That Israel's historiography is written for such a purpose does not make it untrue because it is not objective;" "The truth of the matter is that *all* historiography exhibits the interplay between event, presentation, and purpose." (Ibid., 62). The distinction between written accounts of history/historiography and other written documents such as the Tel Dan and Siloam Tunnel inscriptions that simply witness to historical events (Ibid., 60) is, indeed, a fine one. Whether or not such a distinction is a little forced or lacking in the nuance required in any serious discussion of historiography, Enns's basic point is unlikely to be contested: any presentation of historical events and personalities will be selective and, to that extent, interpretive.

[176] Ibid., 63.

[177] Ibid., 64. With this argument, Enns seems to be implying that Israel's second version of its history arises from this desire to retell the story from a different perspective and for a particular generation.

("your house" and "your king"), the chronicler sets them in the *first* person ("I will set him over my house and my kingdom"). The later change of wording, according to Enns, has a theological purpose. Evangelical attempts to harmonize accounts such as these are, therefore, disallowed, being difficult to apply consistently and, in this case at least, against the evidence and common sense. The biblical interpreter must learn to accept that divergent accounts exist and to handle the fact "with integrity."[178]One key to being able to do so lies in viewing the Bible's "behavior" from the perspective of the historical context in which it was written.[179]

There is, in addition, the issue of the relationship between the text of the Bible and the events it reports. That is, for example, what did Nathan *actually* say? What 2 Samuel reports or what 1 Chronicles reports? Neither? Or a little of both, perhaps? Enns suggests that the Bible is not set up to answer such questions. Not that history, as such, is unimportant; rather, "the *reporting* of historical events–historiography–always involves the shaping of history for particular purposes."[180] This, he claims, is the explanation that makes the best sense of the evidence. However we answer the question, he adds,

> is not nearly as important as the posture from which we attempt these answers: that we fully respect the Bible as God's word at the outset, not *because* we can make sense of it all but *despite* our inability to do so at times.[181]

The evidence presented, it remains only for Enns to provide a concluding statement in which he briefly suggests implications of the foregoing. He makes three

[178] Ibid., 65.

[179] Ibid., 66.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid. (emphases in original).

points, in each of which the "incarnational dimension" of Scripture is specifically invoked. This incarnational dimension is seen, first, in the fact that the Old Testament is an ancient Near Eastern phenomenon.[182] Enns does not elaborate, but it may be understood from the preceding discussion that he means the Scripture is "enculturated."[183] His second point follows from the first: "if the Old Testament is a cultural phenomenon, how binding is it upon us whose cultural landscape is quite different?" That is, where and to what extent is it normative? Enns admits that this is a large issue. He here attempts no more than to be suggestive. Perhaps, after all, the Old Testament has not been given to "tell us what to do." Perhaps we should rather see it as part of a larger story that comes to its climax in Christ; thus, "this story, which ends with the incarnation of God's Son, had an incarnational dimension from the start."[184]

Finally, Enns commends the need to recognize the incarnational aspect of theological thinking in all ages. For "if *even the Bible* is a cultural phenomenon through and through, we should not be surprised to see that our own theological thinking is wrapped in cultural clothing as well." Not that the gospel itself "shifts with every cultural wind" but that each generation must endeavor to understand how that gospel "connects with the world in which that generation is living."[185]

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[182] Ibid., 67.

[183] The term "enculturated" was used by Enns in connection with the second group of texts (*Inspiration*, 43).

[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid., 67-68.

6.4 Summary

Modern biblical and archaeological scholarship has revealed that the Old Testament contains a good deal of material that bears similarities to other contemporary ancient Near Eastern texts. Enns compares texts that relate to creation and the flood, to customs, laws, and proverbs, and to Israel and her kings. The early Genesis chapters, he finds, are less history than myth–"myth" to be understood as "an ancient, premodern, prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories." Even the more historical biblical books are an approach to historical writing that evince a particular interpretive viewpoint. They are less objective than the modern sense of historiography would require. The similarities between biblical and other ANE texts have implications for how the essential nature of the Bible is to be understood. Is it unique? Is it still the word of God? Even laws that were evidently directly revealed by God (such as those given at Sinai) show similarity with laws from other nations, raising the question of the very nature of revelation. Yet, as with the diversity issue, Enns rejects the harmonising apologetic. Instead, Scripture is to be embraced as a document in which God has incarnated himself, entering the messiness of human history and meeting his people within their existing modes of thought and culture.

7. Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a detailed description of the major themes of Peter Enns's *Inspiration*. The focus has been on description and minimal analysis. More detailed analysis and evaluation will be provided in Chapter Four, "Comparison and Evaluation." That evaluation will especially consider the all-

important place of the incarnational analogy in Enns's schema and to the extent to which his work positively or negatively contributes to an evangelical doctrine of Scripture. Several summarising points may now be offered.

First, a survey of the majority of Enns's works preceding *Inspiration* prompts the conclusion that the later volume may be seen as the culmination and systematising of ideas that Enns had been presenting in print even from the time of his postgraduate studies.

Second, the three major issues treated in *Inspiration* have been neatly characterised by Enns as dealing with the Bible's *uniqueness*, *integrity*, and *interpretation*. Each of these are deemed to constitute a challenge to traditional evangelical understandings of biblical inspiration.

Third, the doctrinal implications and challenges of these issues have not been adequately acknowledged or engaged by evangelical scholars.

Fourth, each of the three issues demonstrates the ubiquity of the human dimension of Scripture.

Fifth, the incarnational analogy provides a useful perspective by which to understand the necessity and normality of this human dimension that so thoroughly pervades God's Word.

Sixth, and consequently, this human dimension, far from being a cause of consternation for conservative Christians, ought to be embraced as demonstrating God's condescension in His communication with humanity.

Seventh, the material, as presented in *Inspiration*, should serve to reorient readers' expectations of the Bible; specifically, the biblical writers' conceptions are

necessarily framed and bound by the limitations and influences of their surrounding cultures, notwithstanding the divine inspiration that informs the whole of Scripture.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN FRAME: AN ORTHODOX REFORMED DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

1. Introduction

Whereas Peter Enns has sought to goad evangelicals into a more critical examination of longstanding challenges to the traditional evangelical doctrine of Scripture, John Frame represents those who see no good reason to abandon orthodox views. Indeed, his magnum opus on the doctrine of Scripture, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, is, by his own admission, "reactionary."[1]

Significantly, in *Doctrine of the Word* Frame confesses to having little desire to formulate a doctrine of Scripture that depends on interaction with other theologians (past or present).[2] Although an astonishing admission, it is nevertheless revealing. For, in expressing criticism of many "who include in their writing a great deal of interaction with other theologians and very little interaction with Scripture itself," Frame has provided an important clue to his *modus operandi* as well as an expectation of the basic nature of his 'system'. It is with the biblical material that Frame primarily has to do.[3]

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[1] John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 4 of *A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburgh, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 334 (hereafter, *Doctrine of the Word*).

[2] *Doctrine of the Word*, xxvii-xxviii, 6-7. That the "Abbreviations" of *Doctrine of the Word* (xxxi-xxxii) should list no more than eight theological journals, almost all of them Reformed publications, is itself suggestive of this orientation. So, too, the mere thirteen pages of bibliography, nearly a quarter of which is devoted to Frame's own publications.

[3] *Doctrine of the Word*, xxviii, 7. Frame states, "My book is primarily a *doctrine* of the word of God and Scripture, a systematic theological treatment of the subject. My interest is in what Scripture teaches about itself" (183). He characterises his approach in *Doctrine of the Word* as "a regression to an older way of treating the doctrines of revelation and Scripture, mainly by reading what Scripture has to say about them" (332). The discipline of theology in general, he believes, has become preoccupied with the various auxiliary secular disciplines (such as psychology, sociology, the natural sciences, and so on) "to the extent of neglecting its primary responsibility: to apply Scripture itself." He attributes this partly to the present system for training theologians, where the desired qualification for teaching at a seminary is a doctoral degree, ideally one gained from a prestigious liberal university. At such universities, it is not

He claims, moreover, that a "focus on Scripture without the theological environs gives my argument a kind of starkness, a kind of sharpness, that I want it to have."[4]

Frame's *Doctrine of the Word* constitutes the fourth volume in his *Theology of Lordship* series begun in 1987.[5] Though the second smallest in the series, at over six hundred pages *Doctrine of the Word* is nevertheless a substantial offering on this subject. In scope and size, it may well be without equal in modern evangelical bibliology. Certainly, Frame himself, at the time of publication, regarded *Doctrine of the Word* as his "best work ever."[6] Although *Doctrine of the Word* is itself a recent work, Frame has already followed up with a complete work on systematic theology, his *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief.*[7] Yet in that work, the

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the application of Scripture as God's infallible word that is required, but autonomous thinking that rejects the supreme authority of Scripture (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013], 10). Any theological proposal must show itself to be biblical before it can be considered to have fully made its case. "This means that any theologian worth his salt must interact in depth with the Bible" (Ibid., 11).

[4] *Doctrine of the Word*, xxviii. Frame's chary stance towards "the theological environs" must not be taken as anything like a complete eschewal of interaction with other theologians. Indeed, the final forty percent of *The Doctrine of the Word of God* consists of seventeen appended chapters (numbered as Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.) consisting of some of the author's previously-penned speeches, essays and book reviews. They are included as supplements to specific blocks of material in the main body of *Doctrine of the Word.* Inasmuch as they frequently engage the works of other theologians, these appendices are notably more polemical in tone than the rest of the book. In this paper, all citations from these appendices will include the full title of the appendix, rather than simply as a page number in *Doctrine of the Word*.

[5] The three earlier volumes are: *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (1987), *The Doctrine of God* (2002), and *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (2008), all published by P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ.

[6] *Doctrine of the Word*, xxviii. It is an assessment that Packer (foreword to *Doctrine of the Word*, xxiii) agrees with.

[7] See n. 3, above. Frame's earlier *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006) may be considered anticipatory of the much larger 2013 work: both treat the biblical themes in similar order; both approach theology from the perspective of what Frame calls the "lordship attributes" of God (His control, power, and presence; see *Systematic Theology*, 15, 21-31; *Salvation*, 8-12). In *Salvation* Frame claims that his basic approach in the Theology of Lordship series, as in *Salvation*, is "exegetical, Reformed, and focused on the lordship of God and of Jesus Christ" (*Salvation*, x).

doctrine of the word of God is covered in just 179 pages, a considerably briefer treatment than is found in the 640 pages of *Doctrine of the Word*. *Doctrine of the Word* must therefore be considered his mature and comprehensive statement on Scripture; it is largely from this work that the material in this chapter will be drawn.

Before exploring *Doctrine of the Word* in detail, however, it will be necessary to briefly consider John Frame the man. What theological influences might have helped shape his doctrine of Scripture? To what degree is his bibliology dependent upon his Reformed perspective?

2. Biographical Sketch, Theological Influences, and Reformed Perspective

2.1 Biographical Sketch

Biographical details for John Frame are available on several websites.[8] However, Frame has himself supplied autobiographical details online that are both detailed and somewhat intimate.[9] In more than eight thousand words, and with notable candour, Frame's notes offer unusual insight into his thought processes, theological aims, and the influences that have shaped his views. A number of significant facts may be gleaned from this document; these are briefly addressed here.

[8] For a brief biographical sketch, a good place to start is: http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/bio/johnframe.html. The anonymous website claims to be a collation of information gleaned from Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Frame_(theologian)), the official website of the Reformed Theological Seminary (http://www.rts.edu/Seminary/ faculty/bio.aspx?id=502), from an interview of Frame by Marco Gonzalez (http://www.frame-poythress.org/an-interview-with-john-frame-by-marco-gonzalez/) and from John Frame (the source is unstated, but it is likely to be from the following website maintained by Frame and Poythress: http://www.frame-poythress.org/bibliographies/john-frame-bibliography/)).

[9] "Backgrounds to My Thought," http://www.frame-poythress.org/about/john-frame-full-bio/ (accessed 5 May, 2017). The biographical details presented here are from this webpage, unless noted otherwise. Direct quotations will be referenced to the section of that webpage under which they occur.

First, Frame's church membership, since his conversion in his early teens, has always been within Presbyterianism.[10] His formal education, however, was diverse. An undergraduate liberal arts degree from Princeton[11] exposed him to liberal theology, against which he "sharply rebelled." Princeton was followed by Westminster Seminary, a thoroughly Reformed institution where Frame pursued a Bachelor of Divinity degree under some of the most eminent Reformed luminaries of the day.[12] Yale followed (1964-1968), where Frame earned an MA and MPhil, both in philosophical theology. An unfinished dissertation meant his PhD, again at Yale, remained incomplete.[13]

Study at Yale was followed by a teaching position at his alma mater, Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia (1968-80). This was followed by a move to California to help found a new campus for the seminary in that state. Divisions and factions among the faculty on the California campus provided sufficient motivation for him to end his 32-year association with Westminster and take up a

[10] Frame's first experience was with the United Presbyterian Church of North America, then with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and most recently with the Presbyterian Church in America.

[11] The AB degree at Princeton is a liberal arts degree equivalent to a BA elsewhere. At Princeton, Frame majored in philosophy and took courses also in religion, literature, and history.

[12] These included Cornelius Van Til, John Murray, Ned Stonehouse, Edward Young, Edmund Clowney and Meredith Kline. Their influence upon Frame will be further noted, below.

[13] Frame admits his failing to complete the dissertation for his PhD at Yale was his own failure, not that of the university ("Theology Professor," [n.d.], http://thirdmill.org/answers/answer.asp/file/99718.qna/category/th/page/questions/site/iiim [accessed 29 September, 2017]) But he adds that at Yale, "it was hard to be as serious about modern thought as they wanted me to be," previously opining that "these schools [secular universities and colleges] reject biblical authority." It may be possible to detect the hint of an underlying disillusionment with Yale's approach to Scripture and its expectations of the students; but it is not something Frame has explicitly stated. In 2003, Belhaven College (now University) awarded Frame an honorary Doctorate of Divinity ("Belhaven College Awards Honorary Doctorate to the Rev. John Frame at Orlando Commencement," www.belhaven.edu/news/200304/FrameDoctorate.pdf [accessed 29 September, 2017]).

teaching position at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida, in 2000. Though now retired, Frame remains on the faculty.

2.2 Theological Influences

The bare details of his educational background make it clear that, despite Frame's early and unswerving commitment to Reformed theology, much of his theological schooling came from outside that confession. Nevertheless, it was the Reformed theologians at Westminster that impacted the young Frame most deeply, Van Til in particular being "the greatest influence" on his apologetics and theology.[14] Presuppositionalism and the theme of lordship, gained (or at least reinforced) from Van Til, will, in the material presented below, be seen as controlling elements of Frame's theological edifice in *Doctrine of the Word* and elsewhere.[15] Frame further acknowledges his indebtedness to both Van Til and Edward Clowney (also of Westminster) for their use of triadic systems. These Frame combined with the concept of "perspectives" gained from G. Dennis O'Brien at Princeton, producing what Frame has termed triperspectivalism.[16]

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[14] Frame, "Backgrounds," under "Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadephia), 1961-64."

[15] The theme of lordship is integral to Frame's entire system, as exemplified in the very title of his *Theology of Lordship* series. The connection between presuppositionalism and the lordship of God is already present, and clearly stated, in the earliest of these volumes, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (1987; see n. 5): "For a Christian, the content of Scripture must serve as his ultimate presupposition. … This doctrine is merely the outworking of the lordship of God in the area of human thought" (45). In respect to Van Til and presuppositionalism, Van Til accepted the "presuppositionalist" label somewhat reluctantly, according to Frame; he did, however, "admit straightforwardly that the argument for Christianity is in one sense circular" ("Presuppositional Apologetics," under sec. 2, point #3 (May 23, 2012), www.frame-poythress.org/presuppositional-apologetics/ (accessed 16 April, 2017).

[16] Two examples from Van Til are: a threefold understanding of revelation–revelation from God, nature, and man; and a threefold system of evaluating every ethical decision according to its goal, motive, and standard. Edward Clowney taught that church ministries could be classified as dealing with worship, edification, and witness, while church leadership dealt with teaching, rule, and mercy. See Frame's "Backgrounds," under "Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia), 1961-64."

Even with these elements in place, Frame's theological system was not yet complete. His study of the doctrine of God led him to become dissatisfied with the normal way of organising the material under the general headings of God's transcendence and immanence. The problem, as he saw it, was the tension between those two ideas. Is God so far from us as to be "wholly other," as Otto and Barth had claimed? How, then, could God also be immanent? For Frame, the answer lay in defining God's transcendence in terms of His kingship or lordship. Though transcendent, God is not distant, for He rules us.[17] That lordship, furthermore, is expressed as control, authority, and covenant presence. These would be referred to as God's "lordship attributes." The triad of lordship attributes, as Frame came to realise, had its ultimate root in the triune character of God.

> He is the Father, who develops an authoritative plan; the Son, who carries out that plan by his powerful control of all things; and the Spirt, who as the presence of God applies that plan to nature, history, and human beings.[18]

There is yet another influence from a Westminster theologian that Frame deems of great importance: that of Meredith G. Kline. Kline had done work on the nature of biblical covenants, coming to identify Scripture itself as God's treaty document. The biblical covenants were essentially treaties between Yahweh, as king, and his vassal people. The written treaties, after stating the name of the great King, gave "the historical description of his past blessings to the vassal, the stipulations or laws of the covenant, and the sanctions: the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience."[19] To Frame, the three elements of history, law, and sanctions were

[17] Frame, "Backgrounds," under "Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadephia), 1961-64."

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

again suggestive of triperspectivalism: God was powerfully in control of nature and history; the law pronounced his authoritative requirements; and the sanctions showed God's presence in either mercy or discipline to His people.

More generally, Frame acknowledges his indebtedness to Edward J. Young and John Murray (along with Clowney and Van Til) for their emphasis on maintaining a strong doctrine of Scripture. Murray, he states, "was not afraid to differ from Reformed tradition, even the confessions, when he believed the biblical text pointed in a different direction."[20] The implication is that the same may be the case with Frame. For while deeply committed to Reformed theology, he is at the same time an avowed ecumenist with an accompanying distaste for denominationalism.[21]

It is also clear that Frame is an inerrantist.[22] In his online autobiographical sketch, Frame twice states his commitment to inerrancy, though without defining the term. In *Doctrine of the Word*, however, he largely eschews use of the term, and seems to broach the subject (in Chapter 26, "The Inerrancy of Scripture," pp. 167-76) almost apologetically ("I trust that in this book I have buried the chapters on inerrancy and

[20] Ibid.

[21] This point will be seen as relevant when considering the degree to which Frame's Reformed perspective has determined the details of his bibliology.

[22] Such a stand is required of the RTS faculty. See Item #1 of RTS "Statement of Belief and Covenant" (http://www.rts.edu/site/about/beliefs.aspx [accessed 13 May, 2017]). Item #1 also asserts that all sixty-six books of the Bible are "verbally inspired by Almighty God and therefore without error." Both phrases "verbally inspired" and "without error" are left undefined in this document. As a formulation, the statement (Item #1) is less tight than the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy;" see especially Articles VI, IX, XI, XII and the associated "Exposition," under "Infallibility, Inerrancy, Interpretation." The "Chicago Statement" may be viewed in its entirety at http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf.

Bible problems so deeply in the text that nobody will accuse me of overemphasizing them").[23] The nuances of Frame's understanding will be further explored below.

2.3 Frame's Reformed Perspective

As a theologian, Frame is not easy to classify. Certainly, he is a systematic theologian; his teaching positions at both Westminster and RTS have been in this capacity.[24] Yet, in "My Use of the Reformed Confessions,"[25] Frame describes himself as a "theological generalist." By that term he purposefully places himself at the "opposite extreme" from the theological specialist.[26] The doctrine of the Word of God, the doctrine of God, ethics, theological epistemology, theological method, apologetics, the history of philosophy, the history of modern theology, the philosophy of science, modern culture and the arts are all subjects that he has taught.[27] He has, in addition, "dared to venture into the areas of worship and church music" as an author.

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[23] *Doctrine of the Word*, 333n7.

[24] His current position at RTS is as J.D. Trimble Chair of Systematic Theology and Philosophy.

[25] "My Use of the Reformed Confessions," A Presentation to the Trustees of Westminster Theological Seminary in California, http://www.frame-poythress.org/my-use-of-the-reformed-confessions/ (accessed 19 May, 2017). The second paragraph of this non-sectioned article is the source for all the material in the paragraph that follows here.

[26] That is, where a specialist might focus his or her teaching and writing in a narrow field, Frame prefers to "focus on the forest rather than the trees, to develop a broad overview of the theological enterprise and to see connections between the various theological disciplines" ("Reformed Confessions," para. 4).

[27] Alongside his work in the area of bibliology, Frame's interest in apologetics requires special mention. His presuppositional approach to apologetics has already been noted here; it is an approach that owes much to his connection with Cornelius Van Til, himself a renowned and influential apologist. Frame's personal website lists 33 articles and dictionary entries that he has penned on various aspects of apologetics (www.frame–poythress.org/articles/topics/). His *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburgh, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994) is his book-length contribution to the field. A festschrift published in his honour (*Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes [Phillipsburgh, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009] is doubly significant. In the first place, it differs from most festschrifts in that it analyses Frame's own work in a range of theological areas rather than being a collection of essays on subjects of interest to the honouree. Secondly, no fewer than three of the essays treat Frame's presuppositionalist apologetic system.

The breadth of his interests, however, should not detract from his unswerving commitment to the Reformed theological perspective. Yet it may be asked: to what degree does Reformed theology inform his doctrine of Scripture? The Reformed influences upon Frame's general theological thinking were noted above: Van Til (presuppositionalism, the theme of lordship, triadic systems), Clowney (triadic systems), Kline (Scripture as a treaty document), Young and Murray (Scripture above the confessions). That Frame is theologically indebted to Calvin, Warfield, Kuyper and Bavinck may be deduced from his stated admiration of them.[28] Nevertheless, Frame's obvious indebtedness to these theologians must be seen against an equally overt anti-traditionalism combined with an emphasis on the *sola Scriptura* principle.[29]

It is in Appendix O, "In Defense of Something Close to Biblicism"[30] that the importance of this perspective becomes apparent. In a statement that could be seen as demonstrating denominational arrogance, but is likely no more than a frank statement of belief, Frame (following his teacher John Murray) claims that "the Reformed faith [is] purely and simply the teaching of Scripture."[31] The implication of that assertion is, with Frame, realised in the practical consequence: neither the confessions nor the most admired theologians are allowed to usurp the normative authority of Scripture. Thus, it is seen that Frame is prepared to find fault with Calvin,[32] Warfield,[33] Kuyper and

[28] "Backgrounds," under "Historical."

[29] Frame considers the *sola Scriptura* principle to be the antidote to traditionalism (*Doctrine of the Word*, 601 [Appendix P, "Traditionalism"]).

[30] *Doctrine of the Word*, 567-600.

[31] Ibid., 576-77 (Appendix O).

[32] Ibid., 636 (Appendix Q, "The Spirit and the Scriptures").

[33] *Doctrine of the Word*, 124.

Bavinck,[34] and Kline.[35] Even Van Til, whom Frame claims as the most important influence upon his apologetics and theology,[36] is faulted for having in his theological system aspects that "are not well-grounded scripturally … [these] can be forgotten without loss."[37] It appears, then, to be no mere rhetoric when Frame avers that

> the Protestant doctrine of *sola Scriptura* teaches us to emulate the Reformers in testing every human tradition, even the teachings of the church's most respected teachers, by the Word of God.[38]

Consistent with this is Frame's claim in the preface to *Doctrine of the Word* that, while "interaction with the theological literature is useful in a number of ways," it is not how he intends to present his material. Far more important, he states, "is what Scripture itself tells us."[39] In stating further that his volume would "focus on Scripture without the theological environs,"[40] he is not implying that his theology does not arise from a confessional perspective. But it does provide further evidence of his conviction that the ultimate theological source for his bibliology is not a confession, nor a great theologian of the past, nor a particular theological system, but Scripture itself as best he understands it.

Although Reformed theologians seem to dominate contemporary evangelical theology, and the classic formulations of inerrancy are the product of that branch of

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[34] Ibid., 637 (Appendix Q).

[35] Ibid., 30n3.

[36] See nn. 8, 16 above.

[37] Frame, "Van Til: A Reassessment," para. 6 (May 30, 2012), www.frame-poythress.org/van-til-a-reassessment (accessed 15 April, 2017).

[38] *Doctrine of the Word*, 600-01 (Appendix P).

[39] *Doctrine of the Word*, xxvii.

[40] Ibid.

Protestantism, the inerrancy doctrine itself cannot be characterised as a Reformed doctrine. The reason for this is that the doctrine is *intrinsically* non-denominational.[41] That is why the Evangelical Theological Society, membership of which requires signed acceptance of the inerrancy doctrine, numbers among its members a liberal sprinkling of Baptists (of different persuasions) and at least one Seventh-day Adventist.[42]

In summary, then, Frame's doctrine of Scripture does not appear as a distinctly *Reformed* doctrine, mainly because an understanding of what Scripture *is* and how it was produced is not strongly connected to any particular denominational or confessional emphasis. Two caveats may be added to this assessment. The first is that the inerrancy doctrine does evince *some* dependence upon a solid acknowledgment of God's providence. This is evident from Warfield's emphasis on providence in his stained glass window illustration.[43] On the other hand, a strong belief in God's providence is owned by Arminians as much as by Calvinists.[44] The second caveat is that Frame's apologetic method, as acquired through Van Til, is *claimed* to be "a distinctively Reformed view of Scripture."[45] Whether that claim can survive close

[41] For Protestant denominations, that is. A Roman Catholic bibliology must reckon with the authority of the Church in respect to the interpretation of Scripture.

[42] The strong presence of Baptists (some of whom have connections with the non-*Reformed* Dallas Theological Seminary) is evident from the list of recent executive committee members and former presidents of the Society ("Evangelical Theological Society" (n.d.), www.theopedia.com/Evangelical_Theological_Society (accessed 16 April, 2017). According to the Andrews University Press biographical notes in their press release of Seventh-day Adventist theologian Norman R. Gulley's *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Gulley is an "active member" of the ETS. See http://universitypress.andrews.edu/catalog.php?key=170.

[43] Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, 155-58.

[44] Consider John Wesley's sermon "On Divine Providence." All things are under the management of God, he states (citing Cicero). Further, "there is scarce any doctrine in the whole compass of revelation, which is of deeper importance than this" (points ##1 and 7, (n.d.), wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-67-on-divine-providence/ (accessed 16 April, 2017).

[45] Frame, "Van Til: the Theologian," 11.

scrutiny cannot be explored here. It may be noted, however, that Frame's use of the presuppositionalist apologetic is most apparent when he is dealing with Bible problems (as in Chapter 28 of *Doctrine of the Word*). The bulk of his doctrine of Scripture requires only the presupposition that God has indeed spoken to us in Scripture. That is hardly an exclusively Reformed pre-understanding.

2.4 Summary

It is evident that John Frame is a systematic theologian with a broad range of theological interests that are explored from the perspective of a conscious and unwavering biblicism. His deep commitment to the Reformed branch of Christianity coexists with a willingness to challenge traditional beliefs when these are deemed biblically deficient. In *Doctrine of the Word*, Frame has produced a volume that, while not wearing its inerrancy on its sleeve, must nevertheless be regarded as *the* major contemporary statement of that position. It is, however, no mere rehearsal of traditional beliefs; Frame's triperspectivalism–the prism through which he presents his doctrinal construction–bespeaks an originality that offers the promise of fresh insights hand in hand with the familiar understandings that evangelicals have long embraced.

Following, then, is a limited examination of Frame's doctrine of Scripture as presented chiefly in *Doctrine of the Word*, with supplementary material from others of his writings both preceding and following this work.[46]

[46] With rare exceptions, Frame's material will be presented in its own right without reference to Peter Enns, comparison and evaluation being reserved for the following chapter. The occasional exceptions will serve to justify why some of Frame's material on a particular subject has been included here while other material that would have little or no bearing on a comparison with Enns is excluded. The sense in which the following survey of Frame's doctrine of Scripture is "limited" is explained below.

3. Chapter Methodology

Frame's *Doctrine of the Word* presents the reader with some 640 pages of text. Even if it were the only work of Frame's to be canvassed here, space constraints would severely limit the thoroughness that could be applied to the task of surveying its contents. As noted above, *Doctrine of the Word* is certainly Frame's definitive statement on this doctrine, and there could be justification in considering this one volume a sufficient resource from which to obtain a right understanding of Frame's bibliology.[47] Yet even when treating the same subject matter, authors are wont to express their views differently–perhaps more clearly, perhaps employing a different illustration–in different contexts. It is to be expected, therefore, that there will be statements from others of Frame's works that elucidate, reinforce, give nuance to, or perhaps confound that which the author has written in *Doctrine of the Word*; these gleanings will be included in this study. Nevertheless, the focus will be very largely on the major publication.

As implied in the previous paragraph, the space constraints force upon the present research a procedure that entails a degree of selectivity vis-à-vis the material to be explored. A purely arbitrary selectivity is, however, precluded on the following grounds. First, the present study is focused on the narrower issue of biblical inspiration, which is merely one aspect of the doctrine of Scripture. While it is true that the various aspects of this doctrine are interconnected, some relate more obviously to

[47] "Bibliology" is not a term that Frame himself generally uses, along with others such as anthropology, hamartiology, Christology, and other similar theological terms. He prefers to "speak simply of the doctrine of man, the doctrine of sin, and so on." "The word of God" is the phrase that Scripture most often uses to speak generally about revelation, and is Frame's preferred term for this doctrine. See *Salvation*, 43.

the issue of inspiration than do others.[48] Second, it is especially important to dwell on those aspects that might prove to have some bearing on the challenges raised by Peter Enns. But this is not a mere matter of identifying corresponding chapters in *Doctrine of the Word*; Frame, after all, has a quite different agenda and presents no such corresponding chapters. Rather, it will be necessary to probe the broad understanding that Frame offers in order to answer the question: in what sense does such an understanding counter (if at all) the general thrust of Enns's challenges? In addition, one may reasonably expect that Frame's treatment of the inspiration, inerrancy, phenomena, and problems of Scripture (Chapters 23, 26, 27, and 28 respectively) will be particularly pertinent. Of special interest is Appendix J, Frame's seventeen-page, previously unpublished review of Enns's *Inspiration and Incarnation*.

Thus, although it is not possible here to explore the totality of Frame's bibliological system, it is expected that the method adopted in this chapter will yield the following results: first, an accurate presentation of Frame's view of the doctrine of Scripture, especially in the aspect of inspiration; second, an awareness of the basic presuppositions that Frame brings to the task of theology in general and bibliology in particular; third, a reasonable understanding of what it means to espouse a traditional

[48] Happily, the organisation of *Doctrine of the Word* into forty-six chapters (including an Epilogue) along with seventeen titled appendices allows the easy identification of sections of the book that need not be explored in detail. Examples of the latter are "The Permanence of God's Written Word" (Chapter 16), "The Canon of Scripture" (Chapter 22), "The Content of Scripture" (Chapter 24), Chapters 29 to 32 (the Clarity, Necessity, Comprehensiveness, and Sufficiency of Scripture), "Translations and Editions of Scripture" (Chapter 34)), "Teaching and Preaching" (Chapter 35), "Sacraments" (Chapter 36), "Theology" (Chapter 37), "Human Reception of Scripture" (Chapter 39), "Assurance" (Chapter 41) and "Writing on the Heart" (Chapter 44).

view of Scripture in a twenty-first century context; and fourth, an understanding of where Frame's views are broadly at odds with those of Peter Enns.[49]

Frame's organisation of his material in *Doctrine of the Word* assists with these goals. The book is divided into four parts: "Orientation," "God's Word in Modern Theology," "The Nature of God's Word," and "How the Word Comes to Us." These are followed by seventeen appendices that consist, for the most part, of Frame's published and unpublished reviews and interactions with other theologians on bibliological matters. Thus the method adopted here will be to largely follow the order as given in *Doctrine of the Word*, selecting the more relevant chapters, and consulting the appendices for additional data.[50] The appendix dealing with Enns's *Inspiration and Incarnation* will be treated separately.

Finally, while the basic purpose of this chapter is merely to expose the essence of Frame's doctrine of Scripture, with major evaluation and analysis deferred to the following chapter, some assessments of significant points will be offered here. These will be supplied in two separate sections within the main discussion that follows.

4. Frame's Doctrine of Scripture

4.1 Setting the Scene

Frame's broad theological approach is made explicit in the Preface: "[while] interaction with the theological literature is useful in a number of ways … most

[49] Frame's views, in this respect, will here merely be presented; a closer analysis of how the respective views of Frame and Enns differ will be provided in Chapter Five, "Comparison and Evaluation," below.

[50] The sub-headings used here will not always correspond to the chapter or part titles as found in *Doctrine of the Word*, since it will be necessary at times to conflate topics from two or more chapters into a single discussion.

important by far is what Scripture itself tells us. It has always been my purpose to emphasise the latter."[51] The tone is pastoral:

> I have often said that theology is not primarily an academic discipline, observing the impersonal academic conventions. It is rather (as in the NT) a highly personal communication, a testimony of faith. Our God is personal, and the Christian *didache* is also personal.[52]

The author has chosen to adopt this literary style because, in his view, this is how God speaks to humankind through the pages of His Word.[53] The opening paragraph of the same chapter establishes this as a point of critical importance to Frame's overarching idea. There he states, "The main contention of this volume is that God's speech to man is real speech. It is very much like one person speaking to another. … My thesis is that God's word, in all its qualities and aspects, is a personal communication from him to us."[54] As revealed in the chapter title, Frame terms this concept the *personal-word model*.

Paired with the first brief chapter is a second even briefer chapter ("Lordship and the Word"). Frame here introduces what he calls the three Lordship attributes of control, authority and presence. These attributes emerge from the idea that "the Creator is related to the creature as its *covenant Lord*" and that this covenant lordship has three major connotations:

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[51] *Doctrine of the Word*, xxviii. Frame's repeated admissions that his method differs from others' is striking. Note comments on pages 6, 7 (twice), and 332.

[52] Ibid., xxix.

[53] Frame capitalises *word* and *word of God* when it refers to the written Word of God and when it refers to Christ as the Word incarnate. Otherwise *word* and *word of God* are lowercased (*Doctrine of the Word*, xxx).

[54] Ibid., 3.

> (1) God, by his almighty power, is fully in *control* of the creation. (2) What God says is ultimately *authoritative* … (3) As covenant Lord, he takes the creation … into special relationships with him, relationships that lead to blessing or cursing. So he is always *present* with them.[55]

Frame is only slightly less than dogmatic in suggesting that these three lordship attributes relate in some ways to the three persons of the Trinity: "in general, the Father formulates the eternal divine plan of nature and history (authority), the Son carries out that plan (control), and the Spirit applies it to every person and thing (presence)."[56]

What is the significance of lordship and its attributes to Frame's bibliology? It is, chiefly, that God speaks to his creatures *as Lord*, "for that is what he is. He cannot abandon his lordship while speaking to us." His word, then, "must come to us with absolute power [control] … authority … and presence."[57] The fact that this word so comes to us bearing these personal attributes of God reinforces the thrust of the previous chapter, that God's Word is a *personal* word.

In addition, Frame distinguishes "three *perspectives* by which we can look at all of reality." These correspond to the three lordship attributes.[58] There is the *normative* perspective (the whole world is God's authoritative revelation to us); the *situational*

[55] Ibid., 10.

[56] Ibid., 11.

[57] Ibid., 11.

[58] Like them, they relate in some way to the Trinity. In this connection, however, Frame has elsewhere cautioned against understanding him as suggesting that the three persons of the Trinity are *merely* perspectives on the Godhead. That would constitute a Sabellian position. As persons who interact with one another–talking together, planning together, and expressing love for one another–they are more than perspectives, though not less. See his "A Primer on Perspectivalism" (n.d.), under "The Trinity," www.frame-poythress.org/a-primer-on-perspectivalism/ (accessed 26 October, 2017).

perspective (nature and history must be seen as under God's control); and the *existential* perspective (God comes near us in our personal experience).[59]

With these two brief chapters (constituting Part One, "Orientation"), Frame has expressed his fundamental approach to Scripture: God's word is personal, and it reflects his lordship attributes of control, authority, and presence. The three lordship attributes remind us that God relates to the human creature as a *covenant* Lord; he therefore also *speaks* to it from that same relational position. Consequently, human beings are obligated to respond to God's word as they would to God himself: in obedience, trust, reflection, affection, etc.[60]

Parts Two to Four follow the pattern of Frame's three perspectives: the views of revelation held by modern (mainly mainstream liberal) theologians are the *situational* perspective, the theological situation in which the word of God is taught and preached (Part Two); the nature of God's word, that is, how Scripture itself defines the word, is the *normative* perspective (Part Three); and the means by which God's word comes "from God's lips to our hearts" is the *existential* perspective (Part Four).[61] Frame devotes by far the greatest attention to the last of these. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the totality of his system. Indeed, it will be seen that his survey of modern (liberal) theology exposes a major insight that is crucial to his overall approach to Scripture, viz. the role of autonomous thinking in both liberal and some evangelical

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[59] Ibid., 11. Use of these three perspectives is already present in the first of the *Theology of Lordship* volumes (*The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* [see n. 5, above]), where the principles are set forth at some length (169-346). References also occur in *Salvation* (x, 330); *The Doctrine of God* (see n. 5, above) (Appendix A, "More Triads," 743-750); and "A Primer on Perspectivalism" (under "Other Triads.").

[60] *Doctrine of the Word*, 5.

[61] Ibid., 13.

theology. Furthermore, his criticisms of the liberal systems of thinking bring into sharp relief features of his own approach to Scripture. A very brief survey of the content of this second part of *Doctrine of the Word* will now follow.

4.2 God's Word in Modern Theology

Modern or *liberal* theology–Frame uses the two terms "somewhat synonymously"–is defined as "those types of theology that do not accept the absolute authority of the Bible."[62] As theological definitions go, it is not as tight as some might wish it to be. The rest of the chapter, however, is really an exposition of that definition. The crucial element in Frame's explanation involves the concept of autonomy. For "what distinguishes modern views of revelation from orthodox … views is the affirmation of human *autonomy* in the realm of knowledge;" that is, "the view that human beings have the right to seek knowledge of God's world without being subject to God's revelation."[63] Four key points may be noted.

First, Frame characterises autonomy as underlying "every sinful decision of every human being" beginning with Adam and Eve. Whether as seen in Genesis 3 or subsequently, sin "assumes that God does not exist, or that he has not given us a personal word."[64] Second, the spirit of autonomy may be traced through the major systems of human thought. It was the new element in Western thought introduced by the Greek philosophers, who rejected the authority of religion and tradition. With the

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[62] Ibid., 15. Frame acknowledges that there are nuances in these terms (*modern* and *liberal*), but he prefers here to paint a broad picture.

[63] *Doctrine of the Word*, 15-16.

[64] Ibid., 16.

arrival of Christianity, philosophy became influenced and modified by biblical thought, although the influence, in fact, went both ways. It was the medieval scholastic Thomas Aquinas who attempted something of a synthesis between the two systems.[65] With Descartes, and those who followed him, that synthesis was dismantled. This did not result in purging theology of its philosophical links, but in the application of autonomous reason to *both* theology and philosophy.[66] Frame's analysis suggests "mainstream academic theology" as beginning from around the time of Descartes' death in 1650.[67]

Third, in the stream of liberal theologians of the last few centuries, "nobody … ever took seriously the central issue: the acceptability of autonomous reasoning." Apparently deaf to the protests of conservative scholars and churchmen, "within the liberal movement itself, there was no consideration of an alternative. Intellectual autonomy was accepted as a presupposition, as something fundamental, not to be argued about." The principle of intellectual autonomy came to dominate in the major university faculties. Frame laments that this fundamental "new doctrine" was embraced without significant academic debate and endorsed by no church council.[68]

The fourth and final point to note in Frame's explication of his definition of modern and liberal theology is the connection he draws between autonomy and authority. Intellectual autonomy is claiming the right to exercise reason without the

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[65] Ibid., 17.

[66] Ibid., 18.

[67] Ibid., 19. Frame states that "the seventeenth century A.D. brought a change analogous to the birth of philosophy around 600 B.C." (19).

[68] Ibid., 20.

authority of God's revelation.[69] Again, by the late nineteenth century liberalism was tolerated by most mainstream churches and intellectual autonomy had consequently been adopted "in place of the authority of God's personal words."[70] It is this connection that brings some measure of precision to Frame's claim, noted earlier, that liberal theologies are those that do not accept the absolute authority of the Bible.

For Frame, this understanding is enormously important. Human reason is "a good gift of God,"[71] but is affected by sin. Fallen man "tries to use his reason autonomously. All his arguments are founded on the false premise that God is not the author and final standard of truth."[72] Autonomous thinking extols the virtue of logical validity. Frame points out, however, that this simply cannot be sufficient. Sound syllogisms, for example, require not only logical validity, but also true premises. If the premise of a syllogism is wrong, logical reasoning cannot prevent a false conclusion. Similarly, autonomous thinking at its most logical is fatally flawed simply because it lacks "the 'premises' of God's revelation to us."[73]

Frame recognises "a certain circularity in saying that we should base our reasoning on God's Word, while evaluating God's Word." But this circularity applies to all systems that seek to validate an ultimate principle of thought. For example, "to show that reason is ultimate, one must appeal to reason."[74] But Frame insists that the

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[69] Ibid., 19.

[70] Ibid., 20.

[71] Ibid., 21.

[72] Ibid., 24.

[73] Ibid., 23. Frame's *presuppositionalism* is here in evidence. On this aspect of Frame's theology, see the following paragraph and note.

[74] Ibid., 25.

circularity involved in evaluating God's Word through a reasoning based on that same Word is justified.[75] Building on an argument presented in the previous chapter, he asserts that "reasoning in accord with God's Word is the only kind of reasoning that doesn't dissolve into meaninglessness."[76]

Although in the two following chapters Frame continues to describe and critique the basic characteristics of liberal theology, the essential foundation of his bibliological edifice is, at this point, already established. The primacy of Scripture itself is not only affirmed, it is defined and defended. To accept the primacy of Scripture means to affirm that God Himself speaks to human beings personally through this Word, which at all times conveys the attributes of the covenant Lord from whom it comes. It is logically necessary to accept this as being so, since it is impossible that God should abandon his lordship when he speaks to us. The lordship attributes of control, authority and presence inherent in God's Word are not acceptable to the unregenerate human mind, because the outstanding and universal characteristic of such a mind is an attitude of intellectual autonomy. That autonomy is evident in the earliest biblical accounts of sin and throughout the history of human thought, including modern philosophy and theological liberalism. Scripture is not to be subject to human reason, except as that reason is first subjected to Scripture. The circularity is admitted, but is defended on the basis that it is the only kind of reasoning that does not dissolve into meaninglessness.

[75] It is an admission that Frame makes several times in *Doctrine of the Word* (7, 24-25, 45-46, 85n4, 102n3, 313n12, 333, 433-35, 441, 464, 545n36, 639n65).

[76] *Doctrine of the Word*, 25.

4.3 The Nature of God's Word

Frame's arguments in Part Three, as elsewhere, are carefully nuanced. As space limitations do not permit a detailed exposition of them, it is possible here to do no more than expose the main thrust of them. Frame begins with the fundamental question, "What is the Word of God?"[77] The Word of God includes Scripture, but is not limited to it. It is through his word, for instance, that God governs nature. Further, God's inter-Trinitarian speech ("Father to Son, Son to Father, both to the Spirit, and the Spirit to both") "is a necessary divine attribute … without which God would not be God." Consequently, one must understand that speech is an essential attribute of God, designating "the essence of God, what God really and truly is." Ultimately, therefore, "God's word is God, and God is his word."[78] These considerations lead Frame to define the word of God as "(1) God himself, understood as communicator, and (2) the sum total of his free communications with his creatures."[79]

Although it is the second of these that he will focus on in *Doctrine of the Word*,[80] Frame has more to say on the first point before concluding his presentation on the nature of God's Word. In three successive chapters (Chapters Ten through Twelve), Frame further develops his thesis that God's Word shares the attributes of God's lordship. His Word, therefore, exhibits his controlling power, his meaningful authority, and his personal presence. The details of his arguments will not be explored here,

[77] Ibid., 47.

[78] Ibid., 48. Frame holds that John 1:1 is not *only* Christological in its focus, but indicates also the deity of the creative word: "the passage teaches not only an identity between God and Christ, but a threefold identity, between God, Christ, and the creative word" (68). Frame describes his understanding as providing a "linguistic model of the Trinity" (66).

[79] Ibid., 49. In *Salvation*, 43-49, Frame similarly considers the concept of the word of God.

[80] *Doctrine of the Word*, 49.

except to note just one. “The psalmists,” Frame writes, “view the words of God with religious reverence and awe, attitudes appropriate only to an encounter with God himself.”[81] Since even Scripture considers it idolatry to worship anything other than God, is it not “bibliolatry” so to extol his Word? The charge of bibliolatry, sometimes raised by “opponents of evangelicalism,” is “illegitimate.”[82] That God's word comes through a finite *medium* does not weaken the truth that it is still God's “authentic word” that is found in Scripture. As such “it should be received with absolute trust, obedience, and, yes, worship.”[83] It is an assertion more than an argument, not less so when Frame adds that “Scripture … teaches that we should accept the divine-human words on its pages precisely as God's own.”[84] To be fair, however, Frame's purpose in this third part of *Doctrine of the Word* is simply to determine *what* God's word is. Matters relating to inspiration and the written product that Christians call ‘Scripture’ belong more properly to Part Four: “How the Word Comes to Us.” Indeed, there Frame immediately takes up the issue of ‘medium’ and its relationship to God's authentic word.

4.4 How the Word Comes to Us: Events, Words, and Persons

God's communication with his creatures expresses the attributes of his lordship. But what can be said of the media God employs to bring his word to his creatures? The

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[81] Ibid., 67.

[82] Ibid., 68. It is an observation noted also by, for example, James I. Packer, “Contemporary Views,” 96, and Donald Guthrie, "Biblical Authority and New Testament Scholarship," *Vox Evangelica* 16: 7.

[83] *Doctrine of the Word*, 67-68.

[84] Ibid., 68.

possibility exists that God could "place a message immediately into a person's mind, without any seeing, hearing, or reasoning." Frame considers this to be exceptional, if it occurs at all.[85] It is more likely that "when God speaks with human beings, he almost always uses one medium or other."[86] One may distinguish three categories of revelation media: events, words, and persons.[87] While these must be seen as interrelated; they also explain and interpret one another. Because of this, "all these media are essential to the revelation that God has chosen to give us. It is not our place to pick and choose among them in regard to what we would prefer to hear, to believe, or to obey."[88]

The foregoing line of argument is crucial to Frame's bibliology, and must be understood. On the biblical evidence, all of God's communication to his creatures comes through *created media*.[89] The interrelatedness of the three forms of media through which God speaks to human beings suggests that "the media are inseparable from the revelation. If they are defective, there is no way for us to reclaim an uncorrupted version of God's truth." The media are, therefore, never to be regarded as barriers to God's communication. Rather, they are to be seen as "God's chosen

[85] Nor does he consider it significant, since it seems not to be described at all in Scripture and therefore lies outside proper theological endeavour (Ibid., 72).

[86] Ibid., 71. This is *not* the case with God's inter-Trinitarian communication, which does not require created media (71).

[87] Ibid., 72. Frame's predilection towards triadic formulae is here again evident. He suggests that these categories "correspond roughly" to the lordship attributes. It is not, however, a correspondence that he is willing to press too far. Nor does he deem it necessary to do so; it is more important to see that all the aspects of God's lordship are present regardless of the media through which his word is given (72).

[88] Ibid., 73.

[89] Even when it is *direct*, as at Sinai. For even in that case, and others like it, God's voice uses the (created) sound waves and a human language (Ibid., 71-72, 84).

instruments for bringing his absolute power, authority, and presence to the attention of finite hearers."[90]

Upon that foundational argument, Frame then makes a statement that defines his position on one of the pivotal questions in current debates on inspiration and inerrancy: "This is the fundamental answer to the question whether the 'humanity' of revelation detracts from its divine character."[91] Frame's answer, clearly, is that it does not. God is not handicapped by human finitude; he remains able to say just what he wants to say to his creatures, despite the limitations of the creaturely media. The media, thoroughly human though they may be, are essential to, and inseparable from the revelation. It is true that humans err, but they do not *necessarily* do so. And because *that* is so, "we should not think it impossible that God could reveal himself through human agents, keeping them from error, without violating their humanity."[92]

With the foregoing, Frame has prepared the reader for what is to be his major emphasis in *Doctrine of the Word*, viz. God's revelation through *words*. Words are simply one of the three broad types of created media through which God communicates with his creatures. None of these media is divine, but their created-ness does not make them defective as means of communication. No other means are possible, but that which God has chosen to use must be deemed sufficient.

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[90] Ibid., 73.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid. In defence of this last assertion, Frame adds: "If humanity necessarily entails error, then *all* of God's revelation in Scripture, every sentence, is erroneous, for all of it comes through human mediation. Nobody has ever argued such an extreme position." Further, Christ was fully human, but he did not speak error (73). Frame has more to say on inerrancy in a subsequent chapter, as will be noted below.

4.5 God's Revelation Through Words

As already observed, Frame views God's revelation as being mediated through events, words, and persons. It is the second of these that receives by far the greater focus in *Doctrine of the Word*–indeed, twenty-eight of the thirty-five chapters of Part Four are devoted to expounding the details of this aspect.[93] This emphasis is given "because of Scripture's emphasis on this kind of revelation, and because of the many theological controversies over this concept."[94]

Frame begins with the insistence that revelation is clearly *verbal*, both in the sense that "it is a revelation of the word of God, and [in the sense that] it is a revelation using human words as a medium." Though the two senses may be distinguished, in

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[93] The first of these–God's revelation through events–is explored in just one chapter (chapter 13). Frame's treatment of this aspect will not be reviewed here, largely because Frame himself subordinates it so decisively to his extensive, multi-faceted discussion of revelation through words. The major thrust of Frame's understanding in respect to God's revelation through the medium of events must, however, be noted. It is that both natural revelation and redemptive history present "an unambiguous, clear revelation of God," for which reason "human beings have no freedom to interpret the events as they wish. There is no role here for human autonomy" (Ibid., 80). The reasoning involved here is complemented by what Frame has written elsewhere in respect to the intimate relationship between God's speech and his acts. "He performs all his acts by his speech" (*Systematic Theology*, 521). All his acts reveal his word, his plan; all his words are themselves acts; and we can know God's acts only through his word, "so that for us to know God's words and to know his acts are the same thing" (Ibid., 520). Consequently, the only legitimate interpretation of the acts of God, whether in nature or redemptive history, is interpretation that emerges from faith. Lessing's "big, ugly ditch" between history and faith is therefore nonexistent. "Rather, history necessitates faith, and history cannot be rightly understood apart from faith" (*Doctrine of the Word*, 81). As Frame treats this matter of God's revelation through events rather briefly, he likewise devotes just three chapters to the aspect of revelation mediated through persons. In this case, however, the essence of his arguments will be outlined below.

[94] *Doctrine of the Word*, 82. The controversies are not only theological, but philosophical, the latter intersecting at times with the former. There is not space here to survey the field of linguistic studies and their impact upon theological studies. For a concise overview of the topic, see Jennifer H. Weed, "Religious Language," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource*, n.d., www.iep.utm.edu/rel-lang/ (accessed 10 April, 2017). For more detailed studies, see William P. Alston, *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Brian Davies (ed.), *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially Part II, "The problem of God-Talk," pp. 129-174; Roger M. White, *Talking About God: The Concept of Analogy and the Problem of Religious Language* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010). For his part, Frame has little to say on the subject. In *Doctrine of the Word*, Appendix E ("God and Biblical Language: Transcendence and Immanence," pp. 422-439), Frame does briefly address matters of language, but only to make the point (against Antony Flew and Karl Barth) that ordinary human language is a sufficient vehicle in which to speak of God.

God's revelations "the word of God and the human words are not actually distinct from one another." There is, then, an *identity* between the two, so that (in revelation) "what the human words say, God says."[95] It is on this identity that Frame later builds his definition of inspiration: inspiration is "a divine act that creates an identity between a divine word and a human word."[96] Before treating directly the matter of inspiration, however, Frame first seeks to explore more fully the biblical evidence supporting his 'identity thesis'. Such evidence will serve to undergird the crucial inspiration doctrine.

Frame's argument is not complex. The most direct kind of verbal revelation is the "divine voice … in which God speaks to human beings without any human mediator."[97] This he did at Sinai (Ex20:2-19; Deut 4:13; 5:28-31), to Moses (Num 12:8), at the baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:17) and at Jesus' transfiguration (Matt 17:5).[98] Frame points out that even when God speaks directly to human beings, there is still a "human-creaturely element," since

> the divine voice evidently uses a human language and created elements (atmosphere, sound waves, human hearing mechanisms and brains). These created elements distinguish the divine voice from the eternal language spoken between the persons of the Trinity. The divine voice speaks in the created world, in time and space, to creatures, employing parts of creation.[99]

At this point Frame raises an important question: how might one hearing the divine voice, coming through the creature-humanly elements, recognise it as truly the voice of

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[95] Ibid. Frame is here echoing Warfield's famous dictum, "What Scripture says, God says" (Benjamin B. Warfield, "Inspiration," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982], 2:843).

[96] *Doctrine of the Word*, 140.

[97] Ibid., 83.

[98] Ibid., 83-84.

[99] Ibid., 84.

God? On occasions, as at Sinai, the divine voice was accompanied by signs or miracles. But at other times, as when speaking to Abraham and Elijah, it was not. Frame suggests reassurance here in the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:24 that false Christs and false prophets would lead astray "if possible, even the elect." The *if*-clause is crucial:

> The elect will not ultimately be deceived … because assurance is supernatural. We know that the false revelation is false, just as we know that the true revelation is true–by God's sovereign self-testimony.

Furthermore, if God's self-testimony is sufficient to identify the divine voice that comes without a human mediator, he is certainly able to do so also when he speaks through other kinds of word-media.[100] It is a point that Frame belabours again in the following chapter (Chapter 15–"God's Revelation through Words: Prophets and Apostles"), finally noting that

> when we receive that supernatural verification by God's grace, we confess that the words of the prophets and apostles are nothing less than the word of God, bearing supreme power, authority and divine presence. In these lordship attributes there is no difference between the words of prophets and apostles and the voice of God himself. These words are therefore God's personal words to us.[101]

Moreover, their being written down in permanent form does not make them any less personal, powerful, authoritative, or present.[102] Against Barth's view that

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[100] Ibid., 86.

[101] Ibid., 100. In speaking of that "supernatural verification" (brought about by the Spirit of God; see previous sentence), Frame appears to be referring to what Reformed theologians have termed the *testimonium Spiritus sancti internum*–the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, often referred to simply as *testimonium*. Through the activity of the Spirit in the heart (or mind), the believer is enabled to acknowledge the inherent authority of Scripture. The doctrine goes back "in some form" to Augustine, but received its clearest expression with Calvin (Fred H. Klooster, "Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit," in Elwell, 610). Calvin treats the subject in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.7–9, trans. Henry Beveridge (1559), http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.toc.html (accessed 10 April, 2017). The key phrase, and perhaps the key argument, is that "as God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words [of Scripture] will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit" (*Institutes* 1.7, under point #4).

[102] Ibid., 101, 117.

revelation cannot be preserved, since it exists only in a crisis moment, and that were it to be preserved it would become something we could possess, master and manipulate, Frame counters that such a denial is unscriptural.[103] Rather, the covenantal nature of revelation mandates that His words be written in permanent form, so that they may be preserved from one generation to another.[104] Moreover, a permanent record of God's words and deeds is his continual witness against the sins of his people.[105]

4.6 The Inspiration of Scripture

By this point, Frame has devoted considerable attention to the matter of identity between God's words and the human words that bear his revelation. The latter may take permanent written form; when they do, they lose none of the power, authority, presence, or personal quality of the original. With these points established, Frame is now ready to treat directly the matter of inspiration.

Inspiration concerns "the relation between the divine and human authors of Scripture."[106] Here, of course, is the main point of contention in the evangelical Bible wars, whether that point is expressed in terms of errancy/inerrancy or in the form of the broader question articulated by Kevin Vanhoozer, viz., "What sense can it make to refer to Scripture as 'God's Word written'?"[107] According to Frame, many recent books

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[103] Ibid., 103-04.

[104] Ibid., 117.

[105] Ibid., 134; similarly, "the covenant document is not man's witness concerning God; it is God's witness *against* man" (450).

[106] Ibid., 140.

[107] Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 148. Frame would doubtless approve of Vanhoozer's question. In his "Review of N. T. Wright, *The Last Word*" (Appendix K in *Doctrine of the Word*), Frame notes Wright's failure to "ask

on the doctrine of Scripture "begin with human authorship, assuming that the human writers of Scripture made mistakes and at times misrepresented the divine word."[108] His own approach is self-consciously contrastive, beginning instead with "God's intention to speak personal words to his people. I assume here that God is able, one way or another, to get his words to us." That presuppositional stance does not, however, obviate the need to grapple with the "somewhat problematic" issues connected with "the very presence of human writers on the scene."[109]

Addressing this issue, Frame notes that God does not operate on the human writers in a 'mechanical' fashion; they are not secretaries, recipients of 'dictation'.[110] On rare occasions, certainly, God *did* dictate words to the human writers,[111] but there was no record of this ever being the case with (example) Joshua, Samuel, David, Luke, or even Paul; in each case, "their individual human qualities appear vividly."[112] The

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responsibly whether the words of Scripture are God's words to us." It is a question that N. T. Wright does not helpfully speak to nor succeed "(if this was Wright's purpose) in persuading us not to ask" (*Doctrine of the Word*, 523). It is, Frame contends, a "major problem of omission." For "if one is to deal seriously with the 'Bible wars' … one must ask whether and how inspiration affects the *text* of Scripture" (522).

[108] *Doctrine of the Word*, 140. In a footnote, Frame cites Peter Enns, N. T. Wright, and Andrew McGowan as examples of those who have fallen into this error. Frame deals with each of these in Appendices J, K, and L in *Doctrine of the Word*.

[109] Ibid., 141.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Frame claims that "some theologians … have been *too* eager to avoid suspicion of a dictation theory. Certainly, there are places in Scripture where God literally dictates words for human beings to write down [Ex 34:27 and Jer 36:4 are cited]." And where it does occur, divine dictation ought not to be seen as degrading the humanity of the writers, as some theologians insist; rather, it would surely be "a transcendent privilege to receive dictation from God" (141). In Appendix Q, "The Spirit and the Scriptures," Frame again admits that in the writing of Scripture "sometimes what [God] does seems to be 'dictation,' however much we may wish to deny a 'dictation theory' (see Isa. 6:9ff and Rev. 2-3)" (618). See also his "Primer on Perspectivalism," under "Perspectivalism in General," where he states, "He [God] *generally* does not dictate" (emphasis added).

[112] Ibid., 142. Frame's statement, "[God] uses Luke's intellect and style to convey the truth with the nuance that he [God] desires," is reminiscent of Warfield's well-known 'stained glass window'

process of inspiration is, as Kuyper and Bavinck termed it, *organic*, as distinguished from dictation or mechanical inspiration.[113] "Organic inspiration means that God used all the distinct personal qualities of each writer … [such as] heredity, environment, upbringing, education, gifts, talents, styles, interests, and idiosyncrasies to reveal his word." Harking back to an emphasis made in connection with the *media* of revelation, Frame insists that "these differences were not a barrier that God had to overcome."[114] Indeed, far from weakening the total reliability of the word that God intends for his creatures to understand, Frame sees that the organic process is essential to establishing that very point. God's Word, he points out, "is not *merely* propositional," having as its purpose "to do for us all that can be done by language. He means to convey not only information, but tone, emotion, perspective. He means to convey his love to us, along with the sternness of his justice."[115]

It is an argument that is striking in its subtlety. Whether consciously or not, Frame is here echoing Warfield's stained glass window illustration.[116] That is, the very elements of tone, emotion and perspective, conveyed through the distinct personal qualities of each writer are the very qualities God wishes to use to say what he intends to say. The extra sophistication that Frame brings to the illustration is to employ a

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illustration: "What if the colours of the stained glass window have been designed by the architect for the express purpose of giving to the light that floods the cathedral precisely the tone and quality it receives from them? What if the word of God that comes to His people is framed by God into the word of God it is, precisely by means of the qualities of the men formed by Him for the purpose, through which it is given?" (Warfield, "Inspiration," in Bromiley, 2:846).

[113] *Doctrine of the Word*, 142.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] See n. 112, above.

concept that is often not stressed in conservative evangelical bibliologies: the idea that revelation is not merely propositional. It is the very fact that revelation consists of much that is not (merely) propositional that necessitates the use of human personality in order to convey the exact message God intended for his creatures. Frame pushes the 'conservative' aspect of his argument even further: not only does this organic inspiration result in "exactly what [God] wanted to say to us," it is "just *like* dictation or mechanical inspiration, but with vast riches of meaning."[117]

Having thus propounded a view of inspiration that falls just short of affirming a dictation model, one might consider it almost superfluous for Frame to assert that inspiration is *verbal*. On that matter, however, there is one important point that Frame is not content to leave unstated. "*Verbal* inspiration means that the *words* of Scripture, not only the ideas of the biblical writers, are God's Word." The idea that inspiration is restricted to *thoughts* or *ideas*, as some claim, is contradicted. And once again, Frame builds his argument on the view that revelation is not merely propositional. For it is not just that the biblical testimony reveals that God assigned to his spokesmen the role of speaking and writing his words. The crucial point is that the wide range of things God wants to reveal to his creatures, such as "events, promises, feelings, tone, and so on … don't fit very well into the notion of God's revealing *ideas*." But they do fit very well into the revelation of *words*, "for words (not ideas) are capable of communicating in all these ways."[118]

It is therefore not surprising, he adds, that "the only time we find the word *inspiration* in the English Bible (2 Tim. 3:16), it refers to the written word–not to the

[117] *Doctrine of the Word*, 143.

[118] Ibid., 143n4.

ideas of prophets and apostles, not even to their oral speech, and not to the biblical writers as such, but to the very *text* of Scripture." Frame allows that the term may correctly be applied to the influence of the Spirit on a biblical writer, but it is a mistake, in his view, to claim that inspiration "properly pertains to persons rather than to written texts. In Scripture, the spirit inspires not only prophets, apostles, and biblical writers, but also *texts*."[119]

Assessment I

The foregoing reveals that Frame maintains God's Word is a personal word that exhibits the lordship attributes of God himself: his control, authority, and presence. Modern, or liberal, theology is at odds with this lordship quality of Scripture, particularly since liberal theologians reject the absolute authority of the Bible. Their rejection of this authority proceeds naturally from their desire to maintain intellectual autonomy. In the five chapters where he discusses matters of autonomy, rationalism, and the rise of liberal theology (Chapters 3-7), Frame says almost nothing regarding the underlying historical dynamics that might have contributed to these developments. He describes the arguments of these liberal scholars, the reasoning behind the arguments, and the connections between the various arguments. But he does not inquire as to whether conditions in the Christian church itself, for example, might have provided the soil in which such ideas could germinate. The sole exception is one sentence offered in respect to Kierkegaard's subjectivism: "I have some sympathy with Kierkegaard, who was wrestling with dead orthodoxy in the Danish Lutheran state

[119] Ibid., 143-144.

church" (p. 36). Arguably, a nuanced historical discussion would have been out of place: Frame's "summary" description of modern theology (p. 15) is concerned with the 'what' far more than the 'why'. This lack is not *in itself* sufficient ground for invalidating Frame's depiction of 'the things that are', for a consequence, like a disease, can be serviceably described without reference to the underlying cause.

Frame is clear that "God's purpose in giving us the Bible is communication."[120] Yet he does not build his case in reference to any contemporary standard 'models of communication'. Is his argument that the Bible is communication thereby weakened? Not necessarily. For communication models are models of *human* communication, where not only the medium and the recipient are human but so also is the source. Frame's main argument is that the source is God himself and that, as Lord, God controls the progress of the message through the creaturely medium. Furthermore, even the reception of the message is influenced by the action of the Holy Spirit. The latter does not guarantee that the message will be rightly understood, nor would Frame deny that the receiver's personal background, culture, education, etc., affect the reception. But there is a supernatural element from beginning to end, a Providence whose purposes cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2). There is a receiver whose darkened mind turns the truth of God into a lie (Rom 1:21, 25) or one whose renewed, Spirit-enlightened heart allows her to apprehend the deep things of God. Are these arguments significantly enhanced by reference to human models of communication?

Nevertheless, one area in which communication models can be invoked with reference to Frame's presentation is in relation to the *direction* of communication. For

[120] *Doctrine of the Word*, 617.

Frame, the communication of the word is unidirectional: God speaks to man. Yet it is often to be observed in the Psalms and in the prophetic writings that the biblical writer is speaking to God. In what sense can these passages, recording man's speech to God, be considered as God communicating to man; that is, as God's word? Is inspiration acting in the same way in each case? Or, by Frame's definition of inspiration, is there an identity between these words (man communicating to God) and God's word? If there is, how does that happen? If there is not, in what sense are they inspired? These questions cannot be answered cursorily, and Frame has not broached them here.

Finally, Frame's analysis of the biblical material seems to proceed from the assumption that the written Word was, in any one place, the product of a single writer. In many instances, this is likely correct. But recent research of the Pauline literature, for instance, has suggested that significant portions of the New Testament, at least, were the product of more than one hand.[121] How far can this idea be developed before a conservative understanding of inspiration is challenged? Again, Frame neglects this aspect of the topic. Indeed, he declines even to consider the place of redactors in the production of any part of Scripture, and how a doctrine of inspiration might be impacted by an acknowledgment of this practice. Frame's diagrammatic representation of the process of transmission of God's word (see the diagram in Section 4.7.2, below) tellingly portrays a straightforward process: the divine voice came to prophets and

[121] See E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). The basic idea that the biblical prophet or gospel writer might have used a secretary will reverberate with Seventh-day Adventists. The latter have long understood that many of the writings of their own prophet, Ellen White, were produced with the help of secretaries. Richards, however, pushes the idea further than conservative Adventists might be comfortable with.

apostles, who then wrote down Scripture. It is an omission that detracts somewhat from the overall impact of Frame's theology of Scripture.

It is possible that, for Frame, this criticism is invalidated by his insistence that the locus of inspiration lies not in the person but in the text. That is, it does not matter *who* penned the words of Scripture; it is the *text* with which we have to do. There would be a certain logical consistency in that rejoinder, but it may simply serve to expose the inadequacy of the *a priori* understanding. This particular issue of the locus of inspiration, as demanded by Frame the inerrantist, is explored further here in the following chapter.

4.7 The Authority, Inerrancy, and Phenomena of Scripture

In the foregoing, Frame has dealt with inspiration in its narrowest sense. He next turns to three contested areas that are often treated as issues in inspiration, where *inspiration* is understood more as a theological topic rather than strictly a process or quality.[122]

4.7.1 The authority of Scripture

Frame has already mentioned the aspect of authority in the sense that God's written word, and his words spoken through human channels, bear his divine authority as covenant Lord. The question to which Frame now turns is more specific: Is Scripture's authority in any way dependent upon or modified by its content? As Frame words it, "some have supposed that Scripture has a narrowly redemptive content and

[122] Any book length publication on the topic of inspiration will deal with these issues, mentioned by Frame here, and not confine itself to the narrow issue of inspiration as a process or quality.

purpose, and therefore that it should not be expected to give us revelation from God in matters of interest to science, history, psychology, philosophy, and so on."[123] The question is answered rather peremptorily:

> Since Scripture is God's personal word to us, we dare not limit its scope, telling him, in effect, that we will listen to him only on certain subjects. Would we ever lay down such an ultimatum if he addressed us personally and directly?[124]

Elaboration comes in the form of responding to challenges to the (supposedly) traditional understanding that Scripture is authoritative in all its content. The most significant of these challenges came at the end of the 1970s from two authors, Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, whose proposal in *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach*[125] became widely discussed in evangelical circles. For these authors, Scripture's authority was connected with its purpose, which was to bring people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Matters of history and science lie outside that purpose, therefore Scripture's pronouncements in these areas are not to be considered authoritative.[126] Frame declines to evaluate the work of Rogers and McKim,[127] but offers several summary assertions:

> (1) that God is the author of the whole biblical canon, (2) that we live by all of it (Matt. 4:4), (3) that God has the right to speak to us about anything at all, (4) that the purpose of Scripture is redemptive in a broad sense, not a narrow sense, (5) that the redemptive purpose of Scripture is so broad that no area of human life is excluded from its concern.[128]

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[123] *Doctrine of the Word*, 163.

[124] Ibid.

[125] San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979.

[126] *Doctrine of the Word*, 165.

[127] John D. Woodbridge's critique (*Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers-McKim Proposal* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982]) is, in Frame's opinion, "definitive" (*Doctrine of the Word*, 166).

[128] *Doctrine of the Word*, 166. Some might fault Frame for here employing mere assertion and disdaining to offer scholarly or biblical reasons why the Rogers and McKim proposal might be faulty. But Frame has clearly stated his methodology (see n. 3, above); furthermore, the assertions that he

Closely related to the issue of the areas in which Scripture is to be understood as authoritative, is the question of inerrancy, "one of the most fiercely debated subjects in the doctrine of the Word of God."[129] Its relationship to the issue of authority lies in the fact that inerrancy is susceptible of two major objections. The first objection is that inerrancy misunderstands the *purpose* of Scripture; the second is that it is inconsistent with the *phenomena* of Scripture.[130]

4.7.2 Inerrancy and the purpose of Scripture

As to the first objections, since, according to some, matters of science and history lie outside Scripture's redemptive purpose, inerrancy is not to be expected when the Bible touches on those fields. Consequently, some scholars speak of *limited inerrancy*; Rogers and McKim prefer the term *infallibility* to describe their position.[131]

Referring to dictionary definitions, Frame suggests that *infallible* is actually a stronger term than *inerrant*. There is an overlap of meaning, but whereas *inerrant* may simply mean "containing no errors," *infallible* denotes "incapable of erring/failing."[132] For Frame, "Scripture is both inerrant and infallible. It is inerrant because it is

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makes here are logical outgrowths of his broad understanding of lordship and its connection with the word of God: God's lordship is not restricted to certain areas of the Christian's life; logically, neither can the word of God be so restricted. "The Lord is totalitarian, as only he has a right to be" (*Systematic Theology*, 28). In addition, in a later chapter (*Doctrine of the Word*, Chapter 27, "The Phenomena of Scripture") Frame elaborates on his disagreement with the narrow understanding of Scripture's purpose.

[129] Ibid., 167.

[130] Ibid., 177.

[131] Ibid., 167, 167nn.2,4.

[132] *Doctrine of the Word*, 168.

infallible. There are no errors because there *can be* no errors in the divine speech." Errors result from either deceit or ignorance, neither or which are ever true of God.[133]

The concept of truth is, in this context, an important one for Frame, who would gladly drop both *infallible* and *inerrant* in favour of *true*.[134] Scripture speaks of truth as (1) metaphysical truth (e.g., John 17:3); (2) propositional truth (e.g., Deut 17:4; 1 Kings 10:6; Eph 4:24); and (3) ethical truth (1 John 1:6; 2:4; 2 John 4). It is the second of these that is relevant to discussions about inerrancy.[135] Unfortunately, "theologians are too inclined to distort the word *truth* into some big theological construction that has nothing to do with simple propositional correctness." Consequently, "the more common propositional use of the term, or its relevance to the doctrine of the word of God," is consequently ignored or denied. As a result, the alternative of speaking simply of the *truth* of Scripture, rather than of its *inerrancy* or *infallibility* "is not open to us."[136]

But he is conscious of a dilemma:

> *Infallibility* is a good term … arguably stronger than mere *truth* … [and has] the advantage of a historical usage going back to the Protestant Reformation. But … such writers as Rogers and McKim have hijacked *infallibility* also, going against responsible lexical usage to turn it into a *weaker* term than either *truth* or *inerrancy*.[137]

[133] Ibid., 169.

[134] Ibid., 170-71.

[135] Ibid., 170. Frame argues the point that propositional truth is an inherent feature of Scripture. See also his comments in Ibid., 162, 170-71n13).

[136] Ibid., 171 (emphases in original).

[137] Ibid. (emphases in original).

Frame therefore states he has no choice but to continue to use *inerrancy*, "along with the adjective *infallible*, not to mention *reliable*, *accurate*, *correct*, and others so there can be no doubt as to the view I am defending."[138]

Frame finds another problem with the term *inerrancy*, in that it suggests to many the idea of precision, rather than mere truth.[139] Thus, while Scripture always speaks the truth, it does not always speak with precision. Imprecisions, metaphors, hyperbole, parables, and so forth, are all "shortcuts" that the biblical writers employ in order to effectively communicate truth; that such may not "convey *literal* truth, or truth with a precision expected in specialized contexts … is no reason to charge them with error. Inerrancy, therefore, means that the Bible is true, not that it is maximally precise."[140] It is better, Frame claims, to define *inerrancy* itself "more precisely [!] by saying that *inerrant language makes good on its claims*."[141] The Bible does not claim to speak in the language of the academic elite, or that it always presents narratives chronologically, or that its accounts of people's words are verbatim.[142]

With the foregoing thoughts, Frame essentially rests his immediate defence of inerrancy. By way of conclusion, he states, "Scripture is inerrant because the personal

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[138] Ibid. The "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy: Exposition," under "Infallibility, Inerrancy, Interpretation" (http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf, accessed 16 April, 2017) affirms that Scripture "may properly be called *infallible* and *inerrant*." Both are negative terms that serve to "safeguard crucial positive truths." Given that the formulators of the Chicago Statement are as comfortable with *infallible* as are Rogers, McKim and others, and that all five contributors to a volume such as *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* (ed. J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013]) can live with *inerrant* provided they are permitted to define the term, Frame's desire to find alternatives is not difficult to understand.

[139] *Doctrine of the Word*, 171.

[140] Ibid., 173.

[141] Ibid., 174 (emphases in original; the exclamation mark, too, is Frame's).

[142] Ibid., 174-75.

word of God cannot be anything other than true."[143] Further, this inerrancy applies as much to the written Word as to the oral message of the prophets and apostles, whose word is "just as inerrant as the divine voice itself."[144]

Yet the matter of inerrancy is not quite finished. Of necessity, it is broached again in a later chapter, "The Transmission of Scripture" (Chapter 33). In Frame's view, there are many steps involved in moving from the original revelation proceeding from the divine voice through to the point at which the message reaches the ears, eyes, and hearts of the believer. Frame suggests that these steps are of two fundamentally different kinds. The first kind is offered in diagrammatic form:[145]

the divine voice

prophets and apostles

the written word

In these descending steps there is no decrease in power, authority, or divine presence, so that "the written Word … is no less authoritative than the oral word of the prophets, or than the divine voice."[146] But a number of other steps, including copying,

[143] Ibid., 176. Frame faults James Orr for defining–and consequently rejecting–inerrancy as "hard and fast literality in minute matters of historical, geographical, and scientific detail" (James Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration* [New York: Scribner's, 1910; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1969], 199). Frame is aware of no advocate of inerrancy who has ever so understood the term. "Indeed, this definition is quite wrongheaded. Inerrancy is not about literality or nonliterality. It is about truthfulness" (*Doctrine of the Word*, 532-33).

[144] Ibid., 176.

[145] Ibid., 239. Frame puts descending arrows between each item.

[146] Ibid.

translating, preaching, and more,[147] are also involved in the transmission of God's words to the believer. These, in contrast to the three steps in the diagram, are "fallible means by which human beings hear and assimilate the Word of God."[148]

It is this distinction that allows evangelicals to propose that inerrancy is limited to the *autographs*, that is, to the original manuscripts produced by the inspired writer. Frame, however, prefers to describe this limitation as pertaining to the "*autographic text*," since a perfect copy of an autograph is an identical *text* and therefore just as true and carries the same authority as the original. He finds scriptural justification for this in the biblical injunctions (or curses) against adding to or subtracting from God's words (as in Deut 4:2; 12:32; Prov 30:5-6; and Rev 22:18-19).[149] "So the inscriptional curse passages do distinguish between the original manuscripts of Scripture and the copies, and they forbid any copying that changes the original text."[150] Frame seems to be saying that the curses against adding or subtracting imply the making of copies, and that as long as the copies are true to the original they retain the force of the original.

It is, then, not necessary to possess the original autographic *documents*. What matters is having the autographic *text*. Errors in copies of the original text are possible,

[147] The steps Frame lists are: copies, textual criticism, translations/editions, teaching/preaching, sacraments, theology, confessions/creeds, traditions/human reception, interpretation/understanding, and assurance. Ibid., 240.

[148] Ibid. Frame is nevertheless not suggesting that the *authority* of God's words is necessarily reduced in these lesser, "fallible" steps. Compare his comments in *Doctrine of the Word*, 261-62 and in *Salvation*, 55-56).

[149] *Doctrine of the Word*, 240-42.

[150] Ibid., 243.

since copying is a fallible process. Nor has God promised that copies will be perfect.[151] The science of textual criticism makes it possible "to determine where the imperfections are likely to be. Where there is no evidence of textual corruption, we [may] assume that our present text is autographic and [may] appeal to the text as the inerrant Word of God."[152]

4.7.3 Inerrancy and the phenomena of Scripture

As noted above, inerrancy is susceptible of two major objections, a misunderstanding of the *purpose* of Scripture being one of them. The other is that inerrancy is inconsistent with the *phenomena* of Scripture. The claim, made by many, is that Scripture *appears* to contain errors, and these must be taken seriously. If we do so, evidently "we will not be able to conclude that Scripture is inerrant." That *inductive* approach contrasts with the *deductive* approach preferred by Frame, viz. that inerrancy is a conclusion derived from Scripture's teaching about itself.[153] His defence of his position may be summarised as five points.

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[151] Ibid., 244. Here again, Frame is applying the principle that he had earlier expounded, namely, that the inerrancy of Scripture is to be evaluated against its *claims* (as noted above; see also *Doctrine of the Word*, 174, 198-200 and nn. 179, 180, below).

[152] Ibid., 247. Frame devotes some pages to dealing with a number of issues arising from his discussion of the autographs: (1) since Jesus and the apostles quoted from copies, translations and versions of Scripture and regarded them as the word of God, why is it necessary to limit divine inspiration to the autographs? (2) isn't this limitation "an apologetic dodge?" (3) doesn't this limitation make inerrancy "a dead letter," because of the implicit admission that our present Bibles are not inerrant? (4) "Why did God allow the autographs to be lost?" (5) "Why did God not give us perfect copies?" (6) since, through the fallible process of transmission, some of God's word has been lost, is this not a serious loss? Frame's detailed answers to these objections (244-52) need not be recounted here. For the purposes of this paper, it is enough to know that Frame is an inerrantist and for the reasons noted in the main text. Frame defends his inerrantist stance also in Appendix L ("Review of Andrew McGowan, *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*"), especially pp. 531-48.

[153] Ibid., 178.

First, all doctrines of the Christian faith are beset by problems. We do not allow those problems to force us to jettison belief in such doctrines as the sovereignty of God, the Trinity, and the divine-human nature of Jesus; nor should we jettison the doctrine of inerrancy on the basis of problems, difficulties, and apparent errors in the Bible.[154] Second, "the very nature of Christian faith is to believe God's word *despite* the existence of unresolved difficulties." Abraham, promised a child at age one hundred, with his wife past the age of childbearing, is put forward as an example.[155] Third, Scripture's claim to inerrancy is "entirely clear; it is not in doubt." We must cling to that belief regardless of what an inductive examination of the phenomena might tempt us to believe.[156] Fourth, in dealing with problems in the Bible, "we must not revert to intellectual autonomy … assuming that human reason serves as the final criterion of truth." As with all our activities, so in the study of Scripture: "we should study the problems in faith, presupposing that God is real and that he has given us his personal words in Scripture."[157] Fifth, we have problems with Scripture because of finitude and sin. Our finitude limits our understanding of God's nature and actions, of God's world, of the course of nature and history, and of the cultures described in the Bible.[158] Sin leads people to "repress" God's clear truth of both natural revelation (Rom 1[159]) and Scripture (Luke 24:25; John 5:37-40; 2 Cor 3:14). Although believers may

[154] Ibid., 178.

[155] Ibid., 178-79.

[156] Ibid., 179.

[157] Ibid., 180.

[158] Ibid., 181.

[159] Noting the tendency of sinners to "repress the truth" (Rom 1:18) is a frequent emphasis in *Doctrine of the Word* (16, 76-77, 145, 291, 308, 313, 435, 559).

overcome this sinful tendency, through the Spirit, we remain "subject every day to Satan's temptation" to unbelief as well as wrong behavior. Consequently, "sometimes believers think like unbelievers." Frame refers here especially to liberal scholarship, but notes also a tendency for other believers (evangelicals, perhaps?) to ascribe authority to that kind of scholarship.[160]

Frame, then, is unambiguous in affirming that faith in Scripture as the inerrant word of God must be clung to despite problems, difficulties, and apparent errors in the Bible. When faced with difficulties that we cannot solve, it is, he states, no dishonour to say, "'I don't know how this can be resolved.'"[161] He nevertheless offers, in the following chapter, some general principles for how to deal with "Bible problems."

4.8 Bible Problems

Frame notes nine categories of problems, dealing with each in turn.[162] It is not necessary to review these in detail here, except to note, first, Frame's approach to any problems that might connect with Peter Enns's agenda, and, second, general guidelines that Frame offers.

As to the first, what Frame here considers under the headings of "theological problems," "factual problems," and "problems of factual consistency," would all likely be considered by Enns as examples of 'theological diversity.' In Frame's view,

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[160] *Doctrine of the Word*, 181. Frame's wording does not clearly implicate evangelicals in this tendency to esteem liberal scholarship. But the implication is detectible in his juxtaposition of terms, as in "believers"/"unbelievers" and "believers"/"liberal scholarship."

[161] Ibid., 181.

[162] These are: (1) theological problems; (2) ethical problems; (3) factual problems; (4) problems of factual consistency; (5) problems of quotations and references; (6) historical problems; (7) genre; (8) scientific problems; and (9) problems of date, authorship, and setting (Ibid., 184-200).

theological problems often involve mystery relating to God's person, in which case humility, rather than analysis, is required; or they involve supposedly logical contradictions, in which case more careful reading often dispels that appearance.[163] The assumption of factual problems usually involves misinterpretations of the text, perhaps assuming "that Scripture is making a universal statement when in fact it addresses only a narrow context," or confusing the notion of *fact* with the conclusions of various historical or scientific theories.[164] Questions of factual inconsistency, to a large extent, are …

> simply more complicated forms of the factual questions we discussed earlier, and they should be treated in the same way as the others. Each factual claim needs to be understood properly, with an understanding of its proper universe of discourse and its right interpretation, with an understanding of the flexibility of literary forms.[165]

Frame's first example under the heading "problems of quotations and references" is one that Enns has treated at some length. It is Matthew's use of Hos 11:1 to describe the flight of Joseph and his family into Egypt and their subsequent return. For Enns, it is the problem of "the NT use of the OT;" for Frame, it simply illustrates the need to rightly understand the word *fulfil* (pléroó). "Fulfillments in Scripture," he states, "are not limited to predictions that come true." Neither this nor other such 'fulfillment' quotations in Matthew are inappropriate. They are, rather, "illuminating," in that they indicate that Jesus "reflects the OT messianic expectations in a great many ways."[166]

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[163] Ibid., 188.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Ibid., 189.

[166] *Doctrine of the Word*, 191.

A somewhat different example within the same category is Paul's use of the Hagar story (Gen 16) in Galatians 4:21-31. Paul states that the Hagar story may be interpreted allegorically, an interpretive technique that Protestants have generally condemned. Frame admits that it is unlikely that Moses, the writer of Genesis, had any thought that Hagar "corresponds to" the Jerusalem of Paul's day. Then, "is Paul imposing an interpretation on Genesis 16 that the passage will not bear?" This is denied, on the grounds that Paul was not claiming "to reproduce the original meaning of the Genesis passage, or the meaning it may have had for its original readers, or even the meaning it had in the mind of its human author."[167] Paul was simply "drawing a parallel, a 'correspondence.' Hagar is *similar* in significant ways to the Judaism of Paul's day, and Isaac to the Christians. … The comparison is bold … but it is *appropriate*."[168]

In this section, Frame makes direct reference to Enns's claim that the NT writers were influenced by the interpretative methods of second-temple Judaism, leading them sometimes to wrong conclusions. Some degree of influence is not to be denied, but (demonstrating his commitment to deductive reasoning) Frame insists that "the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy … rule out the idea that the NT writers are guilty of false, inappropriate citations."[169] The many ways in which the NT writers cite

[167] Ibid., 191-92. Frame is here demonstrating consistency with his earlier clarification on the meaning of *inerrancy*, viz. that "the Bible makes good on its claims" (174).

[168] Ibid., 192. *Contra* Frame, see G. W. Hansen, "Galatians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993). Hansen's comment that Paul's allegorical use of Hagar and Sinai in Gal 4 is "problematic" (333) may well represent the view of many.

[169] Ibid. Frame acknowledges that Enns "hesitates to say that these methods actually led the NT writers to false conclusions." It seems, however, that Frame reads Enns as at least implying such.

the OT can be described with the term *application*. "A citation is legitimate if it is a legitimate *application* of the OT text."[170]

"Historical problems" and "scientific problems" are other categories that Frame treats and which connect, to some degree, with the challenges presented by Enns. Historical problems exist on different levels. At the philosophical level, some nineteenth-century OT scholars (Wellhausen and others) posited an evolutionary understanding of religion, patterned after Darwinian evolution. Thus, Israel's religion evolved in its views of God, moving from "a barbaric henotheism … to a lofty monotheism."[171] Frame's reply is stated, rather than argued: "this speculation had no basis in the biblical text, and it deeply contradicted the biblical account which portrayed one God, existing from eternity to eternity, from creation throughout history, revealing himself consistently to successive generations of human beings."[172] At another level, historical problems relate more to the discipline of history as such, where the assertions of non-biblical historians and the findings of archaeology contradicted

[170] Ibid., 193. There would appear to be circularity in Frame's argument, for the legitimacy of the application is precisely the point at issue. Enns, for example, argues that many of these NT citations can *not* be seen as legitimate applications on grounds of either grammatical-historical exegesis, original context or authorial intention (Enns, *Inspiration*, 115). Rather, "the New Testament authors were explaining what the Old Testament means *in light of Christ's coming*" (Ibid., 116). The suspicion of circularity on Frame's part is not allayed by his statement that "the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy … rule out the idea that the NT writers are guilty of false, inappropriate citations" (*Doctrine of the Word*, 192). To be fair, however, this assertion is but a legitimate implication of a theological stance that he has elsewhere argued. It is possible that Frame's "legitimate application" statement is merely an attempt to provide a broad *term* that can cover "the many ways in which the NT writers cite the OT" (Ibid., 193). There is reason to believe that, for Frame, the term "application" is broad enough to embrace Enns's christotelic explanation of these NT citations. Nevertheless, Frame is aware of current scholarly discussion on the issue (Ibid., 192) and himself admits to being "perplexed" at some of the NT interpretations of OT texts (*Doctrine of the Word*, 511).

[171] *Doctrine of the Word*, 193. While not specifically identifying his view with that of Wellhausen and others, Enns has clearly indicated his understanding that Israel's religion was not always monotheistic (see his *Inspiration*, 97-102 and *Evolution of Adam*, 43-45).

[172] *Doctrine of the Word*, 193-94.

the historical statements of the Bible. In either case, the Christian believer is to understand that historians and archaeologists are not infallible and do not speak the final word.[173]

With his third example of historical problems, Frame directly addresses Enns's issue of "uniqueness." Enns notes that a number of narratives and institutions of the OT evince similarities to those in other ANE countries; since Scripture is not in these respects "unique," how can it be inspired of God? Frame responds that "uniqueness of this kind is no part of the doctrine of biblical inspiration." Inspiration demands that Scripture be *true* not *unique* (as Enns uses the latter term). Where Scripture is unique among rival documents is that it is "the one true written Word of the one true God." Besides, "the non-Israelite traditions actually validate to some extent the events described in Scripture. And where they do not, the Christian believer must choose God's Word over the extrabiblical sources."[174] The misunderstanding over Scripture's uniqueness is, in Frame's view, "confusion."[175]

Frame's treatment of problems in the Bible has been necessarily brief on a subject on which other authors have written lengthy books.[176] A single chapter can hope to do no more than expose the basic issues, provide terse answers to selected

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[173] Ibid., 194.

[174] Ibid., 194-95.

[175] Ibid., 194, 195.

[176] A number of such books have been published, such as: John W. Haley, *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1992); Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982); Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties: Clear and Concise Answers from Genesis to Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992); Walter C. Kaiser Jr, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 1996); Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *The Bible Handbook of Difficult Verses: A Complete Guide to Answering the Tough Questions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013).

examples, and offer general principles. There are four general principles that one might glean from Frame's treatment of Bible difficulties, the first three of which are stated in his introductory remarks. First, difficulties in the Bible are nothing new, and many solutions have been suggested. Second, even a *possible* solution refutes the dogmatic assertion that a particular problem has *no* solution. In reality, "nobody has ever *proved* the existence of a single error." Third, "our faith does not depend on our ability to solve any of these problems." There is sufficient positive evidence for the truth of Scripture that unsolved difficulties can be set aside, resting assured that for most difficulties there are at least *possible* solutions.[177] A fourth principle, introduced in the previous chapter ("The Inerrancy of Scripture"), is that difficulties are often ameliorated by understanding what the Bible does and does not claim for itself. This principle is either explicitly stated,[178] or implied–as when Frame states (under "Factual Problems"): "Many problems of this kind deal similarly with misinterpretations of biblical texts. Often the misinterpretation assumes that Scripture is making a universal statement when in fact it addresses only a narrow context."[179]

[177] *Doctrine of the Word*, 184.

[178] Ibid., 198-200 (expressly stated three times). Vanhoozer, perhaps following Frame, states similarly: "In maintaining that Scripture is 'without error,' inerrancy insists only that the Bible makes good on its claims, *whatever these claims may be*" (Kevin Vanhoozer, "Response to Peter Enns," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, 132; note Vanhoozer's clear identification of his own position with that of Frame, 132-33, 135, 130).

[179] *Doctrine of the Word*, 188. Further examples of the 'implied claim' principle are found in *Doctrine of the Word*, 192, 194-95.

4.9 Confessions and Traditions

In four successive chapters[180] Frame treats subjects that may be deemed not truly part of a doctrine of Scripture, since they deal more with how Scripture is taught rather than with what it actually is. The last of these will nevertheless be considered here on the basis of its significance to Frame's overall conception of the role of Scripture in the church.

To begin with, the subject matter of the chapter "Confessions, Creeds, Traditions" is obviously important to Frame. His decision to depart Westminster Theological Seminary stemmed largely from his disaffection with the traditionalism that he encountered there.[181] In *Doctrine of the Word* Frame frequently alludes to his antipathy towards traditionalism, even including an essay (Appendix P, "Traditionalism") which, alone among the seventeen appendices, appears to have been written especially for inclusion in this volume.[182] The preceding appendix ("In Defense of Something Close to Biblicism: Reflections on *Sola Scriptura* and its History in Theological Method") likewise connects with this theme, since, as will be seen, the *sola Scriptura* principle is sometimes in conflict with creedalism and traditionalism.

Frame regards the tendency towards traditionalism as a significant problem in contemporary evangelical and Reformed theology. It is only proper to learn from teachers of the past. On the other hand, the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura* demands that every human tradition be tested against the Scriptures. Traditionalism, in

[180] Chapters 35 ("Teaching and Preaching"), 36 ("Sacraments"), 37 ("Theology") and 38 ("Confessions, Creeds, Traditions").

[181] Details are given in Frame's "Backgrounds," under "Westminster in California, 1980-2000."

[182] The essay that constitutes Appendix P is, however, evidently based upon previous work (see *Doctrine of the Word*, 601n1).

Frame's definition, "exists where *sola Scriptura* is violated, either by adding to or by subtracting from God's Word (Deut. 4:2)."[183] Despite an avowed respect for the *sola Scriptura* principle on the part of most evangelical theologians, there has arisen an increasing emphasis on tradition. This is evidenced by the forming of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals and by recent "conversions" of evangelicals to communions that emphasise the historic traditions of the church: Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy.[184] While acknowledging his limitations as a historian, Frame suggests three reasons for this trend.

First, the movement towards a renewed confessionalism reflects evangelical exposure to liberal theological methods.[185] Liberal theology, "almost by definition, [attempts] to present the Christian message on some basis other than that of the infallible authority of Scripture." Most liberal theologians are loathe to present their work as mere speculation. Upon what other authority, then, can these theologians lean? Frame's answer is that, keen to be seen as Christian teachers and part of the historic theological community, liberals "seek to position themselves within the church's theological tradition."[186] The most admired evangelical scholars have generally earned their degrees or gained appointments at outstanding secular universities. A doctoral

[183] Ibid., 601-02.

[184] Ibid., 604.

[185] Ibid. Not that Frame is opposed to confessionalism per se. He, in fact, states unambiguously his avowed "wish to be known as *confessional*" (612), while abhorring traditionalism (the two are to be sharply distinguished [591]). His position, as noted here, would seem to be that confessionalism has the danger of mutating into traditionalism, with the inevitable result that the *sola Scriptura* position is compromised. Even the church's confessions–legitimate, authoritative statements that function as baptismal instruction, witness to the world, and warning against falsehood (287)–must be amenable to correction by new understandings of Scripture: the principle of *sola Scriptura* must be regarded as above the authority even of confessions (288, 591).

[186] Ibid., 602.

degree cannot be obtained from such a university, claims Frame, if its conclusions are based on the divine, infallible authority of Scripture; but they *can* be achieved by couching the conclusions in "historical" terms. The result is that scholars can get into the habit of using liberal methodologies "without taking adequate care to find biblical standards of evaluation."[187]

A second reason for the increasing emphasis on tradition is the evangelical weariness over the inerrancy debate.[188] While some evangelicals were becoming less conservative, some scholars from the liberal tradition were coming to more conservative conclusions on historical and dogmatic questions. The *rapprochement* between the two sides led to a felt need to find a common-ground methodology; that methodology, exemplified by the work of liberal theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg, was one in which theological statements are valid only if verified by ("religiously neutral"[189]) historical scholarship. Many evangelicals applauded the move.[190] Frame, by contrast, opposes it, since, in his view, *religiously neutral* historical scholarship means "scholarship in which the ultimate standards of truth are found somewhere other than Scripture." Again, the historical emphasis is here seen to be the link with tradition.

Third, evangelicals have felt some shame over their past parochialism, provoking a re-evaluation of what it really meant to be an evangelical. At the same time, the feeling arose among some evangelicals that their own tradition lacked a real sense of the great traditions of the church: it was not well connected to the roots of

[187] Ibid., 604-05.

[188] Ibid., 607.

[189] The phrase is inserted by Frame.

[190] Ibid., 608.

Christendom, and was liturgically inadequate. The results have included defections to the more liturgical, non-evangelical communions or, in other cases, a renewed emphasis within evangelism on the broader Christian traditions. In Frame's view, the latter movement "represents a weakening of the *sola Scriptura* principle."[191]

4.10 The Interpretation of Scripture

Frame's treatment of the interpretation of Scripture (hermeneutics) spans a mere five pages. He admits the available literature is "vast," while his presentation will be "quite elementary," offered merely in the hope of pointing his readers in the right direction.[192] Where other writers have raised hermeneutics "to a new level of philosophical sophistication and abstraction," at times expanding the notion of interpretation to include the philosophy of language and communication, Frame limits himself to the question of understanding biblical language in order to understand texts.[193]

Interpretation involves ascertaining meaning. Using John 1:1 as an illustration, Frame demonstrates that determining meaning exists on three levels: finding (1) an equivalent English phrase (translation from the original language), (2) a theological explanation of the terms, and (3) a program for our lives. These, in his view, amount to *application*:

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[191] Ibid., 609. Frame's concern on this point should not be taken as an antipathy towards ecumenism, a principle that he endorses here and elsewhere (as noted in his footnote, 609n17). But the principle of *sola Scriptura*, which Frame is committed to "heart and soul" (610), is the one to which others must defer.

[192] Ibid., 292.

[193] Ibid.

> When we ask the 'meaning' of a passage, we are simply confessing that we don't know what to do with it. When we explain meaning in various ways, we are helping people learn what to do with the language, how to apply the language to themselves.[194]

This nevertheless leaves unanswered the problem of how to understand texts from times and cultures far removed from ours. Several points are offered to mitigate what appears to many to be a difficult task.

First, human cultures share similarities as well as display differences. Those similarities are increased with the commonality of faith in Christ. Second, the significant differences are bridged by a continuous interpretive process spanning the centuries. It is incorrect to speak of "a huge, empty cultural gap" between the ancient cultures and ours. Third, the church has teachers gifted with expertise in these ancient cultures and languages; they are able to help modern believers understand the texts. Fourth, the most important guide to interpretation is Scripture itself, whereby "the true and full sense of any Scripture … [may be] searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." The unity of Scripture makes more difference than the cultural differences to those who "live in God's Word." Fifth, ultimately, truth is supernaturally known. It is the Spirit who "illumines the Word and enables us to interpret."[195]

4.11 The Aspect of 'Person-revelation'

Frame has propounded the view that revelation is mediated through events[196] and words, the latter aspect receiving by far the greater emphasis. The third and final medium of revelation is *persons*. To this aspect Frame now turns. Though treating it

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[194] Ibid., 294.

[195] Ibid., 295-96.

[196] Frame's brief treatment of this aspect is not reviewed here. See references in nn. 97–99, above.

relatively briefly, Frame nevertheless considers the idea of person-revelation to be vitally necessary for the process of divine-human communication.[197] This is because communication is itself inherently a personal act.[198]

Revelation through persons happens in the first place through God, "the divine witness."[199] In the Old Testament, God sometimes appeared personally to human beings. These theophanies were usually visual, God appearing sometimes as an angel or man, sometimes as a "glory cloud."[200] Jesus, "the chief theophany of God," is the mediator of all revelation; as the Word of God, he is the "chief speaker of God's authoritative word … and … the divine voice incarnate."[201] The Holy Spirit is the one by whom God breathes out his words, and is thus the author of the Bible. He also illumines it to its readers. This leads Frame to emphasise again that "our identification of God's word is supernatural. … The work of the Holy Spirit in illumination and demonstration [of power] is the supernatural factor that enables us to hear the words of Scripture as God's personal words to us."[202] It is an important point for Frame, and he lingers here to consider, on the one hand, the relationship between the Holy Spirit's witness and the function of evidence and, on the other, the tension between the work of the Spirit and the sufficiency of Scripture.[203]

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[197] Ibid., 304.

[198] Ibid., 305.

[199] The first of the three chapters on person-revelation (chapter 42) is subtitled "The Divine Witness."

[200] Ibid., 306. The phrase is Meredith Kline's.

[201] Ibid., 307.

[202] Ibid., 308-309.

[203] Ibid., 312-314.

The evidences in Scripture of its own divine authority are 100 percent cogent. The Spirit does not provide additional evidence to the case for faith nor "miraculously turn uncertain evidence into certain evidence." Rather, he witnesses to the truth that is already objectively present in Scripture.[204] His role is to "*cause* faith." The *reasons* for our faith are found in Scripture. This important distinction between the cause and reason of faith bring clarity, in Frame's view, to the debates about the relation of the Holy Spirit's witness to evidence and arguments. We need both the Spirit (the cause of faith) and the self-witness of Scripture (the reason for faith) in order to be assured of the truth of Scripture. "It is in this way that God comes with his personal words to attest them to our minds and hearts."[205] On the same basis, the supposed tension between the work of the Spirit and the sufficiency of Scripture is relieved. Scripture does contain "all the divine words that we will ever need for any area of life." Nevertheless, the Spirit's work is still necessary in order for the believer to properly understand Scripture and make use of it.[206]

Person-revelation occurs also through human beings. Being made in the image of God, everything a human being was created to be reflects God in some way.[207] Contrary to some traditions (which he declines to name), Frame believes that sin has not entirely erased that image.[208] Called to imitate Christ, particularly his self-

[204] Ibid., 313.

[205] Ibid., 312, 314.

[206] Ibid., 314.

[207] Ibid., 316.

[208] Ibid., citing Gen 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; James 3:9.

sacrificing love, the believer reveals the grace of God to others.[209] Redeemed human beings reveal God in at least two further ways. First, they bear his name. Since God's name equates to his glory (Ex 33:18-19), the believer bears God's glory and his presence; God is by this means revealed in the believer.[210] Secondly, the writing of God's word on our hearts denotes "the deep penetration of God's revelation into our being."[211] Revelation begins in God's own heart and his purpose in communicating with human beings is incomplete until the word resides within his hearers. "Our hearts, then, are the destination of God's revelation. In us the process of communication reaches its terminus."[212]

Assessment II

In Frame's understanding, the Bible is authoritative in all its content. This is so because no sphere of human thought and activity is beyond the broad redemptive purpose of God in giving us the Scriptures. We cannot deny God the right to speak to us (in Scripture) about anything at all. For Frame, it follows that even where Scripture speaks in areas that interconnect with matters of science and history, it speaks with divine authority. Scripture's inerrancy pertains to the whole.

Frame admits that inerrancy is challenged by certain matters of science (relating especially to the age of the earth) and by internal textual difficulties. Yet the essential character of Scripture–its inerrancy, its infallible truthfulness in all its statements–is

[209] Ibid., 316-17.

[210] Ibid., 321-23.

[211] Ibid., 324.

[212] Ibid., 326-27.

not, and cannot be, threatened by such problems. In a stark demonstration of his 'top down', deductive method, Frame admits to the "serious problem" of the 'age of the earth', yet devotes barely one page to its discussion.[213] The details of the scientific challenge, while not outside his area of interest,[214] are evidently irrelevant to the doctrine of Scripture. This is because the only question to be settled is whether the biblical text is interpreted "correctly." "When we have interpreted them correctly," he states, "they will convey truth to us."[215] It is a position that is open to challenge–God might, perhaps, have accommodated his revelations to particular biblical or ANE world views–but it is consistent with his overarching system. Even should his argument be found to be circular at some point, Frame will not deny the charge. As already noted here, circularity, according to Frame, is inherent in all systems that seek to validate an ultimate principle of thought.

Others of Scripture's problems are similarly dealt with. While some effort is made towards explanation or harmonisation, ultimately what is required is faith in the truthfulness of Scripture. Nor is this a blind faith, for it is built on what other texts of Scripture plainly teach. These, as much as the 'problem' texts, constitute the phenomena of the Bible. In Frame's understanding, many standard biblical doctrines have inherent difficulties yet are not on that basis doubted by most scholars. Neither, then, should difficulties in other biblical texts disturb the doctrine of inerrancy.

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[213] *Doctrine of the Word*, 198.

[214] Frame supplies a footnote referring the reader to a lengthier discussion in one of his earlier volumes (*The Doctrine of God*, 307-310): *Doctrine of the Word*, 198n14.

[215] *Doctrine of the Word*, 198.

5. Frame's Appendix J: "Review of Peter Enns, Inspiration and Incarnation"[216]

In a "Note" prefixing the appendix, Frame advises the reader that this review was undertaken in 2008 (some three years following the publication of Enns's volume) at the request of some friends. Its publication in *Doctrine of the Word* is intended to supplement the earlier chapters on inerrancy and Bible problems.[217]

Frame's review follows the outline of Enns's book, dealing in turn with the non-uniqueness of the OT, theological diversity in the OT, and the use of the OT in the New.[218] As to the first, Frame claims to "have a hard time seeing where the problem lies."[219] He appeals repeatedly to the idea that the traditional doctrine of "organic" inspiration happily embraces the phenomena that Enns presents: the biblical text was brought about by both human and divine causes. Indeed, Frame concludes that "in this first section of the book, Enns fails to present any thesis distinct from the traditional evangelical view of organic inspiration, though he seems to think he has done so."[220] Another problem Frame has with the first of Enns's challenges is that the author is unclear in his use of the concepts "evidence," "myth," and "uniqueness." Regarding

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[216] Ibid., 499-516.

[217] Ibid., 499.

[218] Frame's detailed rebuttals of Enns's arguments will be described, where appropriate, in the following chapter ("Comparison and Evaluation"). Here, it is sufficient to note the general thrust of Frame's reaction to *Inspiration and Incarnation*.

[219] *Doctrine of the Word*, 500.

[220] Ibid., 505. Hence Frame's apparent frustration at Enns's insistence that the OT's non-uniqueness constitutes a problem. Frame expresses his frustration in phrases such as the following: "Perhaps there have been some evangelicals who have found these parallels problematic, but I think not very many" (501); "I can't imagine why he [Enns] thought this needed to be argued" (p. 501); "Why would anybody imagine that God cannot use the influence of other cultures to do this …?" (p. 502); "I'm not sure what this means" (502); "I don't understand its relevance" (504); "And again, I wonder who it is who ever embraced the other alternative" (505); "I don't understand why Enns considers this a problem or a tension" (509).

the latter, Frame insists that uniqueness has never been a criterion of inspiration.[221] His final comment on this aspect (in the "Conclusions" section) is dismissive: "I could simply agree with Enns on the data and then move on."[222]

Frame finds Enns's use of the term "diversity", in the second section, "as confusing as was his concept of 'uniqueness' in the first section."[223] For diversity is manifested in various ways; Enns, however, "typically speaks of diversity in a very general way, leaving the reader confused."[224] It is, as in the first section, a looseness in the way terms are employed that leaves Frame apparently perplexed:

> But Enns' 'diversity' language leaves the nature of the problem fairly murky. I just don't know what kind of problem I'm being asked to solve. If this is a perspectival difference, no problem at all. Otherwise, we have some conceptual work to do, even though Enns tells us … that we really shouldn't worry about it.[225]

Again, Frame suggests that what Enns sees as problems are, in some cases, quite in harmony with a traditional understanding of inspiration.[226] Frame singles out four examples of diversity that Enns puts forwards as problematic, and treats these in a little more detail (two pages in total). Of these four, Frame concludes that two, and to some degree a third, again present no threat to the traditional doctrine.[227] Not so the

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[221] Ibid., 505, 503.

[222] Ibid., 515.

[223] Ibid., 506.

[224] Ibid.

[225] Ibid., 507.

[226] Frame mentions, in particular, the differences between the two versions of the Ten Commandments. In addition, "most of Enns' other examples in this section are similarly unthreatening to the tradition, even when Enns seems to think that they are" (508).

[227] These are: the marriages of Ruth, first to Mahlon, then to Boaz, as literally violating the stricture of Deut 23:3; the cases where Scripture sometimes portrays the heathen gods as having no real existence while at other times appearing to suggest they do; the instances of God apparently changing his mind (509-10).

fourth, the case of whether the Passover lamb was to be roasted or boiled: it certainly appears to be a contradiction.[228] Frame's approach with this example is worth noting. First, he acknowledges that it is an "apparent contradiction" (twice), "a contradiction" (once), and an "actual contradiction" (once[229]). Second, he makes no attempt to criticise Enns's exegesis of the relevant texts, though he states in a footnote that an OT colleague (Bruce Waltke) does find fault with Enns's construal of the Hebrew terminology. Third, Frame offers no suggestions for resolving the apparent contradiction, nor does he explain why he declines to do so.[230] Instead, Frame finds fault with Enns's tactic. This example, he states,

> is different from the other examples Enns has mentioned, and he should have warned us. It is as if he sneaks up on us, giving us bland, noncontroversial cases of 'diversity,' so that we will not be alert or alarmed when he suggests an actual contradiction in Scripture.[231]

Tactics aside, for Frame, Enns's presentation betrays a category error. But it is one that appears to be part of a purposeful stratagem and betrays an approach to the broader issue of the phenomena of Scripture that is directly opposed to Frame's own. Frame appears able to accept that there are real difficulties, even ones that he would describe as "contradictions." But there is no need to adjust one's (traditional) understanding of inspiration even if no solution to the problem is evident; the believer's faith in Scripture can be sustained by the enormous positive evidence for Scripture's

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[228] This "fourth" example is treated first in the appendix.

[229] This is strongly implied: where Enns has previously presented "noncontroversial cases of 'diversity' … [he here] suggests an actual contradiction in Scripture" (508-09).

[230] Ibid., 508.

[231] Ibid., 508-09.

truthfulness.[232] Enns's approach, by contrast, is to suggest that these contradictions are problems only *because* of holding to the traditional view of inspiration; adjust one's understanding of inspiration, and these texts will cease to be regarded as problems to be solved.[233]

As to Enns's third group of challenges, Frame notes that the sometimes peculiar ways in which the NT writers interpreted the OT have been the subject of scholarly comment for many centuries.[234] Frame affirms that his general approach to this genre of difficulty is one of the three popular approaches adopted by evangelical scholars that Enns specifically rejects, namely that "the word *application* is the best to cover the wide variety of ways in which the NT authors cite the OT."[235] Frame has very little to say about specific examples that Enns brings to the table,[236] but reserves his most pointed criticism for how Enns deals with the question of how we today should read the Old Testament.

The issue in particular is how the modern interpreter is to maintain the apostles' Christotelic approach while renouncing their second-temple methods. Frame again

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[232] Ibid., 184.

[233] Evangelicalism, according to Enns, has a tendency "to move toward a defensive or apologetic handling of the biblical evidence, to protect the Bible against the modernist charge that diversity is evidence of errors in the Bible and, consequently, that the Bible is not inspired by God" (*Inspiration*, 108). In his view, rather than seeking a "superficial unity" to the Bible, as evangelicals so often do, a more proper understanding will recognise a "more subtle," "deeper" unity "that should ultimately be sought in Christ himself" (p. 110). When Scripture is so understood, "the diversity of Scripture–and the tensions that this diversity introduces–bears witness to God's revelation rather than detracts from it" (p. 111).

[234] Ibid., 512n15.

[235] Ibid., n15. Frame opts for the approach that understands the NT writers were not intending to "interpret" the OT texts, only to "apply" them. See Enns, *Inspiration*, 115.

[236] In fact, Frame mentions only three: Jesus' quotation of Ex 3:6 in Luke 20:34-38 (511); Enns's accusation that pseudo-Solomon was in error (511n14); and Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1-3 (512).

chooses not to engage the specifics of Enns's argument at this point, passing over the several pages that he devotes to the question and moving immediately to Enns's interim conclusion: "The way I begin to work through this impasse," Enns writes, "is to question what we mean by method."[237] This partial solution has no appeal to Frame, who reads it as possibly implying that it would be legitimate to read Scripture with little or no dependable method; the result would be interpretations where "anything goes," none of which could be evaluated as better than any other.[238] Yet Frame is not entirely unsympathetic to Enns's consequent suggestion that interpretation, rather than being based on *method*, is something of an art, Spirit-led, and done in community.[239] Where he deems this suggestion as falling short is in its naivety: how can communal interpretation possibly work when the many denominations are not agreed in their understandings of Scripture?[240] The Spirit witnesses to the word; "we find the truth through his 'speaking in the Scripture.'" But if there is no method, if we are dependent upon walking with our community under the guidance of the Spirit, there is no practical guidance for judging between true and false readings of Scripture.[241]

In summary, Frame's response to Enns's *Inspiration* can be characterised in three words: puzzlement, frustration, and disappointment. Frame indicates some puzzlement over why Enns believes he has put forward significant challenges to the conservative evangelical doctrine of Scripture. With only a few exceptions, Frame

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[237] Enns, *Inspiration*, 160.

[238] *Doctrine of the Word*, 513.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Ibid., 516.

[241] Ibid., 515-16.

finds the examples Enns offers present no real difficulty; nor do they imply anything that an evangelical doctrine of Scripture is not able quite comfortably to incorporate. Frame voices some frustration at Enns's obtuseness of vocabulary at critical points: Enns is either unclear or loose in some of his definitions, so that the reader is either unsure of exactly what Enns is claiming or uncertain of the actual problem that he is suggesting. Finally, Frame expresses disappointment that Enns's volume is of such limited value to its intended readership (the educated lay person or seminarian). Frame is able to resonate with Enns's emphasis on the need of the Holy Spirit in the work of interpreting Scripture. But Frame's overall impression is that, while helping the reader to see that humility is required when endeavouring to describe the phenomenon that is Scripture, Enns's *Inspiration* "says nothing to promote confidence in the truth of the biblical text."[242]

6. Chapter Summary

6.1 General Observations

Frame's *Doctrine of the Word* is without question the most comprehensive systematic treatment of the doctrine of Scripture in modern evangelicalism. It is on the one hand unashamedly conservative and self-consciously Reformed. At the same time, the material is presented within a framework that is new and unique. That uniqueness derives largely from the triperspectivalism that pervades and undergirds the entire system.

[242] Ibid., 516.

Outside of the seventeen appendices, Frame interacts little with other theologians. He does not deny that there is value in such interactions. His stated purpose is rather to find answers "from the Word of God itself."[243]

The several prominent aspects of Frame's thought on the doctrine of Scripture may now be summarised.

6.2 Frame's Bibliology in *The Doctrine of the Word of God*

First, and perhaps most importantly, God's speech to human beings is real speech and comes as a personal word. It is personal both because it proceeds from a personal God and because it is intended to be received as a personal message from this God. Frame labels this the *personal-word model*.

Two crucial concepts follow from this notion. The first is that God's word conveys the attributes of God himself, specifically his control, authority, and presence. These Frame terms *lordship attributes*. It is *as Lord* that God speaks to his creatures; His word necessarily comes to us with all the power (or control), authority and presence that we associate with God himself. This recognition, in turn, leads Frame to conclude, in words that recall the opening statement of John's Gospel, that "God's word is God, and God is his word."[244] This second concept emerges clearly from the first. God and his word are not two separate entities; no more can God be separated from his attributes than can his word, bearing his attributes, be separated from himself.

But what of the words that are to be found on the printed pages of Scripture: in what sense can they be identified with this divine word of God? Frame's response is

[243] Ibid., 7.

[244] Ibid., 48; see also n. 78, above.

that all of God's communication to his creatures–even the direct voice of God–comes through *created media*. Rather than being barriers to God's communication, these are the very means through which God chooses to bring to finite hearers his absolute power, authority, and presence; that is, his lordship attributes.

Frame distinguishes three kinds of media through which God's word comes to us: events, words, and persons. These correspond also to three *perspectives*, namely, the situational, normative, and existential perspectives; it is through these three perspectives that human beings perceive reality.

Of these three media, word is treated most fully and is clearly deemed the most important to a right understanding of Frame's doctrine of Scripture. Revelation is first and foremost verbal. Even revelation that is given through events must, ultimately, be interpreted verbally; there is, in any case, an intimate connection between God's speech and his acts.[245] Similarly, revelation through persons often involves speaking; significantly, Jesus Christ, the ultimate example of God's person-revelations, is called the Word of God.

Yet the permanent record of God's revelation to human beings comes through the medium of the *written* word. To consider the nature of the relation between the divine and human authors of Scripture is to consider the issue of inspiration. While it appears that God did at times ‘dictate’ words to the human writers, this was not generally the case. Inspiration is organic, as Kuyper and Bavinck termed it, so that the various gifts, idiosyncrasies, and styles of the human writers are apparent throughout Scripture. Yet it is through these very qualities that God intends to convey to human

[245] See n. 93, above.

beings those aspects of his will, purpose, feelings, love, justice, etc. that he wishes them to comprehend.

A major point of contention in connection with inspiration is the specific matter of inerrancy. It is closely connected with the issue of authority. Frame rejects the claim that Scripture's authority is restricted to matters of faith and doctrine, and that inerrancy or infallibility are likewise confined to those areas. God's authority extends to all aspects of life; it is inconsistent to imagine that the authority of his word be restricted to areas determined by nothing more than human reasoning. It is true that there are problems to be found in the phenomena of the Bible. There are various ways of handling these problems. Many will be found to be not truly problematic after all, often because the perception of a problem involves imputing to Scripture a position that it does not claim for itself. Most importantly, the Christian must be prepared to place unsolved difficulties to one side, trusting in the sufficient evidence of Scripture's consistent truthfulness.

Frame's suggested strategies for dealing with Bible problems are evident in his approach to the three broad problems raised by Enns. Many of the problems, difficulties, and discrepancies that Enns observes in Scripture are simply not genuinely problematic in Frame's view. Or, as in the case of the non-uniqueness of certain OT passages, Enns errs in expecting uniqueness where Scripture claims none for itself. And where there are genuine problems, one must simply trust in the Bible's truthfulness. Employing a principle that he either implies or specifically states in the early and later chapters of his work,[246] Frame affirms that the Holy Spirit himself

[246] See, for example, *Doctrine of the Word*, 4-5, 7, 309-15.

witnesses to the truthfulness of God's word; under the guidance of the Spirit the believer may determine what are true and false readings of Scripture.

Frame's approach to problems in the Bible thus demonstrates a *presuppositionalist* approach that infuses his entire theological system. One must *begin* with a conviction that God's word is true. Presuppositionalism is evident also in his analysis of modern (liberal) theologies. The autonomous reasoning that so characterises all liberal theology is entirely at loggerheads with the presuppositionalist approach that accepts Scripture's own view of itself and defends what Scripture says about itself "by means of the Bible's own worldview, its own epistemology, and its own values."[247] The circularity is admitted as being unavoidable: any ultimate standard of truth must itself be accountable to that standard. Any other form of reasoning ultimately dissolves into meaninglessness.

In *Doctrine of the Word* Frame has presented a theological edifice that boldly and unambiguously sets itself in opposition not only to liberal theologies but to many contemporary evangelical attempts to redefine the traditional view. The degree in which his system demonstrates an internal consistency and in which it contrasts with the understanding that Enns has set forth in his *Incarnation and Inspiration* will be explored in the chapter that follows.

[247] Ibid., 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARISON AND EVALUATION

1. Introduction

John Frame and Peter Enns are contemporaries (though with a considerable age difference), both are evangelicals, and both hail from a Reformed tradition while receiving significant theological training at secular universities. Both have devoted some attention to issues relating to biblical inspiration yet, despite the several commonalities of their theological backgrounds, they offer profoundly divergent understandings of major issues connected with this topic.

The previous chapters have expounded the essence of their respective views. It remains now to compare and evaluate the two views within the parameters outlined below. The purpose of this 'evaluative comparison' is to determine significant commonalities and differences between the views of the two authors, and to explore strengths and weaknesses of their positions, preliminary to approaching the final, crucial task of this paper. That task is to identify and analyse certain specific aspects of the doctrine of inspiration that remain problematic for contemporary evangelical theologians.

Despite longstanding and ongoing discussions on the nature of Scripture, it does not appear that anyone has ever succeeded in articulating a definitive, final understanding of inspiration. Regardless of the difficulties, the fact remains that we possess this body of writings called, variously, 'Scripture', 'the Bible', 'the Word of God'. The claims it makes upon the reader provoke inevitable questions regarding its nature and the source and extent of its authority. It falls upon theologians to attempt to

articulate concepts that go some way towards answering those questions. It is the purpose of this thesis, and this chapter in particular, to continue that broad theological task and to make a positive contribution to it. However, given the disparate nature of the two works to be compared here, the first challenge is to determine a reasonable and logical ground upon which a fruitful comparison can be made.

2. Methodology

2.1 Outline of the Chapter

After dealing with details of method and researcher perspective, this chapter will present and evaluate selected themes from Enns' *Inspiration and Incarnation* and Frame's *Doctrine of the Word of God*. There is no intention to present an extended review of Enns's three challenges to evangelical bibliology. The major tenets of his argument, and those of Frame, have been delineated in the two preceding chapters. Here, the focus will be on identifying major, overarching differences (along with similarities) and to offer some evaluation of each scholar's arguments.

The primary intention is to use these differences to expose possible weaknesses in contemporary doctrines of Scripture and, from these, to suggest potential new directions for scholarly research. These suggestions will be given in some detail. Because of this intention, the evaluation of each scholar's arguments will not proceed from demanding internal consistency but from an assessment measured against Scripture as it is understood by the researcher. This approach would seem to offer scope to suggest new areas of research.

2.2 Finding Common Themes

Enns's three specific challenges in *Inspiration* do not find an exact corresponding emphasis in Frame's work.[1] Conversely, nor does the former's work offer a comprehensive, systematic treatment of the doctrine of Scripture as is found in Frame's lengthy volume. A comparison of their views is nevertheless possible when it is recognized that there are certain broad themes that are either specifically expressed or implicitly treated in both works. Several candidates for comparison might be advanced, including: the incarnational analogy, accommodation, the inductive-versus-deductive approach to dealing with the biblical phenomena, and harmonisation. The limits of space do not allow an adequate treatment of all of these, forcing the selection of some over others.

Given Enns's emphasis on the incarnational analogy, it is mandatory that this theme be explored here. Indeed, while Enns highlights three particular issues, they find their unity in the claim that Scripture "everywhere, thoroughly" bears the marks of humanity; the neglect or de-emphasis of these issues, Enns claims, constitutes "scriptural docetism."[2] To a significant degree, then, addressing the incarnational analogy engages the overall thrust of what Enns claims in *Inspiration*. That theme also embraces the idea of accommodation. Though not identical, the two are somewhat connected. Because Enns's application of the incarnational analogy focuses so heavily on God's speaking to human beings within their existing forms of thought and culture,

[1] Except in Appendix J ("Review of Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*") of Frame's *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (*Doctrine of the Word*).

[2] Enns, *Inspiration*, 18.

the concept of accommodation may, for the purposes of this study, be subsumed under that analogy.

Another concept that is repeatedly emphasised *in Inspiration* is the need to reckon with how Scripture behaves, rather than imposing upon it a pre-determined doctrine of Scripture. Enns's 'inductive' approach contrasts with the presuppositionalist leanings and corresponding 'deductive' approach of Frame. This matter is important because it is one of methodology. For both theologians, the conclusions they draw stem largely from their respective methodological approaches to the biblical material. Consequently, a comparison of their views on this point is a necessity.

The fourth candidate for discussion, harmonisation, can lay no greater claim for attention than those already mentioned; and probably less. To some degree harmonisation is *demanded* by a presuppositionalist stance. It is in the very nature of the latter that, having determined deductively a doctrine of Scripture from selected texts, the remaining biblical materials will in many places need to be harmonised in order that they be understood to conform to that doctrine. Conversely, the inductivist is more likely to accept the biblical materials in all their variety, and to form a view of the nature of Scripture that reflects that variety. Given the limits of space here, it would seem more important to examine the underlying analytical procedures from which harmonisation does or does not spring than to treat harmonisation itself. Furthermore, Enns himself devotes little space to the issue of harmonisation, beyond noting the propensity of conservative evangelicals to indulge in it.

In their totality these two concepts, the incarnational analogy and the inductive-deductive approach, encompass the essential elements of the three issues raised by

Enns.[3] Individually, they are significant in that they provide an insight into the essential trajectory of each theologian's approach to the doctrine of Scripture, where they diverge, and whether traditional evangelical theology has or has not "handled well" Enns's challenges.

Thus, this chapter will compare and evaluate the place of the incarnational analogy in the work of Enns and Frame (primarily in *Inspiration* and *Doctrine of the Word*) and, additionally, the significance of the inductive-deductive approaches to the biblical phenomena in the writers' respective schemas. Given its explicit emphasis and importance to Enns's thesis, and the complexity inherent in its details, more space will be accorded discussion of the incarnational analogy than the inductive-deductive idea.

Before examining these two themes in detail, however, it will be necessary to briefly compare the more general stance of the two theologians towards Scripture as the Word of God. Are they working from an essentially similar platform? What underlying presuppositions regarding Scripture's authority and origin do they espouse? These fundamental questions must precede closer investigation into the details of their systems.

3. Scripture as the Word of God

Enns commences his study with an affirmation of basic "evangelical instincts," in particular that "the Bible is ultimately from God." Whether his "ultimately" is

[3] The method chosen here eschews a blow-by-blow refutation or appraisal of the detailed examples Enns discusses in his treatment of the three issues. To have trodden the latter path would have been to do little more than repeat material already found in the several published major reviews of *Inspiration*. Rather, the view adopted here is that it is the foundational issues behind each of Enns's challenges that need to be exposed and explored; and it is they, as mentioned above, that allow a fruitful comparison with Frame. Particular details from Enns's work will, however, be closely scrutinised where such scrutiny may serve to elucidate the argument.

significant is a matter of conjecture; Enns does not here elaborate.[4] It is clear, however, that he is willing to affirm that the Bible *is* God's word.[5] That there is a supernatural element–the Spirit of God–behind the Scriptures is, for Enns, a given. Furthermore, to study these Scriptures "by God's Spirit, is a means by which God forms us into the image of his risen Son, with whom we are coheirs."[6] That is an evangelical emphasis that is certainly shared by Frame: "Our hearts are the destination of God's revelation … In our hearts we receive God's personal words to us in such a profound way that they become the foundation of all our thinking and living." For Frame, that process finds its consummation "in the last day" when God's people are received into glory.[7]

For both authors, then, Scripture is (ultimately) *from* God and has as its purpose to lead us *to* God. With both starting and ending points essentially agreed upon, one might wonder if differences in detail between the two views are inconsequential. Such is not the case.

Enns rarely presents Scripture as the word of God without explicit reference to its "human dimension."[8] Granted, it is likely that there is no evangelical today who denies the human element in the composition of Scripture.[9] Certainly Frame does not.

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[4] *Inspiration*, 13-14 (cf. *Evolution of Adam*, xi: "as Jesus, the Word, is of divine origin as well as a thoroughly human figure of first-century Palestine, so is the Bible of ultimately divine origin yet also thoroughly a product of its time"). The affirmation does not succeed in entirely dispelling the close questions pertaining to inspiration, there being a considerable gap between the fact of Scripture's ultimate origin and the various processes that resulted in the text we now possess.

[5] Enns, *Inspiration*, 168, cf. 15. Enns states that the purpose of his book is "not to determine *whether* the Bible is God's word, but to see more clearly *how* it is God's word" (p. 21).

[6] Ibid., 173.

[7] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 327.

[8] *Inspiration*., 18.

[9] Berkouwer is adamant that "the church's tendency to minimize the human aspect of Scripture must be clearly recognized" (G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975], 18).

But what, precisely, is the relationship between the human and divine in the composition of Scripture? Should the two elements receive equal emphasis? It may be fair to say that the major point at issue in divergent understandings of the doctrine of Scripture revolves around this very point.[10] In this, then, Enns is setting forth no new emphasis.[11]

'Minimization', in this context, is a subjective term. Certainly, the *fact* of an active human aspect in the inspiration process is undisputed. Even as conservative a publication as Norman L. Geisler's (ed.) *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980) devotes an entire chapter to the question of the humanity of the Bible's authors (see Gordon R. Lewis, "The Human Authorship of Inspired Scripture," in Geisler, 229-64). The early, more 'conservative' Pinnock spoke of "the need to maintain with equal force both the humanity and the divinity of the word of Scripture" (see Clark Pinnock, "Three Views of the Bible in Contemporary Theology," in *Biblical Authority*, ed. Jack Rogers [Waco: Word Books, 1977], 71). Yet, if conservative evangelicalism in the past had failed to give adequate recognition to Scripture's human element, it was "because of the need to defend its divine side and because of the complexities that consideration of the humanity involves" (Lewis, 230). The charge of holding to a "mechanical dictation" theory of inspiration–where, logically, the human input must be negligible –has sometimes been laid on conservatives. William J. Abraham (*Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981], 33) claims that this view was, in fact, common before modern times; he further charges that it is logically inseparable from the idea of inerrancy, so that modern-day inerrantists are really dictationists despite their protestations to the contrary. (Pinnock complains that "it is a tiresome necessity for Evangelicals to state that 'mechanical dictation' is not now, and never has been, their view" [*Biblical Revelation–The Foundation of Christian Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1971), 93]) Whether or not the charge is correct, what cannot be denied is that those who have strongly urged the *verbal* nature of inspiration, especially those employing the term "dictation," have not found it easy to dodge the accusation of promoting *mechanical* dictation. The nineteen-century Swiss theologian Louis Gaussen was one such, despite his denial of the charge. In the following century, the eminent fundamentalist evangelist John R. Rice's dictationalist views were evidently unpalatable even to the staunchly fundamentalist Bob Jones University. This, despite Rice's clear statements acknowledging the place of the individual Bible writers' literary styles, vocabulary, even tastes and feelings. His disclaimers were seemingly unconvincing even to such conservative peers as Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis (see their *Integrative Theology, Vol 1* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987], 135). For further discussion on the dictationalist views of Gaussen, see Kenneth J. Stewart, "A Bombshell of a Book: Gaussen's *Theopneustia* and its Influence on Subsequent Evangelical Theology," *Evangelical Quarterly* 75, no. 3: 215-37 (July-Sept. 2003); on Rice, see Nathan A. Finn, "John R. Rice, Bob Jones Jr., and the 'Mechanical Dictation' Controversy: Finalizing the Fracturing of Independent Fundamentalism," *The Journal of Baptist Studies* 6 (2014): 60-75. Warfield was dismissive of the charge that 'verbal inspiration' really meant nothing less than mechanical dictation; this, he scoffed, was "a man of straw" (Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig [London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1951], 203n47, cf. 437).

[10] The question is reminiscent of the Christological discussions of the early church, as pointed out by Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguelez and Dennis L. Okholm (eds.), in their introduction to *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 7.

[11] Enns is, in fact, careful to maintain that he is *not* saying anything new, merely insisting that evangelicals pay more regard to problems that have been previously raised (the opening sentence of *Inspiration* reads: "The aim of this book is not novelty but synthesis" [p. 9]).

Nor is he breaking new ground when he suggests that the divine-human elements of Scripture find an analogy (however imperfect[12]) in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Yet Enns does not propose to devote equal attention to the divine and human aspects of Scripture, nor does he undertake to explore, in any systematic way, how the two interrelate. His emphasis is signalled when he states that "what is so helpful about the incarnational analogy is that it reorients us to see that the Bible's [human] 'situatedness' is not a lamentable or embarrassing situation, but a positive one."[13] Enns is less concerned with examining how the divine relates to the human in the inspiration of Scripture as with how the Bible itself relates to the three major issues that he raises.[14] It is the "human stamp" that must be explored. As Jesus was "human through and through," so is his word.[15]

Thus, while Enns has nowhere expressly denied, or even questioned, the divinity of Scripture,[16] his driving concern is to explore how certain issues reveal the humanity of Scripture. Frame's emphasis is quite the opposite. Throughout *Doctrine of the Word* Scripture is spoken of as the word of *God*. Through whatever media God chooses to speak, he does so "as the Lord, for that is what he is. He cannot abandon his lordship while speaking to us."[17] Are the two emphases, as seen in Enns and Frame, contradictory? Not necessarily. An emphasis on either the divine or the human aspect

[12] *Inspiration*, 18, 168.

[13] Ibid., 20.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 21.

[16] Neither in *Inspiration* nor any of his other works.

[17] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 11.

of Scripture implies no automatic negation of the other. Scripture itself frequently focuses alternatively on particular facets of, for example, God's mercy as opposed to his justice or law as opposed to grace. But in respect to the differing emphases of Enns and Frame, two observations must be made.

The first observation is that Enns's emphasis on the human aspect of Scripture's inspiration is nowhere counterbalanced by an equal–or anywhere near an equal–emphasis on the divine aspect. His repeated, unadorned admission that Scripture is divine is insufficient as a counterbalance, for he makes no attempt to explain what he means by that affirmation.[18] If Scripture is *equally* divine and human–as any appeal to the incarnational analogy would seem to imply–the existence of evidence demonstrating that Scripture (like Christ) is human "through and through"[19] would imply the existence of evidence demonstrating also that Scripture is at the same time *divine* "through and through." Were this not the case, it would be possible to advance the claim that the divine element is really subordinate to the human. Enns makes no attempt to enlighten the reader of *Inspiration* in respect to such evidence.

Admittedly, such is not the purpose of his book. In *Inspiration* Enns seeks merely to highlight issues that are problematic for the evangelical doctrine of Scripture, and not to present a systematic treatment of the doctrine. These issues, he claims, force us to place a good deal more emphasis on the human aspect than evangelicals have tended to do. But one may question the validity of arguing *that* case on the basis of the incarnational analogy, for the Chalcedonian formulation is intrinsically concerned with

[18] Enns makes the affirmation at a number of points in *Inspiration* (pp. 14, 15, 21, 108, 167). On whether Enns's seeming one-sidedness might be explained on the basis that his work is a polemic, see comments below (sec. "The Incarnational Analogy," sub-section "Enns and the Biblical Flood Story").

[19] Enns, *Inspiration*, 21.

affirming the equal presence of both the divine and the human natures in the person of Christ. Furthermore, and significantly, Enns repeatedly suggests that the material he presents in *Inspiration* "reorients" us to see Scripture in a different way.[20] This, when taken in connection with his disinclination to explore what it means for Scripture to be divine, suggests that for Enns the human element is, at least in practice, where the emphasis should lie.

Nevertheless, these preliminary criticisms would lose much of their force could it be shown that evangelicals have, indeed, had a skewed understanding of the relationship between the divine and human elements of Scripture. That is, is Enns simply redressing an imbalance, and doing so by purposely overemphasising the opposite position? However, Frame's work provides an important input into this very question, and it is here that the second observation in respect to the differing emphases of Enns and Frame must be made.

In Frame's understanding, the emphasis on the divine element in Scripture is necessary simply because that is the emphasis that Scripture itself explicitly presents. In other words, although coming through human channels, Scripture is to be received as though God himself were speaking to us. One may recall Frame's suggestion that "when God speaks with human beings, he almost always uses one [*created*] medium or another."[21] For Frame, then, even at the most basic level (the initial physical media through which God speaks to us) the human element is present, leading him to the seemingly necessary conclusion that none of the human media should be regarded as barriers to God's communication. For

[20] Ibid., 17, 135.

[21] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 71 (Frame provides examples).

> the media are inseparable from the revelation. If they are defective, there is no way for us to reclaim an uncorrupted version of God's truth. If we are to accept God's revelation, we must accept what we hear and see through his media.[22]

Nor should we imagine that there is a gap between God's word spoken and God's word written. There is, in the Old Testament, no suggestion that "the written form of the word is less authoritative than the oral, or, for that matter, than the divine voice."[23] It cannot be otherwise. Old Testament revelation is covenantal; "the very nature of covenant implies that there will be written revelation, and that that revelation will have the same power, authority, and divine presence as direct, personal revelation from the covenant Lord."[24]

Thus, on the one hand, Enns proceeds from the position that Scripture is both (equally?) divine and human, but that for evangelicals a proper understanding of just what that means is best obtained by observing and rightly appreciating the biblical and extra-biblical data that expose the humanity and the cultural situatedness of the Scriptures. Frame, on the other hand, insists that, whatever factors pertain in the reception, recording, and transmission of God's revelations, the written Scriptures remain, and are to be received, as inviolably God's words spoken directly to human beings. As such, the entire written Word carries an authority equal to that which God might speak audibly and directly to any human being.[25]

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[22] Ibid., 73.

[23] Ibid., 112.

[24] Ibid., 117. Norman Gulley argues in the same direction. The text 2 Pet 1:21 indicates that "both the reception of the word and the speaking of it were under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit" (Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, 307-08). Gulley offers further texts that suggest that what the prophets (and Jesus) were given to speak is what they spoke (Ez 3:10-11; Jn 17:8; Jer 1:6-7, 9; Ex 4:10-16; 7:1; 2 Sam 23:2).

[25] The relationship between the word of God as originally 'spoken' and the words as found in the Bible is very close, according to Frame, and is described by the term *inspiration.* For inspiration is "a divine act that creates an identity between a divine word and a human word" (*Doctrine of the Word*, 140). The

These two observations suggest that it is insufficient to characterise the difference between Enns's and Frame's basic approach as one of simple emphasis; that is, that Enns emphasises the human element of Scripture while Frame emphasises the divine. It *is* a matter of emphasis, but the respective emphases emerge from fundamentally divergent foundations: Enns's emerges from a focus on the phenomena of the Bible, Frame's from a systematic doctrine of Scripture. From their respective foundational platforms, each theologian has discovered an *idée fixé* that becomes the overarching paradigm through which they understand and express their doctrine of Scripture. For Enns, that paradigm is the incarnational analogy; for Frame, it is the Lordship of God. The emphasis of one on the humanity of Scripture and the other on its divinity are in harmony with these overarching paradigms.

4. The Incarnational Analogy

4.1 Enns and the Incarnational Analogy: I

It was suggested, above, that Enns has not clearly articulated what he means with the affirmation that Scripture is the word of God.[26] It is necessary to find further

written words of Scripture bear the same authority as the spoken words of God, since God's relationship with his people is a *covenantal* relationship. This covenant, though not repeated by divine voice in each generation, is yet to be a perpetual covenant. This means that the terms and principles of the covenant and its giver (the covenant Lord) *must be written*, for "the normal way of preserving words is through writing" (p. 102). Two implications that might be drawn from Frame's claim would be that the writing down of Scripture was not an afterthought but an essential element of the divine revelation, and that the written words must faithfully represent the intent and meaning of the original revelation.

[26] Indeed, a lack of perspicuity is sometimes evident elsewhere in *Inspiration*. What does Enns mean, for example, when he speaks of maintaining "a vibrant and reverent doctrine of Scripture"? (*Inspiration*, 13). In what sense can a doctrine be reverent? Again, "we do not protect the Bible or render it more believable to modern people by trying to demonstrate that it is consistent with modern science" (p. 55). This, too, is unclear. By "consistent with modern science," does he mean consistent with scientific terminology or with scientific findings? Again, Enns states that "Proverbs makes no claim that its contents are revealed to Israel through some special event, such as is the case with the law. Rather, it is a body of sayings, many of which are readily affirmed by common sense … that find ample parallels in the wisdom literature of the ancient Near East" (p. 58). Is he implying levels of inspiration: that which comes by direct revelation of God, or through the prophetic gift, more closely reflects the mind of God

support for that suggestion. The bulk of Enns's *Inspiration* consists in examining the three issues with which he is chiefly concerned. They, legitimately, are focused on the human element of Scripture. It is only with his explication of the incarnational analogy, found largely in the introductory and concluding chapters, that Enns attempts to present anything approaching a doctrine of Scripture.

In the introductory chapter (Chapter 1: "Getting Our Bearings") Enns sets forth his position:

> as Christ is both God and human, so is the Bible. … [Christ] is not half-God and half-human … but 100 percent God and 100 percent human–at the same time. This way of thinking of Christ is analogous to thinking about the Bible.[27]

From here, Enns assumes that the major danger is to depreciate the human aspect of the Bible. The trajectory of his thought is immediately evident when he begins to flesh out the analogy: "Although Jesus was '*God* with us,' he still completely assumed the cultural trappings of the world in which he lived. In fact, this is what is implied in 'God *with us*.'" As Jesus was "'made like his brothers in every way' (Heb. 2:17)," so, too, the Bible, which "was *connected to* and therefore *spoke to* those ancient cultures.[28] This connection with the ancient cultures in which the Bible was written carries an implication:

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than that which comes by some other means? He attempts to affirm the 'inspirational' quality of Proverbs by stating that what Proverbs provides is, nevertheless, "*God's* wisdom." The "common" wisdom found in the book "is used by God for a special purpose." Its connections with common ideas demonstrate that God's wisdom is "incarnated in the world of the ancient Near East" (p. 58). If this constitutes, in part, Enns's understanding of inspiration, it falls somewhat short of total transparency. Enns has given no indication as to *why* common proverbs should be accepted as "God's wisdom." Do they *become* something they were not when they are incorporated into Scripture? Were they already God's wisdom before being inscripturated (as Enns seems here to imply)? In either case, what is the function of inspiration in the process? Did inspiration act on the person or on the proverb?

[27] Enns, *Inspiration*, 17.

[28] *Inspiration*, 17 (emphasis in original).

> The encultured qualities of the Bible, therefore, are not extra elements that we can discard to get to the real point, the timeless truths. Rather, precisely because Christianity is a historical religion, God's word reflects the various historical moments in which Scripture was written. … As we learn more and more about that history, we must gladly address the implications of that history for how we view the Bible, that is, what we should expect from it.[29]

Certain elements of this statement require close attention. First, the urging to accept the "encultured qualities" of the Bible as a necessary feature of Scripture recalls Frame's insistence (noted above) that the earthly media are a necessary element of God's revelation to human beings. But whereas Enns will claim that the features he here emphasises drive us to appreciate the human aspect of Scripture, Frame finds reason to move in the opposite direction: if the presence and use of human media in conveying the words of God somehow obfuscates God's revelation, then the situation is hopeless, since there exists no way to reclaim an uncorrupted version of that revelation. The necessity and ubiquity of the human media rather suggest, to Frame, the constancy of the quality of the revelation that God has given.

A second observation regarding Enns's statement relates to some obscurity in the details. To begin with, Enns appears to present a certain tension between the "encultured qualities" of the Bible and its "timeless truths"? What is the relationship between these two? Does one exclude, or diminish, the other? The encultured qualities must not be discarded. If the encultured qualities of the Bible are somehow sacrosanct– if the ubiquitous "human marks" must inform all biblical enquiry–can there remain "timeless" truths in Scripture? If so, do the encultured qualities form *part of* those truths? Are they necessary to an understanding of those truths? These are not easy questions to answer. It may even be unfair to expect Enns to have tackled them given

[29] Ibid., 17-18.

the overall thrust and purported readership of his book. Yet to proceed as if such questions do not exist renders his statement slightly rhetorical.

Additionally, Enns refers to "the various historical moments in which Scripture was written." By adding that "we must gladly address the implications of that history for how we view the Bible," it is implied that these historical moments might bring difficulty to some believers.[30]

The question that Enns does not broach at this point is precisely how the incarnational analogy relates to these details. He has noted that Christ was a Jew, accepting the language and customs of his people. Presumably, these are the "encultured qualities" of Jesus the man.[31] But how should the other concept of "timeless truths" be related to Jesus? Does it refer to the words he spoke? To the works he did? To his divinity? Are these truths (whatever they are) somehow compromised, altered or reduced through their identity with his Jewishness?

Enns speaks of the need to "gladly" address certain issues, implying that one's initial reaction to the issues he raises might, for some, be one of discomfort. Elsewhere in the same chapter, Enns more directly claims that reading the Bible has, for some,

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[30] Ibid., 18.

[31] Some insight into Enns's thought may be gleaned from the way in which, much later in the book, he relates the teaching of Jesus to the conventions of his time. In claiming that Jesus himself employed Second Temple interpretive conventions in order to reach his audience, Enns comes close to suggesting that he *mis*interpreted at least one OT text (Lk 20:34-38; see *Inspiration,* 115, 116). There is no question but that Enns here associates Christ's interpretive practice with the "odd manner in which the NT authors use the Old Testament" (p. 115); indeed, Jesus' use of the OT is provided as the lead example in the chapter, implying that Enns wishes to make the point that the practice of the NT writers was in harmony with the hermeneutic that Jesus himself used. This is not a matter of Enns's view of inspiration even, but of his view of *Jesus*. For Enns is not claiming here that the NT writers rephrased Christ's words in accordance with their own Second Temple hermeneutics; rather, "the manner in which *Jesus uses* Exodus 3:6 is striking to our ears" (p. 114; emphasis supplied). Furthermore, that the original listeners "found Jesus' use of the Old Testament to be persuasive" (p. 115) roots the words in Jesus' own mouth rather than in that of the Evangelists writing some decades later. The point here is that Enns's incarnational model seems actually to go beyond informing his view of Scripture and of inspiration; it affects his understanding of Christ the Word himself.

become "a serious theological problem–perhaps even a crisis,"[32] since issues relating to its humanity have brought problems, challenges, and difficulty to many of its readers.[33] In what sense is it correspondingly problematic to consider the humanity of Jesus? Enns admits that there are places where the incarnational analogy "as with any analogy ... does not quite fit."[34] What those places might be, he does not state. Certainly, if the analogy does not quite fit on the question of how the humanity of Jesus in any sense compromises the perfection of God's revelation in either the words, works, or person of Jesus, then it becomes more challenging to defend the relevance of the analogy to his basic argument.[35] That would be damaging to Enns's overall thesis, since he insists that "the long-standing identification between Christ the word and Scripture the word is central to how I think through the issues raised in this book."[36]

Enns returns to the incarnational analogy in the concluding chapter of *Inspiration*. Might we here find a more illuminating treatment detailing how the analogy is to be applied? He early offers the point that "the incarnate written word (Scripture) is, like Christ, beyond our ability to grasp exhaustively."[37] Enns then

[32] Ibid., 15.

[33] Ibid., 15-17, 20.

[34] Ibid., 18.

[35] His basic thesis may be stated as the claim that the traditional evangelical view of Scripture must be reoriented in the light of the increasingly evident human dimension of Scripture.

[36] Ibid., 18.

[37] Ibid., 168 (cf. 18).

proceeds to explain how the incarnational analogy[38] can illumine the reader's understanding of the three issues that dominate his book.

Scripture, he states, may indeed be thought of as "unique" in the sense that it is like no other. This might appear to undermine the whole point of his first challenge, viz. that the Old Testament is so noticeably *like* many other ANE documents. But Enns carefully qualifies what he means:

> Its uniqueness is seen not in holding human cultures at arm's length, but in the belief that Scripture is the only book in which God speaks incarnately. As it is with Christ, so it is with the Bible–the 'coming together' of the divine and human sets it apart from all others.[39]

It is an eloquent statement, but nonetheless problematic. For the evangelical is interested in knowing not just *that* God speaks incarnately, but *what* God speaks. Does he speak, in this unique written document, words that are to be received as the very words of God? Does the embracing of human cultures result in a lessening of the perspicuity of God's revelation in Scripture? Enns devotes no space to such questions, preferring instead to focus on the limiting effects of culture on theology itself. God's revelations in Scripture were themselves limited by cultural constraints–"particular human circumstances"; likewise, our own "theologizing, because we are human beings living in particular historical and cultural moments, will have a temporary and provisional–even fallen–dimension to it."[40] Other cultures will have different

[38] Enns at this point suggests that it might make more sense to speak of "the incarnational *parallel* between Christ and the Bible" (Ibid., 168).

[39] Ibid., 168.

[40] Ibid., 169.

perspectives on the message of the Bible. The gospel is "multidimensional,"[41] and the incarnational analogy, Enns claims, illustrates that fact.

Exactly how this multidimensionality is illustrated by the incarnation is not easy to discern. Enns seems to be saying, first, that God's revelation was given within the limits of one particular culture in a particular period of history. It was so both in the living word (Christ) and the written word. But there exist many other cultures and times. Had God given his living and written revelation to a different culture and time, he would have expressed himself in terms familiar with that culture and time.

Few are likely to disagree with Enns on this point. But Enns does not here grapple with the relationship between medium and message.[42] Warfield's famous stained glass window illustration posits that the medium, far from corrupting in any

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Nor has he grappled with the concept of truth in the postmodern context. The topic has exercised postconservative and postliberal theologians. For discussion of the concept of truth in the postmodern context, see Douglas Groothuis, "Truth Defined and Defended," in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 59-80; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 38-39; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Truth," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 821; John Macquarrie, "Truth, Concepts of," in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 647-50; Sheila Greeve Davaney and Delwin Brown, "Postliberalism," in McGrath, 453-56. More general essays on the concept of truth as applied to Scripture may be found in Alan G. Padgett and Patrick R. Keifert (eds.), *But Is It All True: The Bible and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006). Given the purposes of Enns's *Inspiration*, it cannot be expected that he would there offer a lengthy discourse on these concepts. Nevertheless, in one paragraph he does discuss truth in relation to myth (*Inspiration*, 40). He muses on the difficulty some might have in accepting that the opening chapters of the Bible might be "wrong"–mythical–given that the Bible and the gospel are true, and that truth is understood to be bound up with historical events. But, Enns replies, while some might use 'myth' as "shorthand for 'untrue,' 'made-up,' 'storybook,' … many who use the term are trying to get at something deeper." What does he mean by "deeper"? Enns answers simply by defining myth: "it is *an ancient, premodern, prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories: Who are we? Where do we come from?*" It is not clear how this "more generous way of defining myth" might enable the reader to have a clear grasp of in what sense the opening chapters of Genesis are *true*. Carl F. H. Henry is to the point when he insists that "the fundamental issue remains the issue of truth, the truth of theological assertions. No work on theology will be worth its weight if that fundamental issue is obscured" (*God, Revelation, and Authority: God Who Speaks and Shows: Volume 1: Primary Considerations*, 2nd ed. [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999], 14).

sense the message, is instead used by God to convey the very message he intends.[43] Warfield might be right in this, or he might be mistaken. But he at least states clearly a concept that must be addressed. On the topic of biblical inspiration, the more conservative elements of evangelicalism tend to side with Warfield. Inasmuch as Enns is here discussing the issue of medium–in this case, the cultural medium–it would have been helpful had he attempted to explain how his argument either supports or contradicts Warfield's point. For example, to what degree did the pre-scientific medium of the ANE culture, in which the biblical writings were produced, limit God's ability to communicate objective facts about the early history of the world?

Enns's broad generalizations about God's accommodating his revelations to such a culture do little to address questions of this nature. This becomes apparent when Enns devotes some attention to the biblical account of the Flood. A brief analysis of Enns's discussion of the biblical Flood story will be offered here in order to illustrate more specifically the substance of this criticism.

4.2 Enns and the Biblical Flood Story

Enns's brief treatment of the biblical Flood story forms part of his first "challenge" to evangelicalism, namely, the parallels between the Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern literature. As Enns puts it: "the problem raised by these Akkadian texts is whether the biblical stories are historical." If, as "many modern scholars and biblically educated people" suggest, the Near Eastern flood stories are myth, yet reveal many parallels with the biblical flood story, is it not the case that the

[43] Warfield, "Inspiration and Authority," 155-156.

biblical story is also myth?[44] Enns's answer moves down two parallel tracks. First, one must define myth carefully. A myth is "an ancient, premodern, prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories: Who are we? Where do we come from?"[45] Secondly, we cannot impose modern standards of historical inquiry and scientific precision on the biblical or Near Eastern documents. These suggestions require some analysis.

4.2.1 The concept of 'myth'

Enns's definition of myth avoids the issue of whether a story is fictional or nonfictional. Since the problem raised by the Akkadian texts is, according to Enns, one of "historicity," one might expect Enns to address that very issue. Certainly, whatever parallels might exist between the biblical Flood story and the Atrahasis and Gilgamesh epics,[46] invoking cultural and literary similarity and the incarnational analogy offers no illumination on certain questions of historicity:

1. Did a flood (local or universal) occur which Noah and seven family members survived only by entering an ark?
2. Did God bring about this flood with the purpose of destroying "all flesh"?
3. Did God speak to Noah and direct him to build the ark? Did he describe to him its dimensions and the materials to be used in its construction?
4. Did God instruct Noah to bring the animals, in pairs and in sevens, into the ark?
5. Did it rain for forty straight days and did the "earth" remain flooded for 150 days?
6. Did Noah and his family remain in the ark for one year?

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[44] *Inspiration*, 40-41.

[45] Ibid., 40 (italics in original).

[46] Enns states that "the obvious similarities between them indicates [sic] a connection on some level. Perhaps one borrowed from the other, or perhaps all of these stories have older precursors" (*Inspiration*, 29).

7. Did Noah send out first a raven and then a dove?
8. Did God speak to Noah and tell him to go out of the ark?
9. Did God, after the flood, pledge never again to curse the ground nor to destroy every living thing?
10. Did God at that point either create the rainbow or invest it with a particular symbology?

These several questions, some of them seemingly trivial in themselves, highlight the limited value of broad generalisations such as are sometimes found in *Inspiration*. How does the cultural affinity of the Flood account with similar stories from nearby cultures impact both the 'broad' and the 'minor' details of the biblical story? Does the biblical account represent an actual event? If so, did it occur as described in the Genesis record? If the Flood story, as found in Scripture, is to be defined as myth in the way that Enns defines myth, how are we to determine which elements of the story are fictional and which (if any) are not? In Enns's definition of myth, the ancients were "addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories." The wording of the definition implies that the Israelite author (or authors) was not attempting to write history: the important questions are not 'What actually happened?', but 'Why are we here?' and 'Who are we?'

In the light of those 'Why?' and 'Who?' questions, the detailed 'What?' questions mentioned above become, perhaps, irrelevant. Not all will find this solution satisfactory; for if those questions of historicity *are* irrelevant, that fact is not established merely by imposing upon the narrative an arbitrary characterisation of 'myth'. It can be argued in the other direction, of course; either way, the historicity of Genesis cannot be established by arbitrary pronouncement. The Flood story as well as the Creation story relates events in the same matter-of-fact manner, with the same

attention to chronological detail, using the same kind of everyday language, rooted in normal earthly activities, events, and beings (rain, boat-building, animals), as the remaining stories of Genesis; indeed of the entire Bible. Scripture does not normally make explicit claims as to the historicity of its narratives. There are some exceptions, such as John's proclaiming the truthfulness of his testimony (Jn 19:35; 21:24) and the Old Testament writers' comments about contemporary memorabilia (Gen 35:20; 47:26; Deut 3:14; Josh 4:9; 7:26; 8:28, 29; 9:27; 10:27; etc.). These certainly demonstrate that Scripture *purports*, at least in these instances, to be relating actual events. But why should this assumption be confined only to those events that are so notated? It seems reasonable to regard these occasional comments as pointers to the general historicity of the biblical narratives.

For Enns, the question of historical facticity is not confined to the early Genesis narratives. While these may be characterised (by him) as myth, the historicity of subsequent narratives up to the time of the monarchic period is also in question. This is because these pre-monarchic narratives have no witness external to Scripture: "It is questionable logic to reason backward from the historical character of the monarchic account, *for which there is some evidence*, to the primeval and ancestral stories, *for which such evidence is lacking*.[47] Here Enns has stated very clearly his position. Again, not all will find this satisfactory, and one might be prompted to wonder if such a position of historical skepticism might not be applied to the Christ story as well.

[47] Ibid., 43.

4.2.2 Modern versus ancient standards of historiography

If Enns's concept of myth allows him to skirt certain questions of historical detail, so too his claim that modern standards of historical enquiry were not those of the Old Testament writers. In the final paragraph of the section "Group 1–Creation and the Flood: Is Genesis Myth or History?" Enns refers four times to "standards." In his view, modern "standards" of historical enquiry and scientific precision are not to be applied to the ancient texts. This argument, too, is able to sustain itself only by a de-emphasis on detail. In broadest terms, it is not unreasonable to expect that natural phenomena will be described by ancient peoples in prescientific language. But, to continue with the Flood as a case study, the building of a boat, the measurements and material of that boat, the falling of rain, the details of a flood, the movement and pairing of animals, the number of days' rain, the age of Noah at the time of the flood, the sending out of named birds–all of these are adequately described (and would be even today) in non-scientific language. Indeed, it would be clumsy and pedantic to attempt otherwise.

Enns cannot be unaware of these objections. But, again, such details are not where his focus lies; the broader picture is his concern. A clue to his thought on this point is found in his suggestion that "ancient peoples composed lengthy stories to address these types of questions [questions of how and why natural phenomena occurred], and on some level the cause was attributed to unknown, powerful figures."[48] The implication is that the Flood story of Genesis is (at least) largely fictional; it is not

[48] Ibid.

an *account* but a *composition*. But if this is what Enns means, it is reasonable to expect that he state it plainly.[49]

Enns's treatment of the Genesis Creation/Flood stories and their connection with ANE myths is not provided for its own purpose. It is intended to illustrate the incarnational quality of God's revelations to human beings. Thus, following his discussion of these narratives, Enns returns more specifically to the concept of incarnational revelation. From the incarnation of Christ we may learn the lesson that "God was willing and ready to adopt an ancient way of thinking"; in his revelation he "accommodates, condescends, meets [the people] where they are."[50] For this reason, the cultural setting of the Bible is to be accepted thankfully, for God came to the ancient Israelites "just as he did more fully in Bethlehem … centuries later."[51] As with his treatment of the Flood account, Enns again declines to explore how the details of the text are to be understood in the light of his proposal. His generalisations fail to alleviate–indeed, they highlight–this lack.

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[49] Enns appears ready to address the issue plainly in the seven-page section "Is Genesis Myth or History?" (Ibid., 49-56). That a straightforward answer may not be expected is signalled from the third sentence, where Enns states, "I question how much value there is in posing the choice of Genesis as either myth or history" (p. 49). Why? Because the distinction "seems to be a modern invention" and because the word 'myth' is, for many, freighted with negative connotations and implies a "full contrast" between the Bible and other (mythical) ANE literature (pp. 49-50). Enns is saying, in other words, that to insist upon Scripture's *uniqueness* vis-à-vis the mythical nature of other ANE literature is a mistake. Significantly, Enns then restates his definition of myth, thus implying that the answer to the question is that Genesis is *not* history, but myth understood as "an ancient, premodern, prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories" (p. 50; italics in original. See also pp. 53, 55). Frame's comment on one aspect of this part of Enns's discussion is to the point: "He raises a nonissue (How can a revealed book be culturally conditioned?) and avoids a real issue (Did the flood actually take place?)" (Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, Appendix J, "Review of Peter Enns," 504).

[50] *Inspiration*, 56.

[51] Ibid.

Enns has insisted that we must deal with what we *see* in Scripture, with how the Scripture *behaves*. That makes it all the more incumbent upon him to bring every aspect of his proposal to the text itself. In respect to his first challenge, Enns has considered the text in connection with various ANE texts; he needs also to bring the incarnational analogy into direct contact with the biblical text.[52]

In Enns's defence, it is possible to argue that he is offering a polemic, not a systematic treatment on the doctrine of Scripture. He is thus not bound to provide argument and counter-argument. It is true that Enns is not attempting a full-scale doctrine of Scripture as is found in Frame. Yet Enns has stated clearly that his purpose "throughout" *Inspiration* is to provide a "synthesis,"[53] and to help his readers "think through" the issues that he raises.[54] That is not the language of a polemic. One does not help laypeople–especially lay readers, his target readership–to "think through" issues merely by providing them with one side of an issue. This must be especially the case

[52] Enns's use of the incarnational analogy to bring additional insight to his second challenge says little that he has not already said in the previous chapter, despite claiming that "an incarnational approach can foster a better theological environment for handling diversity" (Ibid., 73). The OT, in its diversity, is "messy" (p. 109-111). But God "goes very low to know his people and to make himself known" (p. 109); in the written word as in the embodied word (Christ), God enters "the messiness of history" (p. 111). Enns slightly extends his previous applications of the incarnational analogy when he states that "tensions [between biblical texts] demonstrate to us … how fully God participates in history, that he *incarnates* himself throughout Israel's history" (p. 108). In addition, while the diversity of the OT is real, it is also the case that it finds its unity not simply in "the words on the page, but [in] the incarnate word who is more than simply the sum of the biblical parts" (p. 110). In his treatment of the OT and its interpretation in the NT–his third challenge–Enns's use of the incarnational analogy is similarly limited. The apostles' use of Second Temple interpretive traditions was not simply "an effort to connect with their audience"; rather, these traditions "seem to represent the biblical authors' own *understanding*" of the OT episodes (p.142). No mere heuristic technique, the phenomenon demonstrates how God used thoroughly human channels for his revelatory purposes. Thus, "if we appeal to the incarnational analogy, this [use of Second Temple interpretive traditions] should come as no surprise" (p.142).

[53] Ibid., 168; similarly on p. 9.

[54] Ibid., 48.

with matters relating to the incarnation which is intrinsically, and unavoidably, two-sided.

Enns's treatment of the Genesis narratives also paints incarnational revelation as more 'culture-bound' than some might prefer. That God communicated through human modes of expression–which are necessarily tied to a particular culture–seems uncontentious.[55] The contention arises in deciding to what degree the elements of historical facticity and religious values and concepts might be modified in the process of such communication. This is a complex topic, a full discussion of which lies beyond the scope of this research. One therefore hesitates to arbitrate on the matter here, beyond offering the suggestion that Enns's analysis of the Genesis narratives seems to imply a revelational God who is at the same time too immanent *and* too transcendent.[56]

In Enns's schema, God has come very near us in the biblical writings, accommodating his revelations to the culture and thought world of human beings. But the nearness is so complete that God is ultimately unable to penetrate that culture to lift even the inspired writer beyond the vast bulk of its errors, its myths, its untruths, and its uncertainties. In this sense, God, ironically, is *distanced* from the text. Impotent to

[55] Compare Frame, *Doctrine*, 409; see also reference in n. 82, below.

[56] Gulley (*Systematic Theology*, 45) stresses the influence of various philosophical movements upon theology throughout its history. The timeless view of God made him too transcendent, while the process view made him too immanent. The degree to which Enns might be consciously or subconsciously influenced by such philosophies is impossible to judge from the material in *Inspiration*. In his use of the incarnational analogy, he would appear to be purposely emphasising God's immanence–"God *with us*"–but has not perceived the irony of the distortion that results. Grenz and Olson point out that Christian theology, at its best, "has always sought a balance between the twin truths of the divine transcendence and the divine immanence" (Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992], 11). In an historical-theological study they trace the swing of the pendulum from one emphasis to the other in the various theological movements of the twentieth century. There is, in their study, no discussion of how these concepts might relate to a doctrine of inspiration.

interpose truth, he must stand afar off and allow human beings to express truth to the best of their native human abilities.[57]

The analogy of the Incarnation itself provides some substantiation for this criticism. For it is not just that Jesus came *from* God; he came *as* God. He was truly and fully incarnated, but he retained his pre-existing God-nature. If the analogy is to be brought to Scripture, as Enns desires to do, one must be careful when stating, as Enns does, that Scripture is *from* God.[58] It is, but its connection with God pertains not only to its origin but also to the very character that it maintains in its incarnated form. The Incarnation itself illustrates this point.

Enns believes that communicating truth in a way that reflects existing cultural concepts is in keeping with an incarnational concept of revelation. God draws near to human beings, entering into their very history. It is an important and thrilling concept, and Enns is to be commended for embracing and highlighting it. But one must not overlook the parallel truth that the Incarnation of Jesus was, in at least one important sense, *counter* cultural. The Jewish religion was stubbornly monotheistic; yet the very essence of the Incarnation demanded a conceptual reorientation to accommodate the

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[57] Here, Enns is not alone. The postconservative move to focus more on the Spirit's work in the church today and less on his work in the inspiration event, seems on the surface to bring God near: God's work is *contemporary*, not to be confined to a book. Hand in hand, however, the Spirit's work in the biblical author becomes less effectual. Note John R. Franke ("Recasting Inerrancy: The Bible As Witness to Missional Plurality," in Merrick and Garrett [eds.], *Biblical Inerrancy*, 269): "By inspiration, they ["the human speech-acts of Scripture"] bear a proper relationship to God, but inspiration does not enable them to transcend their limitations as a finite creaturely medium." But if the work of the Spirit in inspiration did not enable the Bible writers to "transcend their limitations as a finite creaturely medium" (which doubtless includes their culture), it is something of a stretch to see how that same Spirit, "speaking in and through Scripture," can "appropriate" the time- and culture-bound ancient text "for the purpose of speaking to us today," of "[guiding] the church in the variegated circumstances of particular contemporary settings," and of "shaping the narrative world it [the Christian community] inhabits" (pp. 271, 272). Does it not seem in this that the Holy Spirit's work in *inspiration* is less efficacious than his work in *illumination*?

[58] Note how Enns states it: "...the Bible is ultimately from God and … is God's gift to the church" (*Inspiration*, 14).

idea of a pre-existent, co-eternal Son. That it took some three hundred years for the Christian church to reconcile this new revelation with the established monotheistic dogma tends to contradict any notion that revelation *must* be constrained within existing modes of thinking. It is not that God does not accommodate his revelations. All verbal revelation from a transcendent God is, by its very nature, adapted to the human situation. But if even human thinkers are sometimes able to advance ideas that are 'ahead of their time', there is no reason to assume that God is bound to limit the content and expression of his revelations to existing beliefs and concepts. At least one Bible text seems to imply that God sometimes spoke *through* the prophets and not *to* them, and that his message, though given and recorded in one particular age, was intended to be fully understood only by future generations (1 Pet 1:10-12).

4.3 Enns and the Incarnational Analogy: II

Two years after the publication of *Inspiration*, Enns addressed more fully the incarnational analogy in "Preliminary Observations on an Incarnational Model of Scripture."[59] Enns's purpose was to illustrate the validity and vitality of the incarnational analogy to evangelical thought.[60] To this end he briefly presented selected statements on the subject from Reformed luminaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Charles Hodge, Warfield, A. A. Hodge, Bavinck, and Ridderbos.[61]

[59] *Calvin Theological Journal* 42 (2007): 219-36.

[60] Ibid., 221.

[61] And C. S. Lewis, the only one of the group not a Reformed theologian.

Each theologian, with appeal to the incarnational analogy[62] found reason to confess the full humanity of Scripture despite, in the case of the Princetonians (Warfield and the Hodges), their antipathy to contemporary progressive or liberal theologians whose own emphasis on Scripture's humanity was an essential feature of their liberal views.

Enns approves of these theologians' recognition of the human element of Scripture. Yet he finds some shortcomings in their treatments of the topic, in particular their failure to spell out the specifics of the analogy to discover "the practical application of this insight for pressing issues of the time."[63] Addressing this lack, Enns concludes his article with his own suggestions for practical applications of the model. First, it provides a much-needed apologetic that can be helpful for people struggling today with issues arising from the humanity of Scripture. "An incarnational model," as he puts it, "can help remove the offense of the Bible's humanity." Second, to study Scripture as "an ancient historical phenomenon" enables us to behold God's willingness to draw very near to human beings.[64]

In this article, dedicated entirely to the incarnational analogy, one might have hoped that Enns would offer some degree of engagement with the implications of the divine-human nature of Christ to the doctrine of inspiration that was missing from *Inspiration*. This turns out not to be the case. While lamenting the failure of his theological forebears to delve into specifics, Enns himself again employs a wide brush on his canvas. Despite many references to the *fact* of a divine element, entirely absent

[62] In fact, Ridderbos, alone among the group, makes no specific mention of the incarnation in the statements selected by Enns. Nevertheless, Enns commends him as being the only one of the six who applies the incarnation model "with any determination" (Enns, "Preliminary Observations," 230).

[63] Ibid., 231.

[64] Ibid., 236, 235.

is any discussion as to what it *means* for Scripture to be divine while also being human. Enns's by-now-familiar emphasis on the human marks is near absolute. A driving force behind many abandoning evangelical Christianity over problems in Scripture is, he claims, "a model of Scripture where too much humanity posed a problem. This model, the extent to which it exists, must be laid to rest."[65]

The implication is that, for Enns, there can be no such thing as "too much humanity" in the Scriptures. Such language raises the inevitable question: Just how much humanity is compatible with an incarnational analogy? If the analogy is to be pressed, one must accept that Scripture is not 50 percent but 100 percent human, just as Jesus was 100% human. But in that case, how is Scripture to be distinguished in its essence from the thoroughly human writings of Tolstoy, or of Virgil? To ask *this* kind of question is to acknowledge that the vital humanity of Scripture cannot rightly be spoken of or emphasised without at the same time reckoning with the 100% divinity of Scripture. Only then can one speak of an analogy.[66]

This criticism is not offered without admitting that there is genuine difficulty in stating just what it means to say that Scripture is in some sense "divine." Scripture is the Word of God, and Enns does not deny this. "All Scripture" is breathed out by God. Enns probably would not deny that, either, although he does not directly comment on that Pauline idea.[67] Enns emphasises that "the human marks of the Bible are

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[65] Ibid., 235.

[66] Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 353, insightfully comments that "a balanced view of the divine and the human in Scripture must be understood in their union, rather than in their separateness."

[67] Enns does cite 2 Tim 3:16 once in *Inspiration* (p. 107), but not in connection with Scripture being "breathed out" but to reinforce the idea that all Scripture is "profitable."

everywhere, thoroughly integrated into the nature of Scripture itself."[68] If, then, we are to accept that *all* Scripture is breathed out by God, we may at least understand that, whatever that means, it is applicable to the entire Bible. It must mean that the divine breath, too, is "everywhere, thoroughly integrated" into the nature of Scripture itself.

Not unrelated to this is a degree of ambiguity that adheres to one of Enns's concluding statements: "The more we study Scripture as an ancient historical phenomenon, the more we see how it transcends that ancient historical setting."[69] We may take this statement at face value, as being an affirmation of the Bible's special quality as the Word of God.[70] What gives it that special quality? Is it that all of Scripture was breathed out by God, the writing of it superintended by the Holy Spirit? Is it *this* that allows the Bible to transcend its historical setting? Whether or not Enns believes that to be the case, the context of his statement (the preceding sentences) indicates a slightly different emphasis.

> Indeed, on every page, there is a reminder of how determined God is to be right there in the ups and downs of the drama of redemptive history. If we see that, perhaps we will be reminded of how determined he is to be right there in the ups and downs of our histories.[71]

Thus, for Enns, Scripture transcends its ancient historical setting because it *bears witness* to God's willingness to "be there" with us. True, this is an important aspect of incarnation. But if there is any sense in which Scripture is analogous with the

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[68] *Inspiration*, 18.

[69] "Preliminary Observations," 236.

[70] In this sense, Enns is content even to speak of Scripture being "unique," with the caveat "that using this word does not prevent us from recognizing and *embracing* the marks of the ancient settings in which the Bible was written" (*Inspiration*, 168).

[71] "Preliminary Observations," 236. Enns's statement in respect to Scripture transcending its historical setting follows immediately after this.

incarnation of Jesus, there ought to be the recognition that Jesus, while fully human, was no ordinary man. It is not just that he bore witness, in his humanity, to God's determination to dwell among us; more than that, he bore in his humanity the very nature of God. And while none can comprehend just how that 'works', we have the witness of Scripture that "no man ever spoke like this Man!" (Jn 7:46). He did not just speak *for* God, he spoke *as* God.

The 'speaking', surely, is integral to the analogy. That Jesus, like Scripture, is called the "Word" (Jn 1:1, 14, etc.) is both the springboard for the analogy and its lodestar. If God spoke to humanity through the person of his Son (Heb 1:1-2), he also spoke through the words of that same Son (Jn 3:34; 6:63). Enns's summary statements in this article give the impression that the essence of the incarnation is *that* God comes near to humanity, as though the act is the primary message that we are to grasp. The actual ministry of Jesus suggests that the incarnation is more (though not less) than this: his every word revealed the mind and purpose of God. The crisis in Galilee, when many of Jesus' disciples turned away, was occasioned by the words that Jesus spoke. To one group, his words were "a hard saying." To the other, they were "the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:60, 68).

Enns cannot be faulted for wishing to emphasise the humanity of Scripture, if he believes he is redressing an imbalance. And, in the opinion of this researcher, doing so by drawing an analogy with the incarnation is well placed. But in failing to consider the place and function of words themselves in the incarnation, Enns's application of the analogy must be considered incomplete.

Referring specifically to Enns, Andrew McGowan suggests that the incarnational model is actually *unnecessary* to emphasise the humanness of Scripture.[72] This would seem to be correct; but, to some degree, it misses the point. Enns wishes not merely to emphasise the human element–though that would certainly appear to be his chief aim–but to remind his readers that the ubiquitous human marks in Scripture are entirely consistent with a God whose ultimate act of revelation involved a thorough connection with the human situation.

The greater criticism, in fact, is that Enns has not succeeded in demonstrating that the incarnational analogy *works*. A vocal duo cannot be judged a successful partnership by assessing only one of the partners, no matter how well that partner sings or how insightful the evaluation. Enns may be right to insist that, as God accommodated himself to the human condition in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, so his revelations to us in history and Scripture have always been accommodated to our human situation. It is also true that the incarnation of Jesus involved a *kenosis*, although there is disagreement as to how this is to be understood.[73] Regardless of where Enns stands vis-à-vis the kenotic theory, his one-sidedness does not comport well with a classical Christology; this is quite apart from the disadvantages it brings to formulating a credible bibliology.[74]

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[72] McGowan, *Divine Authenticity of Scripture*, 120. His comment is made with respect to Enns's work.

[73] See Stephen M. Smith, "Kenosis, Kenotic Theology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001], 651).

[74] Enns uses the term "emptying" in *Evolution of Adam*: "I only mean to make the point that we should expect of Scripture the same sort of embrace of the human that Jesus himself willingly took on, even to the point of emptying himself of his divine prerogative and becoming our brother." The language can be justified biblically. But the statement must be understood in connection with Enns's overall thrust both in *Evolution of Adam* and *Inspiration*. That thrust, as already seen, is one of a strong emphasis on the humanity of Scripture with little in the way of balancing statements as to its divine side. For Christ, the laying aside of his divine prerogative did not involve the laying aside of his divine personhood, for he

Enns's weakness here undermines what is potentially his strongest argument: the phenomena of Scripture. For there is no question that the phenomena, in places, present the interpreter with difficulties. The limitations of humanity appear, in places, to thrust themselves into the Scriptural record. Of these difficulties Enns has presented significant examples. He has attempted to account for the presence of such phenomena by analogy with the incarnation. In so doing, however, he introduces the requirement that the phenomena, purportedly more characteristic of humanity than of divinity, have an analogue in the life, words, and works of the Saviour.

But to which of the Lord's words and works, and to which aspect of his life, would Enns draw our attention in order to make this point? Orthodox Christian theology understands Christ to have been perfect even in his humanity. As a human, Jesus experienced frailties of the physical kind: the capacity to experience hunger, pain, and death. On the level of the mind, his knowledge was incomplete. But there is no evidence that these frailties in any way impacted the perfection of his life and message (Heb 4:15; Jn 6:63). It could be argued that, by analogy, the imperfection of human words and literary forms likewise did *not* negatively impact the integrity of the message of Scripture, either in its totality or in its parts.

It was *as a human* that the Saviour presented his perfect portrait of the Father (Jn 14:9; 1:18). What implications does this have for the incarnational analogy? In

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was always "*God* with us." In Christological terms, Enns's seeming imbalance lays him open to a criticism offered more than thirty years earlier by Pinnock: "In their effort to divorce the human element of Scripture from the divine Word, modern theologians reveal their 'Nestorian' tendencies in the field of inspiration" (*Biblical Revelation*, 94). Relevant, here, is Paul Helm's comment in respect to Warfield: "Theologically speaking, the balance Warfield strikes between human agency and divine preparation and inspiration, is possible only because of his full theism, stressing both divine transcendence and immanence" ("B. B. Warfield's Path to Inerrancy: An Attempt to Correct Some Serious Misunderstandings," *Westminster Theological Journal* 72 [2010]: 35). The relevance, applied to Enns, is that his stress on the human aspect of Scripture is, in one sense, equivalent to emphasising God's immanence above his transcendence, thus demonstrating an inadequate theistic understanding.

Christ, God's accommodation to the human situation obviously did not include accommodation to humanity's sins and mistakes.

Enns is aware of the limitations of the analogy, even though he does not articulate these.[75] Yet, in the context of his work, his use of the analogy should at least provide some insight into the dual nature of Scripture and the mutual impact of one element upon the other. If Enns's Christology is orthodox–and he gives every indication that it is–God's voluntary accommodation in his speaking to human beings must result in no concomitant lessening of the divine presence. Can the data presented by Enns be understood in the way he presents it without negatively impacting one's perception, not of the divine *motivation* in revelation, but of the divine *quality* and *presence* in his word?

4.4 Summary of Enns's Treatment of the Incarnational Analogy

The essential details of Enns's application of the incarnational analogy to the doctrine of Scripture were outlined in a previous chapter of this paper.[76] The discussion here has rather focused on a critical analysis of Enns's position. Enns claims that God meets human beings at their level; he accommodates his revelations to the human situation; the Scriptures were written within various historical moments; God speaks incarnately in Scripture, rather as he spoke through Christ himself. Enns believes that all this must shape what we mean when we speak of Scripture as the Word of God. It *is* the Word of *God*, but the human "marks" are found throughout. They are discernible in

[75] He states no more than that there is "mystery" in the incarnation of Christ (*Inspiration*, 18, 168). Others have been more specific (see, for example, McGowan [*Divine Authenticity of Scripture*, 120-21], who also cites the objections of John Webster [see n. 96, below]).

[76] Chapter Two: "Peter Enns: Challenges to the Traditional View."

the obvious influences of ANE culture, in the variety of Scripture's pronouncements and perspectives, and in the theological influences that shaped its self-interpretation. By analogy with the incarnation of Christ, Enns believes, we may expect such human marks as evidence of God coming close to humanity in order to make his revelations understandable.

A review of Enns's material will fail to discover exactly how the dual nature of Scripture is supposed to reflect the duality of Christ's human nature. Although the divine glory was veiled in the person of Christ, the divine perfection was nevertheless undimmed and unmarred by error in word or deed. In what sense is this true of the inscripturated Word?[77] Perhaps Enns has displayed wisdom in not undertaking to tackle this question. He has candidly admitted that there is mystery in the incarnation of Christ and that, for this reason, it may even be better to speak of the incarnational "parallel" between Christ and the Bible.[78] But he has focused on just one aspect of this parallel, namely the *fact* that God enters into human history. From this he attempts a "synthesis" by which certain problematic aspects of the Old Testament can be better understood. To be fair, Enns does not pretend to offer more than a partial understanding. "Our theologies," he states, "are necessarily limited and provisional."[79] But to tackle difficult questions from such a narrow perspective, eschewing

[77] The "inscripturated word" is here meant to denote the "written word," that is, Scripture. The nuance is suggestive of a word that exists before it is written. Every word, of course, has a pre-existence before it is written, for it is first conceived in a mind. The difference with the inspired words of Scripture is that their existence passes from one mind (God's) to another (the human writer of Scripture) before taking written form. Thus, the words of Scripture were first spoken by God, heard audibly or by some mysterious means in the mind of the Bible writer, and then, by the process of inspiration, written down.

[78] *Inspiration*, 168.

[79] *Inspiration*, 169.

consideration of nuances that we may discern (if only dimly), risks presenting a theology that is much more provisional than he might wish.

4.5 Frame and the Incarnational Analogy

Having considered the essence of Enns's use of the incarnational analogy to bring illumination to aspects of biblical interpretation, what may be found in Frame's system that addresses the issue? The brief answer is that he says very little. His most direct statement on the divine-human nature of Scripture is made in the context of a debate with the Dooyeweerdians:

> The Scriptures are a kind of incarnation of the word of God. Scripture is God's Word, but it is also the words of men. It has a human and a divine nature. It has all the truth, power, holiness, and majesty of God; yet it conveys also the personalities of the human writers, speaking their language, their experience, faith, hopes, questions, and concerns. Nevertheless, in this incarnate form the Word of God loses none of its truth and perfection. It is God's Word with supreme authority for us.[80]

It is assertion more than argument,[81] and while providing slightly more detail than the affirmations Enns offers–particularly in its references to the divine aspects of the Scriptures–it makes no attempt to grapple with the "human marks" of Scripture.

In an earlier article, Frame addresses the issue of the humanity of the Bible in connection with 'communication'.[82] Good communication requires speaking the language of one's hearers. God, therefore, communicates to human beings in language that they are used to, in ways that they are used to hearing. As in the incarnation of

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[80] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 409 (Appendix D, "Dooyeweerd and the Word of God").

[81] In the context, Frame was simply making ten propositions (this is the seventh), originally entitled "What Is God's Word?" as a contribution to ongoing discussions with adherents of the cosmonomic philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd.

[82] The article is included in *Doctrine of the Word* as Appendix Q, "The Spirit and the Scriptures." The article originally appeared with the same title in Carson and Woodbridge, eds., *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, 213-35.

Christ, "God's written Word is a truly human word, one that captures all the nuances of human life and human communication." Though written some twenty years before Enns's *Inspiration*, Frame next addresses, essentially, the issue of diversity in Scripture. "Some types of 'uniformity' actually *hinder* communication," as when a simple question is answered with unnecessary detail. Furthermore, "if God had spoken to the Hebrews using the precise language of twentieth-century science, he would have been thoroughly incomprehensible." He offers one further example: "if every apparent contradiction were explained in context, what would happen to the religious and emotional impact of the words?"[83]

With respect to this last example, in his review of Enns's *Inspiration*,[84] Frame sympathises with Enns's emphasis on Scripture presenting different sides of God, and offers an example. When telling a Bible story, one cannot continually make theological qualifications; nor do biblical texts interrupt themselves to do so. In other words, some of the difficulties of Scripture–those where the reader might wish for greater clarity or some degree of qualification–are simply evidence of good principles of communication.[85] From such examples we can see that "the humanity of Scripture ought not to be an embarrassment to us, a weakness in an otherwise powerful document. Rather, the humanity of Scripture is its *strength*."[86]

[83] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 617.

[84] Appendix J, "Review of Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*," in *Doctrine of the Word*, 499-516.

[85] See Frame's comment in n. 83, above.

[86] Ibid., 617-18.

The sentiments in the last statement are ones with which Enns would be in complete agreement.[87] It is important to understand the significance of this agreement. Both theologians are able to affirm the humanity of Scripture as "a truly human word,"[88] even to affirm that the human marks everywhere evident in the Bible are a strength rather than a weakness. There is agreement, too, that the divine-human nature of Christ has some echo in the nature of Scripture. But this concurrence (between the two theologians) is possible only by speaking in the most general terms and by declining to examine the details closely. In Enns's case, he has devoted considerable attention to details in connection with the human marks of Scripture, but he has declined to work through the details of the incarnational analogy itself. Frame, too, in the statements just cited, has set forth his position without grappling with such human marks as Enns has urged. Further consideration of Frame's theology, as given in *Doctrine of the Word*, may confirm or modify this early impression.

In his review of Enns's *Inspiration* (Appendix J in *Doctrine of the Word*), Frame deals in turn with the three challenges presented by Enns, but, curiously (given its importance to Enns's thought), offers no specific section on the incarnational analogy. The matter is first alluded to in connection with Enns's second issue: theological diversity. Frame affirms his acceptance of the principle of divine accommodation, which may be expressed by the metaphor of incarnation, but cautions that "we have to be more careful than Enns is about the implications we draw from that

[87] Enns several times states that the various evidences of Scripture's humanity are not to be thought of as an "embarrassment" (*Inspiration*, 20, 56, 109).

[88] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 617.

metaphor."[89] As noted above, Enns states that the ultimate unity of Scripture is found in Christ, "not simply the words on the page." This, replies Frame, is true, but "the question of the doctrine of Scripture is precisely *how* its overall unity in Christ is or is not reflected in the words on the page." In fact, "the doctrine of Scripture is a doctrine about language," for the simple reason that Scripture is itself language.[90] It is likely from this perspective that Frame later criticises Enns for refusing to discuss the implications of instances of theological diversity for the doctrine of biblical infallibility and inerrancy.[91]

4.6 Frame's Objections to the Incarnational Analogy: Some Implications

Aside from the few brief allusions to the incarnational analogy noted above, Frame has nothing more to say on the subject in his review. There are, nevertheless, incidental comments that he makes in his review of Andrew McGowan's *The Spiration of Scripture* that have some relevance to the topic.[92] Most directly, he refers to McGowan's discussion of the analogy. Frame states, "There is not much difference between McGowan's position and mine in this regard."[93] What, then, is McGowan's

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[89] Ibid., 510.

[90] Ibid., 510.

[91] Ibid., 515. In *Inspiration*, Enns defends his disinclination to explore such matters by stating that such would be an "abstract discussion" (p. 106) that we should avoid. To the contrary, Frame replies, "I believe that these questions are the real heart of the issue" (*Doctrine of the Word*, 515). Frame does not elaborate.

[92] *Doctrine of the Word*, 525-53 (Appendix L, "Review of Andrew McGowan, *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*").

[93] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 548n39. Since Frame identifies with McGowan on this matter, it is fitting here to consider McGowan's objections to the incarnational analogy as representing Frame's own objections. It will be assumed here that had Frame disagreed with McGowan's position on the analogy in any detail of significance, he would have included it in his 29-page detailed review of McGowan.

position? The incarnational analogy is, McGowan avers, "an inappropriate theological model." His objections fall into three areas. The first is that it is not taught in Scripture; the second is that, while "Scripture can share certain divine attributes … it cannot have a divine nature, because it is not God." Only God is divine.[94] McGowan's third objection is that danger lurks in the analogy,[95] citing John Webster's concern that a wrong understanding of the analogy could be "Christologically disastrous."[96]

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[94] McGowan, *Divine Authenticity of Scripture*, 119, 120-21. Fernando Canale, while rejecting the analogy on similar grounds, is more specific: the process by which God became, in Christ, a human being and by which his knowledge, in Scripture, became human knowledge "belong to different planes–the former to the plane of things and being (ontology), the latter to knowledge (epistemology). Thus, we cannot determine how we view the incarnation of Scripture through revelation-inspiration from our view of Christ's incarnation. To determine how the divine and human factors interact in each case, we must study them separately" (*The Cognitive Principle of Christian Theology: A Hermeneutical Study of the Revelation and Inspiration of the Bible* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Lithotech, 2005], 324). Furthermore, "we must understand both objects before we can say that they are analogous" (p. 323)–and we do not have this understanding. Against this, an analogy does not imply identity, as Canale admits (p. 323). If it did, Canale's objection would be valid; to claim two things were identical would require a very high level of understanding of both objects. But an analogy need not say more than that two things are *similar in some sense*–in the sense, perhaps, of appearance, or of function, or of operation. Geisler and Roach, too, affirm that an analogy requires only *similarity* not *identity* (*Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011], 308). That both Jesus Christ and Scripture are a mysterious blend of the divine and the human demands the recognition that they are *in that respect alone* analogous. The important question is: what can we learn about Scripture through those aspects where there is an evident analogy?

[95] McGowan, *Divine Authenticity of Scripture*, 121.

[96] Ibid. Webster fears that applying the incarnational concept to Scripture might "threaten the uniqueness of the Word's becoming flesh by making 'incarnation' a general principle or characteristic of divine action in, through or under creaturely action" (*Ibid*.). It is surely a groundless fear. In the first place, Webster undermines his owns argument with his next sentence: "But the Word made flesh and the scriptural word are in no way equivalent realities." If so, there can be no danger of threat to the uniqueness of the Word's becoming flesh provided the difference of category is maintained. In the second place, does not the entirety of Scripture bear witness–as Enns will agree!–to a God who, in one sense, incarnates himself by placing his divine word into the mouths of human prophets? More profoundly, as expressed by Samuele Bacchiocchi, "is not God's willingness to enter into the limitations of human time at creation [on the Sabbath]… a prefiguration of [his] willingness to enter, if the need should arise, into human flesh in order to become 'Emmanuel,' 'God with us'?" (*Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of THE GOOD NEWS of the Sabbath for Today* [Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1980], 40). The incarnation of the *logos* was certainly unique; but the principle of incarnation was, unlike God's work as destroyer, no "strange act" (Is 28:21) that was contrary to his self-sacrificing nature. Furthermore, Bacchiocchi's statement provokes recognition of the contentious issue of God's timeless nature. The timelessness of God, according to Fernando Canale, is a theological commonplace derived from various philosophies. We should rather understand that God has entered human time (Gulley 10). The reluctance to understand God as one who has incarnated himself in various ways through history is possibly not unrelated to this common misconception that a timeless God cannot fully interact within the constraints of human time.

McGowan's first objection requires little comment. The analogy may not be specifically *taught* in Scripture; the more important question is whether it is theologically acceptable to draw certain implications from the material found in the pages of Scripture.

McGowan's second objection, that there is no real analogy because a text cannot be compared to a person, needs to be more closely examined. "Scripture," McGowan asserts, "can share certain divine attributes but it cannot have a divine nature, because it is not God."[97] He may be right. But his argument hinges on understanding inspiration as applying exclusively to a *quality* of the *text* of Scripture. But is there a more valid analogy if inspiration is understood as applying to a divine *operation* on the *writer* of Scripture?

It is true, as many have pointed out, that 2 Tim 3:16, the *locus classicus* for the doctrine of inspiration, refers to the text and not to the Bible writers, since the subject of the sentence is the *graphé* themselves. Yet *theopneustos* is suggestive of an action, a process even, as much as of an adjectival *state*. The *graphé* were God-breathed. It seems legitimate to understand the term, in this context, as referring both to the nature of the Scriptures and to the process by which they were produced. 2 Pet 1:21, while not employing *theopneustos*, likewise focuses on God's action (through the Holy Spirit) in producing prophecy.[98] The important point here is that this action necessarily involved persons.

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[97] *Divine Authenticity of Scripture*, 120, 121. Oddly, given his essential agreement with McGowan's position on the incarnational analogy, Frame is less sensitive on this point: "Scripture," he states, "is both a divine book and a human book" (*Doctrine of the Word*, 140).

[98] Feinberg also talks about a "process that produced the inspired texts." The process has elsewhere been termed *concurrence* ("The Meaning of Inerrancy," 282). Packer clearly affirms that *theopneustos* has both a passive and an active sense and stresses the divine *activity* that is involved. He well states the case

Frame, in common with many inerrantists, understands inspiration as referring "to the very *text* of Scripture," "not to the ideas of prophets and apostles, not even to their oral speech, and not to the biblical writers as such"[99] He does not deny that the action of the Spirit upon the prophets and apostles, as they spoke and wrote, may rightly be described as *inspiration*; "but we should never say, as some have, that inspiration properly pertains to persons rather than to written texts."[100] Frame's concern, as an inerrantist, is to guard the integrity of the text. Yet the suspicion that there is some ambiguity in his approach is not allayed by his defining inspiration as "*a divine act* that creates an identity between a divine word and a human word," nor by his assertion that "the term may be extended to oral revelation by prophets and

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when he writes that "the divine activity that produced Scripture" was one "which involved human writers as a means to an end, but which actually terminated, not on them, but on what they wrote" (James I. Packer, "'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God" [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978], 77-78). It is an important point. To speak of inspiration as acting upon a person does not imply that it ever met its terminus with the person; the action of the Spirit upon the person, being mysteriously combined and transmuted in the person, resulted in a supernaturally generated logos. In this 'process and product' one may see, as argued below, an analogy between Christ and Scripture.

[99] *Doctrine of the Word*, 144. The seminal fundamentalist publication, *The Fundamentals*, evinces a similar emphasis, as stated unambiguously by George S. Bishop ("The Testimony of the Scriptures to Themselves," *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 2, ed. R. A. Torrey, A. C. Dixon, et al., (The AGES Digital Library Reference, 2000), 78 http://ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books%20II/Torrey%20-%20The%20Fundamentals%202.pdf (accessed 16 February, 2016): "The sacred assertion ["all Scripture is inspired"] is not of the instruments, but of the Author; not of the agents, but of the product. … God inspires not men, but language. … The Scriptures says that 'holy men were moved'… but that their writing, their manuscript, what they put down and left on the page, was God-breathed." Frame believes that a "serious flaw" in current evangelical theologies of Scripture is an absence of attention to the nature of the text. As exemplars of this trend he cites McGowan, N. T. Wright, and Enns. See *Doctrine of the Word*, 553 (Appendix L, "Review of Andrew McGowan"). It was mentioned above that McGowan's argument (that Scripture could share certain divine attributes though not the divine nature) hinged on an understanding of inspiration referring to the *text* of Scripture. But Frame's point is not that McGowan does not accept inspiration as referring to the text, but that he focuses too largely on the human appearance of the text; he ought, in Frame's view, to consider more carefully the text's nature as a *divine* text.

[100] *Doctrine of the Word*, 144.

apostles, and to the human writers of Scripture, because certainly there is *an act of God* by which God's words are identical with their own."[101]

One may ask where this leads. If inspiration may be understood, at least partly, as an *act* of God through the Holy Spirit, it ought to be possible to discuss inspiration

[101] Ibid., 140; emphasis supplied. George Bishop's unswerving commitment to an inspired text, as opposed to an inspired person, leads him to offer a bold illustration: "You breathe upon a pane of glass. Your breath congeals there; freezes there; stays there … That is the notion. The writing on the page beneath the hand of Paul was just as much breathed on, breathed into that page, as was His soul breathed into Adam" ("Testimony of the Scriptures," 78). The illustration suggests an action of the Holy Spirit that, though working *through* the human agent, engages that agent only at the physical level–certainly not at the level of mind. The practical, inevitable, result is something very close to *mechanical* dictation, as evidenced by the author's subsequent assertion: "We take the ground that on the original parchment — the membrane–every sentence, word, line, mark, point, pen-stroke, jot, tittle was put there by God" (p. 79). Yet it is important to understand the dynamics of polemic and of historical context. The author's position appears to be, in part, a reaction to the higher critical stance in which it is affirmed that the writer is inspired but the text is not (p. 81). This affirmation allowed the higher critics considerable freedom in handling the text. For the writers cannot be examined, and the 'divine' processes at work in them are mysterious; we may offer various notions as to how the Spirit may have acted upon them, and the text may then be viewed in the light of those notions. One may see this dynamic operating in Schleiermacher; for him, the *person* (he mentions the "Apostles") was inspired. Their "experiential insight," their pure and complete grasp of Christianity, was theirs constantly, and in these insights the biblical books they wrote were (merely) sharers (Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999], 599). Canale suggests that "many contemporary supporters of thought inspiration are attracted to it precisely because it allows them a certain latitude for interpretation. Since the thought and not the words are inspired … the interpreter looks for the thought or meaning behind and beyond the words" (*Cognitive Principle*, 196). The inerrantist sees that the best, least risky route in countering such views is to begin and end with the text; the text may at least be seen and examined, and pronouncement made concerning it. Here, then, in all likelihood, is one concern that drives the inerrantist to focus on the text as the object of inspiration and to downplay the divine, mysterious moving of God's Spirit upon the human authors. Another concern may be that when the idea of inspiration is closely connected with the person, it is an easy step to enquire as to whether some individuals were more inspired than others. The reality of that danger was illustrated in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the late 1880s, when the denomination's president, G. I. Butler, advanced the suggestion that the Scriptures "are inspired just in the degree that the person is inspired who writes them" (*Review and Herald*, "*Inspiration* [No. 1], Jan. 8, 1884, 24). For references to others outside the Seventh-day Adventist denomination who held to a similar view, see Alberto R. Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10, no. 1-2 (1999), 492n38. Gulley, a contemporary Seventh-day Adventist theologian, is one who is prepared to state plainly that "inspiration works on the biblical writer," adding that "the truths are Spirit-given and expressed in Spirit-guided ways of human writing" (*Systematic Theology*, 682). His position is in harmony with the denomination's semi-official pronouncement on the subject: "God inspired men–not words" (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe... A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*, 2nd ed. [Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006], 14).

in these terms. The role of the Holy Spirit then becomes important,[102] for he is the agent of the action. Luke records Jesus as announcing his mission in Galilee with the words of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach … to preach … to preach ..." (Lk 4:18f). Furthermore, the connection between Spirit and word is not merely one of impulse or influence, but of actual identity, for Jesus is recorded by John as stating that "it is the Spirit who gives life … the words that I speak to you *are* spirit and they are life" (Jn 6:63).[103] Frame has stated that "there is a sense in which God's word is God himself."[104] What Christ is claiming for *his* words seems not far removed from this assertion, if removed at all. The question again arises, is there an identity between the words Jesus spoke and his words as recorded in Scripture? If there is an identity, does this require a modification of McGowan's assertion that "[Scripture] cannot have a divine nature, because it is not God"? And can this be done without incurring the charge of bibliolatry?

In light of the above, certain difficulties some find in conscripting the incarnational analogy into the service of a doctrine of Scripture may be dealt with on two fronts. The first is by understanding inspiration as an act of God upon a person

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[102] The connection has already been noted with 2 Pet 1:21. It may be observed also in Is 59:21 ("My Spirit who is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth") and Ez 11:5 ("the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said to me, 'Speak!'").

[103] English translations are divided over whether to capitalise "spirit" and thereby identify it unambiguously and exclusively as the Holy Spirit. A similar problem may be seen in Jn 4:24, where *pneuma* is similarly anarthrous. The lack of the article before *pneuma* in Jn 6:63 "indicates the quality or essential nature of Jesus' words," according to Andreas J. Kostenberger (*John* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004], 219n94). In both cases, some kind of reference to the Holy Spirit can be perceived; for the Spirit is somehow present with any true worshipper (4:24) and in Jesus' words (6:63). George R. Beasley-Murray suggests that the words "Spirit and life"– he capitalizes "Spirit"–speak to "those who receive them [Christ's words] in faith, since they who accept them and believe in the Son receive the Spirit and the life of which he speaks." George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 96.

[104] *Doctrine of the Word*, 48. By "God's word" Frame here means not the Bible, but the words that God speaks.

(resulting in a text that may also be described as inspired), and the second is by recognising an identity between Jesus and his word. *In both, the Spirit is key*–as the "Spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10) in the one case, and as the "Spirit of life" (Rom 8:2) in the other. In both cases, the Spirit is *acting*. The human is acted upon through a divine agency producing an entity that is both human and divine. The incarnation of Jesus began with an act of the Holy Spirit, for what was "conceived in her" was "of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 1:20; cf. Lk 1:35). The preaching of Christ was by the unction of the Spirit (Lk 4:18f), so that his words, in their human dress, were "Spirit and life" (Jn 6:63).

The point to be drawn from this is that it may be possible to consider the incarnational analogy in connection not only with the text that we possess, but with the *process* by which the inspired documents were brought into being. In other words, it is not in this case an analogy of ontology; it is an analogy of process or action.[105] The parallels are found in the actions of the Holy Spirit upon ordinary human beings. The Spirit "overshadowed" Mary (Lk 1:35) to bring about the incarnate Word; the Spirit similarly "moved" upon the prophets to produce the prophetic word (2 Pet 1:21). In the case of Mary, the Holy Spirit used what she already possessed physically, but at the same time implanted in her what she did not and could not originate in herself. Is a parallel not implied in the Petrine passage, which begins with the affirmation that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Pet 1:20), and adds that "holy men … spoke," using the physical organs they already possessed? The process is entirely divine, while employing the human. More, as Mary *received* the Word, so did

[105] It should be remembered than an analogy requires only similarity on certain levels. See n. 94, above.

the prophets receive the word.[106] Nor, in either case, did the human receivers of this divine action have a choice in its reception.[107] The parallels are likely not coincidental.

Considering the analogy between Christ and Scripture in this way circumvents McGowan's criticism, for the parallel is no longer between a person and a text but between the *activity* of the Spirit of God resulting in those two different forms of *logos*. While the concept needs more evaluation and elucidation than space allows here, the evidence so far adduced suggests that a *prima facie* case exists for scholars to prosecute this line of enquiry further.

It will be obvious that the foregoing bypasses the context for McGowan's final objection, that the analogy carries a risk to orthodox Christology. Yet even if pressing the analogy on ontological grounds, one may counter McGowan's concern by the recognition, first, that any analogy may hide inadequacies, with their consequent interpretive dangers. One must recognise, secondly, that all theological enquiry has the potential for error;[108] and who is equipped to discern whether supposedly lesser errors might not contain the seed of a greater error no less ruinous than the Christological error? Yet this potential is to be no deterrent to the exploration of legitimate theological topics; for if it is "the glory of God to conceal a matter," it is no less "the glory of kings … to search out a matter" (Prov 25:2).

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[106] That there is a parallel between what Mary received and what the prophets received gains added support from 1 Pet 1:22: God's word is *seed*.

[107] Mary's passive involvement in her conception is paralleled–at least as witnessed in the words of Jeremiah–by the passive reception of the word of prophecy: "Then I said, 'I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name.' But his word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not" (Jer 20:9). The word of the Lord *came* to the prophets on each occasion.

[108] Dewey M. Beegle makes the same point (*Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973], 283-87). "There is no absolute protection against doctrinal deviation" (p. 286; see also p. 287).

4.7 More from Frame on the Divine-Human Aspects of Scripture

In the same review of McGowan, Frame addresses the oft-repeated charge that inerrantists neglect the human side of Scripture. Reminiscent of comments in his review of Enns, Frame here approaches the issue on the basis of language. To "communicate *truly* in the *ordinary language* of human beings" includes the idea that one may use everyday language without having to qualify one's meaning. As an example: "today, we speak regularly of the sun rising and setting, without dreaming (let alone desiring) that any of our hearers will adopt a geocentric cosmology."[109] Similarly, it is questionable that a Bible writer's reference to a 'three story universe' carries with it the requirement that the reader adopt such a cosmology.[110] With this understanding, he claims, the human side of Scripture is seen to fit together with the divine side "very comfortably indeed."[111]

How is one to evaluate this argument? Its limited applicability to the 'problem' of the human marks of the Bible is obvious: there is a great deal more to the matter of the phenomena of Scripture than references to a three story universe.[112] Yet Frame

[109] *Doctrine of the Word*, 540, 539 (emphasis in original).

[110] Ibid., 539. Frame's view is sharply contradicted by Denis O. Lamoureux ("No Historical Adam: Evolutionary Creation View," in *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, ed. Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday, Counterpoints series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013, 46). It may be impossible to arbitrate definitively on this point, since it cannot be known with certainty just what the Bible writers actually believed nor the relationship between what the biblical writers understood and what, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they were enabled to write.

[111] *Doctrine of the Word*, 540n31.

[112] Yet, Frame's argument is not devoid of merit. To begin with, no Bible writer directly refers to a three story universe. References to "four corners" could possibly be regarded as "everyday language," as Frame puts it, while language deemed by many to indicate an ancient cosmology may actually have a theological rather than literal meaning. This theological meaning, with imagery linking the Garden of Eden, the temple, and the cosmos, has been explored by a number of theologians. G. K. Beale has done considerable work here, most fully in *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17, ed. D. A. Carson (Leicester: Apollos, 2004). In *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical*

seems to expect his argument to be broadly applied: "When we construe Scripture as ordinary human language, we discover that it is at the same time divinely true."[113] That is, with the pre-understanding that Scripture is the word of *God*, the phenomena of the *language* provide no grounds for modifying that high view. Frame has made no reference to the incarnational model, yet he is speaking in those terms: the humanity and divinity of Scripture coexist without tension. As limited as his argument is, he has at least suggested one path to follow (the phenomenon of language and communication) that might show how the two elements may be understood to function together.

A more stunning argument is given when Frame, in another appendix, considers the transcendence and immanence of God and the relationship these characteristics have for biblical language.[114] God's two attributes of transcendence and immanence are not in conflict with each other. "God is close to us *because* he is Lord." As Lord, he is "free to make his power felt everywhere we go. He is Lord, and thus able to reveal himself clearly to us, distinguishing himself from all mere creatures."[115] That is, God's distance from us does not prevent him from drawing near and revealing himself to his intelligent creation. At the same time, his coming close–surely an accommodation–does not result in an *identity* with his creatures or (by implication) with their cultural

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Authority (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), Beale devotes two chapters (Six and Seven, pp. 161-218) to a briefer treatment of the topic.

[113] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 540n31.

[114] Ibid., 422-39 (Appendix E, "God and Biblical Language: Transcendence and Immanence").

[115] Ibid., 437.

modes of thought and expression; for in his revealing he remains distinct from the creation, distinguishable from the thoughts and ideas expressed by the mere creature.[116]

It is, then, the very fact of God's lordship that is the guarantee of his ability to reveal himself as far as he wishes to do so. The precise application of the foregoing to language is made in the last sentence of the appendix: "Human language may convey the infallible word of God, because God is *Lord*–even of human language."[117] In sharp contradistinction to Enns, Frame finds no reason to see God's nearness to us, either personally or as experienced through language, as entailing any compromise of the messages that he chooses to reveal.

4.8 Summary of Frame's Treatment of the Incarnational Analogy

The foregoing analysis reveals that, while Frame does broach the subject of Scripture's duality, he prefers not to treat it through the incarnational analogy. Following McGowan, his reticence evidently owes something to the dangers it poses to Christology. Frame does explicitly mention the analogy. But he does no more than affirm that Scripture is both divine and human and he makes little attempt to elucidate the duality.

Nevertheless, it is clear that for Frame there *is* an analogy. This is apparent in his statement that "the Bible is *both* Creator and creature, as Jesus is both God and man."[118] Unless Frame has merely been careless or imprecise in his language, he here

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[116] The Lordship attribute of "control" seems to be operative here, though Frame does not specifically say so at this point.

[117] Ibid., 439.

[118] Ibid., 407.

comes close to ascribing personhood to the actual words of Scripture. If so, this leaves him open to the charge of bibliolatry. Frame is aware of this possibility and tackles it head on, though not in the context of his discussion of the incarnational analogy. He counters the charge by appeal to the concept of 'medium'. The word of God *is* to be worshiped. Yet it comes to us in a finite, creaturely medium. It is not the medium that is to be worshiped, "but through the created medium, we receive the authentic word of God, and that word of God should be treasured as if God were speaking it with his own lips."[119] For, he adds, the word is God (Jn 1:1); and this verse "indicates not only the deity of Christ, but also the deity of the creative word."[120]

These last words suggest that the incarnational analogy lies very close to the surface of Frame's understanding, however great his reluctance to state it in those terms. The word is divine as Christ is divine. As Christ became flesh, so the written word was given in a human medium. It is somewhat surprising that Frame does not press the point: as the human nature of Christ did not reduce his divinity, nor, by analogy, does the creaturely human medium of Scripture reduce its divinity. Perhaps Frame believes that the inerrancy doctrine is adequately established by Scripture's own self testimony regarding its divinity. The analogy, then, is unnecessary.

It could be suggested that Frame has no advantage over Enns here: both have, in essence, done little more than present their reasons for emphasising, respectively, the divine and the human aspects of Scripture. What might lift Frame's treatment to a higher plane, however, is the thoroughly biblical, systematic presentation of the

[119] Ibid., 67-68. He adds, "Evangelicals are often too sensitive to the charge of bibliolatry. That charge is illegitimate, and it should not motivate evangelicals to water down their view of Scripture" (p. 68).

[120] Ibid., 68.

biblical data in respect to God and his word.[121] The human marks that appear at times to disturb this high view are not quite ignored; but they *are* discounted as having insufficient weight to overturn what his systematic treatment has revealed. This position is, perhaps, not as arbitrary as it might appear. The words of Hermann Sasse, if accepted, bring validity to Frame's dogmatism:

> Between the Monophysitism of fundamentalists who failed to understand the human nature of the Bible and the Nestorianism of modern Protestant and Anglican theology which sees the two natures, but fails to find the unity of scripture as a book at the same time fully human and fully divine, we have to go the narrow path between these two errors. But we must never forget that the Chalcedonese has been authoritatively explained in the doctrine of the '*enhypostasia.*' The human nature has its 'hypostasis' in the divine. So Holy Scripture is first of all and essentially God's Word. The human word in the Bible has no independent meaning.[122]

Nevertheless, Sasse's claim that "the human word in the Bible has no independent meaning"–that is, has meaning only in connection with Christ–is not inconsistent with Enns's own *christotelic* understanding. For Enns, the principle promoted by Sasse does not, therefore, negate the problems posed by the phenomena of the Bible. The stubborn facts of the human marks of the Bible are not dealt with by mere theologising. How are these phenomena to be handled? The answers suggested by Enns and Frame betray two quite different approaches to the topic, and must now be addressed.

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[121] One must constantly bear in mind that, while Frame and Enns write from different perspectives and different scholarly disciplines, both were grappling with the essential nature of Scripture. Had Enns signalled his intention 'merely' to introduce certain difficult OT issues and leave it to the reader or to systematic theologians to suggest how these might be aligned with the broader themes of Scripture, one would be wrong to assess his work against Frame's systematic treatment. But this is not what Enns does. Rather, as already mentioned here, his purpose in writing *Inspiration* is to help people think through the issues, and to offer his readers a synthesis. Enns further states his intention to "provide a theological paradigm" that will help readers think about "what Scripture as a whole *is*" (p. 15). His starting point may be different, the material he handles quite distinct; yet ultimately Enns has in view an endpoint that is not dissimilar from Frame's: what *is* the Word of God?

[122] Hermann Sasse, "Inspiration and Inerrancy," *Concordia* (Spring 2010), 118.

5. The Inductive-Deductive Approaches to Biblical Phenomena

Any contemporary doctrine of Scripture–whether a systematic treatment (as per Frame) or a selective, topical study (as per Enns)–will, explicitly or implicitly, adopt an approach to interpreting the phenomena of Scripture that is either broadly deductive or inductive.[123] Each approach, as will be shown, is closely connected with certain prior assumptions on the part of both scholars.[124] Inasmuch as these two approaches are represented in the two authors under consideration here, it will be instructive to note the degree to which their varying conclusions are dependent upon their respective approaches.

[123] Donald Bloesch suggests that the inductive-deductive option is, in fact, only one of three options confronting the church at this point in history. This first he characterises as evangelical rationalism. Whether employing the inductive or the deductive approach, it involves virtually equating Scripture with divine revelation. The second option is "a religioethical experientialism that makes human moral experience the supreme criterion in shaping theological understanding. The third is a biblical evangelicalism where "the Bible is the divinely prepared medium or channel of divine revelation rather than the revelation itself"; here God's Spirit brings fresh knowledge with the hearing and reading of the biblical message (Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation*, Christian Foundations [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994], 18). In this scheme, both Enns and Frame might be seen to be operating within a basically modernistic *weltanschauung*. However, it is more likely that even when interpreting Scripture from a postmodern perspective, the interpreter will employ either a deductive or inductive method when having to deal with the phenomena of Scripture.

[124] In this, Enns and Frame are hardly unique. Note Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1980), 79: "Therefore, since both conservative and critical scholars are willing to construct hypotheses to account for the phenomena found in Scripture, the difference between them lies in the assumptions each brings to that Scripture." In fact, there would appear to be not one, but two prior assumptions that each side makes. The first is that Scripture ought to be the "starting point and source of reference"; the second is the decision whether to give primacy to the phenomena or to the "explicit assertions" of the biblical writers (see Peter M. van Bemmelen, *Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987], 377).

5.1 Enns and the Inductive Approach

Douglass Moo has stated that "no factor is cited as an argument against the inerrancy of Scripture more often than the Bible itself."[125] While Enns prefers not to speak directly of inerrancy, he is quite in accord with Moo's observation when he claims that "our expectations [of how the Bible should look] should be informed by how the Bible in fact behaves."[126] For what Enns *sees* is a Bible where the human marks "are *everywhere, thoroughly integrated* into the nature of Scripture itself."[127]

In tandem with his presentation of major examples of such human marks, organised in *Inspiration* as three "issues," Enns offers a significant admonition: as we are confronted with these issues, we must allow them to "reorient us to see these problems in a better light."[128] By this he does not mean that the problems may be harmonised with any preconceived understanding of the Bible.[129] On the contrary, however problematic these details of the biblical material, they are to be accepted as

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[125] Douglas Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 179. Moo's statement is casual testimony to the easy association of the two concepts of inerrancy and biblical phenomena. The connection is natural, since the many obvious discrepancies (real or apparent) so easily discoverable in the biblical text, inevitably raise questions as to the inerrancy of that text. Everett Harrison concurs: inerrancy is "a natural corollary of full inspiration" ("The Phenomena of Scripture," in *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1958)], 250). Beegle's discussion of ten selected biblical texts seems aimed at demonstrating the impossibility of being an inductivist and inerrantist at the same time (see his *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*, 176-94).

[126] Enns, *Inspiration*, 66. Compare: "As a corrective, one must observe how Scripture *does* behave and draw conclusions from that" (p. 73); "There is always more thinking and reflection to be done in observing how Scripture behaves and what conclusions we draw" (p. 108).

[127] Ibid., 18.

[128] Ibid., 17. Such reorientation will be directed toward a doctrine of Scripture (see further, below).

[129] Enns's disaffection with harmonisation is near explicit. Speaking to the issue of theological diversity, he states that for one "significant strand of contemporary Christian thinking on the Old Testament" the difficulties of the diversity "just *appear* to be a problem. You just need to read a bit more closely or do a little more research, and if you're patient enough, you'll get the right answer eventually. For others, however (including myself), such an approach comes close to intellectual dishonesty" (*Inspiration*, 107).

evidence of God's accommodating his revelation to human beings through the modalities and thought patterns of their times and cultures. What we, the readers, must do, is

> take a step back from the details and allow these issues to challenge us on a more fundamental level. … It is not enough simply to say that the Bible is the word of God or that it is inspired or to apply some other label. The issue is how these descriptions of the Bible bear fruit when we touch down in one part of the Bible or another. How does the study of Scripture in the contemporary world affect how we flesh out descriptions such as 'word of God' or 'inspired'?[130]

The clear implication from these statements is that a prior conception of what it means to say the Bible is inspired must be held loosely; what we actually *see* as we examine the various texts of Scripture may require us to reformulate any prior "descriptions."[131]

The reorientation that Enns speaks of will naturally be directed toward a doctrine of Scripture. He states, "How the evangelical church *fleshes out* its doctrine of Scripture will always have somewhat of a provisional quality to it. ... When new evidence comes to light, or old evidence is seen in a new light, we must be willing to engage that evidence and adjust our doctrine accordingly."[132] But adjust exactly what? That God speaks in Scripture? That the Holy Spirit carries the writer along and reveals new truths? The notion that Scripture is authoritative? Is it the aspect of revelation or inspiration that is to be adjusted? These issues are not defined in *Inspiration*.

One thing Enns does make clear is that the difficulties that can arise from the recognition of certain phenomena emerge from the Bible itself; they are not imposed

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[130] Ibid., 16-17.

[131] It is a point that Enns reiterates after reviewing the evidence for each of his "issues" (Ibid., 47, 108-09, 158).

[132] Ibid., 14.

onto the Bible from outside theories or attacks.[133] His claim may be easily accepted in regards to the "diversity" found in the biblical texts (Enns's second issue). In respect to his first and third issues, however, the fact is much less self-evident. In both cases there are external factors–ANE texts and Second Temple practices–that may be *applied* to the biblical text in various ways. A traditional doctrine of Scripture is not necessarily challenged by all of these applications of the data.[134] But it is a moot point. Should any discrepancies within the biblical materials be demonstrated–as Enns so claims in respect to his second issue–a case has at least been made, even if the details and interpretation are open to debate.

If discrepancies and difficulties are inherent in the biblical text itself, it follows that revelations of such need not be new. Enns, indeed, makes that very point, and does so in respect both to discrepancies within the biblical text (particularly with the issue of "theological diversity") and to tensions between the Bible and external factors.[135]

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[133] Ibid., 15, 73.

[134] The available literature attests to the difference of interpretation and application of the extrabiblical data in respect to the biblical text. On the Old Testament and its connection with other ANE texts, see, for example, G. K. Beale, *Erosion of Inerrancy* (see n. 112, above); Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, 3rd edition (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006); John N. Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or* Just *Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009); Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, The Biblical Resource Series, ed. Astrid B. Beck and David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006). On the NT use of the OT, see G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), and the discussions of interpretive practices in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, Counterpoints series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008). Even the difficulties within the biblical text–the seeming contradictions–are amenable to treatments that view them in ways quite different from Enns's. See, for example, Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

[135] *Inspiration*, 71-72, 14.

The chief consideration to be noted from the above is that the phenomena of Scripture are seen to undermine the traditional doctrine of Scripture. Not that Enns is opposed to having a doctrine of Scripture; he early states his sympathy with those "who desire to maintain a vibrant and reverent doctrine of Scripture."[136] Nor is he intending to tear down without also building up. Though making no pretension of trying to formulate a doctrine of Scripture himself, he does express his desire "to provide a theological paradigm for people who know instinctively that the Bible is God's word, but for whom reading the Bible has already become a serious theological problem–perhaps even a crisis."[137]

It was earlier noted that Enns insists that a doctrine of Scripture must be informed by how the Bible behaves, by what we actually *see* in the Bible. He calls this that we see in the Bible, "what the Bible *is.*" Terse, almost incidental, it is yet a significant comment. The *nature* of Scripture is implied as being determined very largely by the phenomena. A consideration of the context in which the statement is given might, however, allow a more nuanced construal:

> But the bottom line is this: how we conceive of the normativity or authority of the Old Testament must be in continual conversation with the incarnate dimension of Scripture. In other words, what the Bible *is* should affect what we as Christians do with it.[138]

Perhaps Enns is merely stating that Scripture is an *incarnate* document. Yet, in *Inspiration*, 'incarnate' is usually used to point up a commonality with that which is human, rather than stressing a mysterious blend of the human and divine. This is

[136] Ibid., 13; cf. 15, 67.

[137] Ibid., 15.

[138] Ibid., 67.

evidenced when Enns again uses the phrase in the question: "What the Bible is must be understood in light of the cultural context in which it was given."[139] Here, not only is Scripture to be assessed by its own phenomena and by its own culture, it seems its essential nature is to be understood through the prism of external cultural conditions.

Enns's "what the Bible *is*" statements may be capable of various interpretations. But however they are to be understood, they are in harmony with earlier evidence that, for Enns, makes the phenomena determinative. Such is the essence of the inductive approach.[140]

Also essential to the inductive method is a conscious eschewal of working from a presuppositional stance. Preferring the term *preconceptions* to *presuppositions*, Enns draws a clear connection with the inductive appeal to the phenomena:

> One of the central themes of this book is this: *The problems many of us feel regarding the Bible may have less to do with the Bible itself and more to do with our own preconceptions*. I have found again and again that listening to how the Bible itself behaves and suspending preconceived notions … about how we think the Bible ought to behave is refreshing …[141]

Certain of Enns's statements must be seen as criticism of working from preconceptions.[142] In Enns's eyes, evidently, it is a problem with the conservative evangelical approach to Scripture.

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[139] Ibid., 41.

[140] Achtemeier (*The Inspiration of Scripture*, 50) writes that "it is characteristic for the liberal view of Scripture to begin with the phenomena of the Bible, and formulate a doctrine of Scripture which then takes them into account [while] the conservative view reverses the order." It is now no longer possible to make such an easy distinction, unless one is to understand "conservative" to mean "inerrantist." Enns is just one of a considerable number of evangelicals espousing the need to formulate a doctrine of Scripture through an inductive approach. This should be understood as essentially the same phenomenon as the retreat from a strict inerrantist position that has characterised evangelicalism over the last several decades.

[141] Enns, *Inspiration*, 15 (emphasis in original).

[142] Such statements would include: (1) the failure of evangelicals to "engage the *doctrinal implications*" of particular lines of enquiry (*Inspiration*, 13); (2) "issues that have not been handled well in evangelical

Elsewhere, Enns has stated more plainly his antipathy with this procedure. In his response to a review of his *Evolution of Adam*, Enns finds fault with the reviewer's "methodological missteps," one of which is the insistence that one's view of Scripture should be built *dogmatically* (from the top down) rather than *phenomenologically* (from the ground up). This, Enns claims, is a common mindset in evangelicalism,[143] which "too frequently" engages in tactics such as "shifting attention from concrete matters of biblical interpretation to 'higher' matters of epistemology and theological prolegomena as the proper place to address the phenomena of Scripture." Such tactics may never obviate the need "to engage the evidence credibly and knowledgeably without a predetermined outcome."[144]

"Presuppositions," "preconceptions," "predetermined outcome." Such constitute, in part, the terminology of this issue.[145] To these three, Enns adds a fourth: in *Evolution of Adam* he prefaces his main discussion with a statement of his own "precommitments." These relate to his Christian faith as summed up in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and his belief in "the universal and humanly unalterable grip of both death and sin, and the work of the Savior, by the deep love and mercy of the

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theology" (15); and assumptions regarding what something bearing the title 'word of God' should look like (21).

[143] Enns, "Spinning Our Wheels: A Response to a Review of 'The Evolution of Adam'," blog, first section (Aug 14, 2012), http://www.patheos.com/blogs/peterenns/2012/08/spinning-our-wheels-a-response-to-a-review-of-the-evolution-of-adam-with-apologies-to-those-with-a-500-word-1-6-minute-internet-attention-span/ (accessed 2 Feb, 2016).

[144] Ibid., under "Section 2, 'Doctrine of Scripture'."

[145] The issue of presuppositionalism versus evidentialism, as a field within apologetics, is too vast a subject to be explored here. Those methodologies, and others, are debated in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan, Counterpoints series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000). Contributors William Lane Craig, Gary R. Habermas, Paul D. Feinberg, John M. Frame, and Kelly James Clark put forward the cases for, respectively, classical apologetics, evidential apologetics, cumulative case apologetics, presuppositional apologetics, and reformed epistemology apologetics.

Father, in delivering humanity from them"; to this, Enns adds his desire to "follow the teachings of Scripture as a whole and Jesus in particular."[146]

Is a precommitment (especially in terms of a theological belief system) distinguishable from theological presuppositions or preconceptions? Whatever the possible lexical distinctions between precommitment and presupposition or preconception, one key factor is unavoidable. It is that no belief structure is beyond challenge, and any attendant precommitment, under challenge, may need to be discarded–or retained as an inviolable tenet regardless of missing or contrary evidence. In the latter case, it hardly matters whether such a stance is termed precommitment or presupposition; practically speaking, they are open to the same objections (or commendations).[147]

5.2 Frame and the Deductive Approach

On this issue, Frame plants his stake firmly:

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[146] Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, x-xi.

[147] Perhaps Enns realises this, despite his careful choice of terminology. In his "Response to R. Albert Mohler Jr.," (*Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, 60-61), Enns faults Mohler for arguing his case through "unexamined assertions"–"premises," "a priori commitments that Mohler claims are clearly derived from Scripture's 'teaching' about itself." In other words, using a dogmatic, 'top down' method to build doctrine. Enns continues: "I am not criticizing Mohler simply for *having* philosophical precommitments–we all do. I am criticizing him for treating them as self-evident and beyond dispute, not open to scrutiny or refinement, even when they can be shown to be inadequate and obscurantist." Three points should be noted. First, it is clear that Enns is here using 'precommitments' as equivalent to 'preconceptions' of the kind that he has elsewhere suggested should be suspended, as noted above. Second, his admission to having his own precommitments is consequently an admission to having preconceptions. Third, in suggesting that Mohler ought to hold his precommitments "open to scrutiny or refinement," would Enns apply the same to himself? That is, is his precommitment to the Christian faith also open to scrutiny or refinement? Indeed, the gospel to which Enns is precommitted is attested only in the very Scriptures that he believes are thoroughly enculturated; if he is prepared to yield some traditional biblical beliefs on the basis of contrary extrabiblical evidence, he can only cling to others as a stubborn *a priori* or be prepared to yield them too, should evidence so indicate. Even the internal evidence may provide difficulties for him (Jesus' apparent deception, for example, in Jn 7:8, 10; is Enns willing to admit deception on the part of the Lord, or will his precommitments override the surface biblical evidence?).

> I believe the inductive method … is a faulty method for determining the character of Scripture. Of course, Scripture contains 'difficulties,' problems, apparent errors. But what role should these play in our formulation of the doctrine of Scripture?[148]

The statement occurs in his chapter, "The Phenomena of Scripture," indicating the ineluctable connection between biblical phenomena and the inductive method. Correspondingly, Frame's previous chapter, "The Inerrancy of Scripture," sets forth the approach that he plainly acknowledges as "deductive": inerrancy, he declares, is derived "as a conclusion from Scripture's teaching about itself."[149] Yet in his review of McGowan's *Divine Spiration* (referred to above), Frame *disputes* McGowan's charge that inerrantism is deductivist![150] Is Frame here at odds with himself?

Perhaps his seemingly contradictory statements can be harmonised. In one sense, inerrancy *is* deduced (or implied)–from another doctrine, viz. "the doctrine that God cannot speak untruth."[151] But Frame believes it is not to be faulted on that ground, for "deductions or implications of biblical doctrines have the same authority as those doctrines themselves," provided those deductions are correct.[152] Frame provides an example.

> To breathe out words is to speak. To say that God breathes out errors is to say that he speaks errors. That is biblically impossible. God does not lie (Titus 1:2), and he does not make mistakes (Heb. 4:12). So he speaks only truth.[153]

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[148] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 178.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid., 550.

[151] Ibid., 545.

[152] Ibid., 546. Here Frame appeals to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1.6 (*Doctrine of the Word*, 545).

[153] Ibid., 547. The logic is impeccable, but the argument is not unassailable. Less conservative evangelicals do not deny the consistent and perfect truthfulness of God himself; the issue revolves around the degree of identity between the divine mind and the human words of Scripture.

Inerrancy, in Frame's view is just another word for truth.[154] And since it is an *explicit* teaching of the Bible that God's word is truth, inerrancy, by extension, is an actual teaching of the Bible and "not just a human judgment about what God cannot do."[155] This being the case, inerrancy is not *merely* an inference,[156] not merely a deduction. "Inerrantism judges the nature of the Scriptures from what Scripture says about itself"–an inductive understanding based on the textual phenomena–"and from what it says about God's character."[157]

Thus, in Frame's view an *inductive* study of the Scriptures can contribute to understanding the basic nature of Scripture.[158] But it needs not to be stressed. The more important point seems to be that Scripture bears witness to itself: "the authority of Scripture is a doctrine of the Christian faith … like the deity of Christ, justification by faith, and sacrificial atonement. To prove such doctrines, Christians go to Scripture." A doctrine of Scripture must therefore be built from Scripture's own self-witness. And the evidence for Scripture's claims regarding its own authority are "furnished through the presuppositions that come from, among other things, our religious convictions."

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[154] In the context of "inerrancy," Frame uses the term "truth" in the propositional sense. Scripture is inerrant, or true, in this sense, in addition to being true in both the metaphysical and the ethical sense (Ibid., 170).

[155] Ibid., 546-47.

[156] Ibid., 546.

[157] Ibid., 550.

[158] So also Warfield (*Inspiration and Authority*, 205; see also the discussion in van Bemmelen, *Issues*, 213-21); Wayne Grudem, "Scripture's Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 44.

There is circularity here, and Frame admits it. "It is impossible to avoid circularity of a sort when one is arguing on behalf of an *ultimate criterion*."[159]

But of what relevance is this to Enns's inductivism? For Enns, too, admits to "precommitments" which, as shown above, really amount to presuppositions. With Frame, he begins from a platform of faith and a belief that Scripture is the word of God. Does Frame's deductivism gain him any advantage in the pressing question that remains: *What about the phenomena*?

5.3 Frame and the Phenomena of Scripture

Frame devotes one chapter to the question of phenomena. Upon what principles does he deal with the broad issue, and are these principles built upon his deductivist approach? He begins by acknowledging the inductivists' charge that "if we take the phenomena seriously … we will not be able to conclude that Scripture is inerrant." But, replies Frame, all biblical doctrines are beset by problems. The doctrine of God's sovereignty, the doctrine of the Trinity, the paradox of Christ's dual nature: none are without difficulty, but we do not thereby reject them. In fact, it is "the very nature of Christian faith to believe God's Word *despite* the existence of unresolved difficulties."[160] Consequently, withholding judgment until the problems are solved is an improper theological methodology. We walk by faith, not by sight.[161] In other

[159] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 441 (emphasis in original). Note also: "Scripture is our chief authority for the doctrine of God, of sin, of Christ, of salvation; it must also be our chief authority for the doctrine of Scripture" (p. 102n3).

[160] Ibid., 178. Warfield makes the same point in *Inspiration and Authority*, 215-16.

[161] *Doctrine of the Word*, 179.

words, withholding judgment may actually indicate a lack of faith, through a refusal to positively commit oneself to trusting God's word.

This seems reasonable: every doctrine has inherent difficulties. But the solution seems too easy, and one wonders whether Frame has confused 'difficulty' with 'mystery'? That could be urged as the case with the three examples that Frame mentions (God's sovereignty, the Trinity, Christ's dual nature). The difficulties of the phenomena are of an entirely different category: they (in many cases) do not relate to things we cannot see or that we cannot comprehend but to the things we *do* see. The latter would include apparently contradictory texts and similarities between ANE texts and biblical texts; in other words, the problems that Enns has raised.

Nevertheless, having launched his argument from a consideration of Christian doctrine in general, Frame then concludes it with direct reference to the phenomena: "We must believe [God's word], despite what we may be tempted to believe through an inductive examination of the phenomena."[162] But it is not an automatic step from one to the other, and Frame has failed to recognise this. Theological problems with *accepted, established* doctrines are not the same thing as factual discrepancies. Nor with any of Enns's three issues. One might expect Enns to cry "Foul" against this argument.

But Frame is not finished:

> If Scripture's claim to be the Word of God were itself problematic, and then we discovered from the phenomena that the Bible text is full of unsolved problems, we might well reconsider our initial assumption. But … no one can fairly doubt that Scripture *claims* to be God's written Word.[163]

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid (emphasis in original).

Here, Frame falls back on his foundational argument: Scripture *is* God's Word written. This personal Word from God is the means by which he rules his church. "Given the pervasiveness of this biblical teaching, we cannot question it on the basis of problems found in the phenomena."[164] Perhaps Frame is correct in claiming that inerrancy is not *merely* an inference (as noted, above); but it becomes evident that ultimately, unambiguously, the case must be maintained by deduction.

If the first principle upon which Frame builds his case against the inductivist focus on phenomena is defensive, the second is offensive. Problems exist. They ought to be dealt with (since to ignore the phenomena is to ignore the Word itself). But in dealing with them,

> we must not revert to intellectual autonomy … assuming that human reason serves as the final criterion of truth. Rather, we should study the problems in faith, presupposing that God is real and that he has given us his personal words in Scripture. His Word, not our own wisdom, is to be our ultimate standard.[165]

For Frame, the circularity and presuppositionalism involved here are not to be avoided. What lifts this position above the alternative (intellectual autonomy) is that God's personal words themselves assure us of where the truth lies. This may seem to be fideistic. It is not, for Frame is not opposed to reason. The crucial point is simply that reason, like our sight and hearing, can be distorted by sin. Reason is limited simply because it is creaturely. "To deny this limitation is to deny the ultimacy of God's thought and to assert human autonomy in its place."[166]

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[164] Ibid., 179-80.

[165] Ibid., 180.

[166] Ibid., 22, 25.

It may be argued, *contra* Frame, that the phenomena of Scripture as much as the so-called didactic statements constitute the words that God has given us in Scripture. That is, the inductivist, as much as the deductivist, may claim to be dealing with Scripture *as the Word of God*. However much he may be suggesting a reorientation of perspective, this is clearly Enns's perception of his own position, as already noted.

But it is one thing to admit there are difficulties, "things hard to understand" (2 Pet 3:16); it is quite another to conclude that Scripture does not, in effect, tell us the truth about the origin of our world, wrongly implies (at times) that other gods really exist, presents ANE myths clothed in Jewish garb as actual events of history, presents a messy disunity,[167] and evinces apostolic interpretive methods stemming more from the adoption of human traditions than of divine inspiration. The several claims noted in the preceding sentence are not the *necessary* conclusions of an inductivist approach. But the deductivist is less likely to promote them for the simple reason that they–at least, some of them–create a tension within the overall biblical picture.

Certainly, Enns's application of the inductive approach suggests an aversion towards attempts to harmonise internal discrepancies (see. n. 129, above). As an inductivist, he is willing to accept these tensions. The 'top down' approach of the deductive method, by contrast, carries within its very fabric the tendency towards harmonisation, for its broad foundational biblical beliefs are derived by comparing text with text and bringing them together as a consistent whole.

[167] "What the diversity of the Bible tells us is that there is no superficial unity to the Bible. Portions of the Bible are in tension with each other. … "The messiness of the Old Testament … is a source of embarrassment for some …" Enns, *Inspiration*, 108-09.

Frame, for his part, admits that there are problems, but that these must be studied in faith, and will assuredly look different when approached from that perspective. They may test our faith, but "they do not carry anywhere near the weight of God's self-witness."[168] Frame is blunt. "We have problems with Scripture for two reasons: finitude and sin."[169] Our finitude bars us from knowing completely God's world and the course of nature and history. We are limited in our understanding of distant cultures and times, and of ancient poetry and literary practices. Additionally, sinners "repress" the truth (Romans 1); sometimes believers think like unbelievers, ascribing authority to a liberal scholarship that is committed to reading the Bible like any other book.[170] He concludes: "The difference between liberal Bible critics [does he here include progressive evangelicals?] and believing Christians is not merely academic, a difference in point of view; nor is it merely a difference in presupposition … It is a moral difference."[171] There Frame's argument ends.

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[168] *Doctrine of the Word*, 180. In his discussion of particular problems raised by Enns, Frame concedes genuine difficulty in two places. The first is in connection with theological diversity. Here Frame deals specifically with three examples that Enns provides, examples that "seem to point" in a direction away from traditional views of Scripture (*Doctrine of the Word*, 508-09 [Appendix J]). After examining the three examples, Frame concludes that the second and third raise no problems for the traditional view. Regarding the first, Frame sees "at least an apparent contradiction as to whether the Passover lamb should be roasted or boiled," and is unable to suggest a solution. A second area of difficulty is in Enns's third challenge, taken as a whole. Frame commences his treatment of this issue by stating that "many of us have been perplexed at some of these [NT] interpretations [of OT texts]" (p. 511). Frame does not interact with the specific examples Enns presents. Instead, he simply notes that there are "better ways of dealing with these examples," and refers the reader to available literature on the subject (p. 512n15); see also Frame's response to Enns in Appendix J of *Doctrine of the Word*, discussed here in Chapter 3, sec. 5.

[169] Ibid.

[170] Ibid., 180-81.

[171] Ibid., 182.

5.4 Comparative Evaluation of the Two Methodologies

Enns and Frame demonstrate respectively an inductive 'bottom up' and deductive 'top down' approach to understanding the nature of Scripture. The first begins from an appeal to the 'phenomena': what you see is what you have. Apparent contradictions are likely truly contradictions; evident disharmony is evidence of disharmony. The nature and character of Scripture is properly assessed only if the phenomena are accorded their rightful place and allowed to contribute materially to a doctrine of Scripture; indeed, their primacy must be sufficient to allow them to contradict preexisting doctrine.[172] Thus, Enns begins with the human writers. In their humanity, they were bound by their cultural mores, myths and modes of thought. If Enns owns the concept that the Spirit of inspiration was potent to raise them above their cultures, to teach them what they could not know by human endeavour, he provides no solid hint of it.

Frame believes this 'bottom up' approach is mistaken, for those who so understand the Scriptures then "have to deal with the problem of how God can reveal himself authoritatively in such writings."[173] It is fundamental to Frame's thesis to accept that "Scripture … should be treated as nothing less than God's personal word." And God's words "are not the subject of criticism."[174] Where Enns begins with the human writers, Frame begins with the so-called didactic statements of Scripture: what

[172] The application of these two opposing methodologies in biblical discussions and their particular relevance to the divide between conservative and progressive theologians was recognised by Warfield. Warfield, like Frame, *broadly speaking* defended the deductive approach and opposed the other. See his *Inspiration and Authority*, 205-07, 223.

[173] Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 140.

[174] Ibid., 7, 4.

does the Bible explicitly, clearly, and directly teach about its own nature? These statements are sacrosanct; where any phenomena appear to be in conflict with the didactic statements, the former must yield.

The two writers seem not only to be employing different methodologies but also to be working from very different vantage points. Whereas Enns need only point out problems,[175] Frame has a position both to establish and to defend. The establishing of his position–a systematic construction of a doctrine of Scripture–becomes at the same time the platform of defence against any opposing views. This is evident from the material already presented here. Frame's presuppositionalism, his emphasis on God's word as his act of speaking (which can only be without error), his understanding of God's word as truth, his recognition that sinners "repress" the truth–all these derive from his system and are brought into service to counter the inductivism of Enns.

Enns, by contrast, has no need for an elaborate system or complex argument. While the phenomena may themselves be systematised, they do not need to be made to conform to a predetermined system of theology. He simply lays before the reader certain facts, asking that preconceptions be laid aside and the data examined. But his apparent advantage may in some instances prove a handicap. Some facts are not well explained apart from a context. For example, the seeming harshness of some of the punishments that God inflicted upon individuals and upon the Jewish nation can only rightly be evaluated by placing them within a much broader theological picture. This suggests that biblical facts–phenomena–are *best* explained with reference to an overarching biblical context and to the intermeshing of various theological

[175] He also offers a way of working through these 'problems'–via the incarnational analogy–but that solution (such as it is) is not relevant to the immediate point being made here.

considerations the formulation of which are the particular provenance of systematic theologians.[176]

Is it the case, then, that Frame's deductive approach is simply typical of a systematic theologian and Enns's more typical of a biblical scholar? Certainly, the systematic theologian is, by the nature of his/her task, concerned with exposing an "over-all, unified understanding of Scripture."[177] This cannot be done without seeking to harmonise seemingly divergent texts, a task that is of less concern to the exegete. But it is very difficult to be certain if this is a likely basis on which to explain the differences between the methodologies of Frame and Enns. Not all systematic theologies are written by conservative evangelicals and the field of exegetical and biblical studies has had its share of very conservative scholars.[178] Whatever the chosen field of theology, the scholar brings to it a pre-existing theological perspective. Despite their honest endeavours, scholars would be less than human (or more than human!) were they to bring a consistent impartiality to their task.

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[176] So Carson, "Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, 24: "hard cases make not only bad law but bad theology[; thus] one should not give *priority* to them in the articulation of doctrine, even though each one must be thoughtfully considered."

[177] Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," *Westminster Theological Journal* 38, no. 3 (Spring 1976): 295.

[178] While most systematic theologies appear to emerge from more conservative branches of evangelicalism, there have been exceptions. Examples include Stanley J. Grenz (1994), Robert W. Jenson (1997-1999), Wolfhart Pannenberg (1991-2009), and Andrew W. Thistelton (2015). Michael F. Bird's *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013) is a rare example of a systematic theology written by a biblical scholar rather than a systematic theologian. A list of very conservative contemporary biblical scholars would include such names as Gregory K. Beale, Daniel I. Block, Darrel L. Bock, Craig L. Blomberg, Donald A. Carson, Eugene H. Merrill, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr, Andreas J. Köstenberger, Moisés Silva, Willem VanGemeren, and more. These conservative biblical scholars all are, or have been, members of the Evangelical Theological Society, membership of which requires a signed commitment to uphold an inerrancy stance.

And if the human theologian John Frame had, at some point in his career, chosen to be a biblical rather than a systematic scholar, would his conclusions on the nature of Scripture have been less conservative than they now are? No one can say.

If there is such a thing as a theological *weltanschauung*, then even the inductivist brings this to the theological table. This would be consistent with Frame's insistence that some measure of circularity is always present when arguing on behalf of ultimate criteria: one *begins* with assumptions. Enns, indeed, admits to the "precommitments" that he brings with him as he reads Scripture. On the other hand, no systematic theologian will decry the value of inductive reasoning, for it is necessary in all proper exegesis. Frame believes the inductive approach "is a faulty method for determining the *character of Scripture*."[179] But this is not a claim that deduction is involved in every aspect of the theological task. In what measure the two methodologies are to be combined may simply be something that each interpreter must decide as they see fit.

Finally, one may consider the place and function of a 'foundation' in the two methodologies represented by Frame and Enns. It seems clear enough that the deductivist first builds a foundation derived from the seemingly undisputed claims of Scripture–that God is holy, righteous and good; that there is a divine lawgiver; that the world was created by Yahweh; that Jesus came from God; etc. Upon that foundation the material derived from other texts is laid. Should subsequent material be found that is not easy to incorporate into the structure–so-called 'problem' texts– it may need to

[179] *Doctrine of the Word*, 178 (emphasis supplied).

be laid aside for the time being. Perhaps a place will later be found for it. Whatever the case, the foundation remains in place.

Scripture states, for example, that "the LORD is righteous in all his ways, gracious in all his works" (Ps 145:17). Such an unambiguous statement, deemed by the Christian church to be the overwhelming testimony of Scripture, forms part of the foundation of biblical belief. It is an essential, integral part of biblical truth. There are passages in the Word that seem to belie this understanding of God: the imprecatory psalms; the divine order to slay the Midianites, Canaanites, and others; the death penalty required of a blasphemer; etc. The deductivist will not permit these 'materials' to topple the foundation. A way is sought for them to be slotted into the structure as it exists. Such texts form part of the kaleidoscope of information that Scripture provides about God and the world, but they are understood *from the perspective of* pre-existing doctrinal formulations.

For the deductivist, there is a multi-faceted foundation. Whatever is found in Scripture must be able to be incorporated into that structure. This could be seen as one implication of all Scripture being inspired (2 Tim 3:16). So, however problematic or discomforting the imprecatory psalms or the command to slay the Canaanites, for the deductivist these texts are not permitted to exist independent of the overall biblical picture: they do not obtain in some kind of theological parallel universe. They must be seen as somehow in harmony with the biblical concept of a God who is righteous in all his ways and who does *all* things well (Mk 7:37).

If this fairly (if only partially) describes the deductive approach to reading Scripture, it is tempting to describe the inductive approach in antithetical terms. But this would be a mistake. The inductivist, too, assuming there is a similar commitment

to the orthodox creeds of Christendom, will accept that there must be a foundation. She, too, works from within a biblical paradigm: there is a Creator God; this God is righteous in all his ways; Jesus is our resurrected Lord; there is sin and there is a judgment. Where the inductivist differs from the deductivist is in what she does with those texts that do not seem to fit neatly into the foundation. Specifically, the inductivist may claim that such texts simply do not belong in the system. They belong, to be sure, *in Scripture*; as such they form part of a larger theological edifice. But they do not belong in the more limited foundation of timeless biblical truths. They exist or function in Scripture as theological aberrations possibly, or as witness to God's accommodation to culture and belief. Theological equivalents to evolutionary vestigial organs, they bear witness to what once was, but they no longer function in the living corpus of Christian belief and practice.

Thus Enns claims that certain biblical texts portray a God who exists alongside other (lesser) gods.[180] For Enns, the foundation of essential biblical truths is inviolably monotheistic. The 'polytheistic' texts exist (and are permitted to remain) in Scripture as vestigial statements that have no practical relevance to proper theological understanding today. The deductivist, on the other hand, will attempt to incorporate the same texts within the foundation. He must therefore interpret those texts in such a way that they will harmonize with the many texts that portray a one-God world and universe.

In one sense, then, there is no purely inductive or deductive approach. The inductivist accepts, and works with a foundation that may, in fact, differ little from that

[180] *Inspiration*, 98-102.

accepted by the deductivist. The deductivist, in turn, has formulated his foundation by an inductivist approach, building from the phenomena of Scripture.

The two terms may be cautiously employed to identify a particular theologian's broad method. But ultimately one must simply recognize that some individuals are comfortable with accepting incongruities in Scripture and being willing to allow some texts to be disqualified from participation; others prefer to understand that every biblical text is to be placed upon the foundational texts and must be seen as an integral part of the overall message and substance of Scripture.

6. Summary of Findings

To this point, the present chapter has sought to uncover the fundamental differences between two approaches to understanding the nature of Scripture, as represented by Peter Enns and John Frame. The significant findings of this chapter will be presented in point form, considering each author *vis-à-vis* the other. Following this, some proposals and suggestions for further research will be offered. The latter are offered separately from the "Summary of Findings" in order to preserve clarity of presentation.

6.1 The Inspired Word of God

To begin with, problems attend the phrase "Word of God." For Frame, the words to be found in the Bible are, in the truest sense, God's words. By this he does not mean they are the holy language which presumably characterises communication between the members of the Trinity. He means that the Bible contains God's personal words to us. In Enns, "word of God" is used much more loosely, and usually

synonymous with "the Bible."[181] The relationship between God's speaking and the written words that constitute Scripture is not elucidated. Enns's characterisation of Scripture as the "word of God" or "God's word" is an affirmation that this book has its ultimate origin in God. This, of course, allows considerable room for theological manoeuvre. This is so because of the practical and historical gap that exists between the initial revelation–whenever there was any revelation at all, a matter that Enns does not address–and the writing of the word.

A second question emerges from the first: what is the relationship between the word of God as originally 'spoken' and the words as found in the Bible? To Frame, the relationship is very close. There is an identity between the divine word and the human words that is created by the work of inspiration. Furthermore, God's relationship with his people is established and maintained as a covenant, and that covenant is with every successive generation. It follows necessarily from this that the terms and principles of the covenant and its giver *must be written* and, by logical implication, must faithfully convey the meaning and intent of the original, spoken terms of the covenant.

With Enns, inspiration is a more elusive concept. It is noteworthy that in a book that carries "inspiration" in its title, the author nowhere attempts a definition of inspiration, indeed, hardly ever employs the word.[182] It is not just that Enns does not explicate his understanding of inspiration; a rigorously thought-through doctrine of inspiration is simply unnecessary for his purposes. It is required only that one observe

[181] The "w" in "word of God" and "God's word" is not capitalised in Enns as it generally is in Frame.

[182] Tellingly, even in the "Glossary," where words such as *hermeneutics*, *general revelation*, and *special revelation* appear, *inspiration* is absent.

the way Scripture behaves–its "creatureliness,"[183] the tension of its theological diversity, its thoroughly enculturated qualities–to recognise the ubiquitous human marks and embrace this evidence of its incarnated nature.[184]

6.2 The Incarnational Analogy: The Broad Concept

The two authors differ in their acceptance and use of the incarnational analogy. There is some degree of analogy, in Frame's view, but he is loath to press the analogy. To the degree that it does exist, however, it witnesses to a stark truth: "the Word in *Scripture is God come in human form*; it is an incarnation. The Bible is *both* Creator and creature, as Jesus is both God and man."[185] Further, and as a logical corollary, "in this incarnate form the Word of God loses none of its truth and perfection."[186]

By contrast, the incarnational analogy is foundational to Enns's system. What this model indicates, he believes, is that the God who incarnated himself as a human being in first-century Palestine, who lowered himself to be human "through and through," likewise gets "down and dirty" to speak to us in Scripture. Whether considering the non-uniqueness of the OT Scriptures vis-à-vis other ANE documents, the variability of the strands of thought in OT theology, or the thoroughly Second-Temple methodology of the NT writers, what is *seen* in the biblical record is evidence of, and best explained through, the incarnational model. As Christ became God *with us*,

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[183] Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 144.

[184] Ironically, in his subsequent *Evolution of Adam*, Enns does directly broach the question of inspiration (143, 93-950). It is, again, an 'enculturated' view of inspiration that eschews discussion of either the process or the locus of inspiration.

[185] *Doctrine of the Word*, 407.

[186] Ibid., 409

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adopting the appearance, culture, and thought world of a first-century Jew, so did God accommodate his word to meet the people where they were. What is seen in the Bible, then, is a thoroughly "enculturated" word.[187] Enns seems disinclined to discuss what it means for Scripture to be the *divine* Word of God at the same time as being a human document. This provokes the conclusion that, for Enns, the incarnational analogy is essentially the concept of accommodation: as God accommodated himself in Jesus to become a first-century Jew, so he accommodated himself in Scripture to produce an enculturated word.

6.3 The Incarnational Analogy: The Question of Detail

Whether embracing the incarnational analogy with rigour or restraint, neither Enns nor Frame have attempted to tease out details that might inhere in the analogy. Enns's apparent reluctance to do so might be explained on the basis of his stated focus. His intention is to demonstrate that the human marks are everywhere present in the Bible. Its enculturated qualities, the humanness of its themes and thoughts, its identity with ANE culture, its disparate theologies–all these find their parallel, their justification, and their explanation in God's accommodating his ultimate revelation to human beings in a very human Jesus.

Enns's failure to treat the incarnational analogy in more detail must be seen as just that. This is because the very essence of the incarnation was a *union* of two natures; orthodox Christology understands them as 'indivisible'. Enns clearly accepts this orthodox understanding, since he elsewhere states his adherence to the Christian

[187] Enns, *Inspiration*, 43.

faith as summed up in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.[188] Yet he proceeds on the basis that a near-exclusive focus on the human 'aspect' of Scripture is sufficient to reach a balanced understanding of the Bible's essential nature and message. In other words, the whole may be understood by the part. Logically and theologically, such a position is problematic. It is no defence to point out that the very meaning of the incarnation is that God became *human* and that the focus of attention may legitimately be on the human manifestations of Christ's nature. Paul emphasises that "*God* was *manifested* in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16). That statement is itself not entirely perspicuous. But however it is to be understood, it excludes positing a wholistic explanation of the words and acts and nature of Christ other than through the prism of his divinity. The manifestation of divinity was evidently not to be eclipsed by Christ's humanity.

Frame's reticence to expand upon the analogy is less explicable, given his interest in building a detailed and systematic doctrine of Scripture. His reluctance seems to stem, in part, from a respect for the mysterious nature of the incarnation of Christ and of the danger to Christology of applying the concept of incarnation to an impersonal word.[189] Yet Frame also acknowledges the mysterious nature of Scripture. The mystery is two-fold. On the one hand, there is mystery in some of the subjects that the Bible teaches or implies.[190] There is also mystery in how the Holy Spirit worked as he inspired the Bible.[191] The mysterious nature of Scripture, rather than invalidating

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[188] See n. 146, above.

[189] While Frame has not expressed his reticence in such words, he has stated his basic agreement with McGowan on the matter, whose objections run along those lines.

[190] Frame lists a number of these in his treatment of "Theological Problems" (*Doctrine of the Word,* 184).

[191] Ibid., 618.

the idea of an analogy between Scripture and the incarnation, can be seen as consistent with it. It is puzzling that Frame did not explore this aspect further.

He is concerned, in addition, that the integrity of orthodox Christology might suffer if the analogy is pressed. In any case, Frame's system relies on alternative arguments both to establish the divine authority of the biblical text and to deny that this authority is in any sense reduced by the humanity of that same text.

6.4 The Locus of Inspiration in the Text

Though differing so markedly in their methodologies and conclusions, ironically both scholars share a focus on the text almost to the exclusion of consideration of the Holy Spirit's role in inspiration. Enns is concerned with the text that confronts us. What we see in Scripture, how Scripture behaves, is determinative of its nature. This focus allows him to deal with the text itself, following Enlightenment principles of literary study. Doing so also allows him to compare the biblical text with other ANE documents. Frame likewise is fixated on the text. This focus flows quite naturally from his systematic treatment of the *word* of God, while it is *necessitated* by his commitment to inerrancy as an inviolable doctrine of Scripture.

There is no question but that the text is important. We must deal with the text; and, perhaps more importantly, the text must deal with us. But the present topic of research is 'inspiration' and, as has been argued here, that cannot be rightly understood (to the degree that it can ever be 'rightly understood') without a far greater consideration of the Holy Spirit's role than either Enns or Frame have acknowledged. It must be considered a possibility that both scholars' strong emphasis on the text has contributed to a corresponding lack of emphasis on the vital function of the Holy Spirit

in inspiration. Implications of the importance of the Holy Spirit to this subject will constitute a major part of the proposals offered in the following chapter.

6.5 The Inductive-Deductive Methodologies, Presuppositions, and 'Precommitments'

Frame and Enns have adopted two quite different stances in their approach to problematic texts. These two perspectives result in two contrasting methodologies that are usually denoted as either deductive or inductive. The first, preferred by Frame, is a 'top down' approach that finds stability in a broad foundational understanding of Scriptural truths; 'problem' texts are evaluated against this foundation and, as far as possible, aligned with pre-existing theological understandings. The 'bottom up' inductive method that characterises Enns's scholarly work evaluates individual biblical texts on their own merit. Any tension a particular text might introduce against another, or even again 'established' biblical doctrine, is allowed to remain without forcing the need to harmonise it with existing understandings.

Inductivists (in particular) speak of the 'phenomena' of Scripture. By this is meant that the interpreter of the Bible must grapple with what is actually *seen* in its pages. One must not dilute or distort the clear import of any text in order to align it with any prior theological understanding or system. Yet it would not be correct to associate the idea of biblical phenomena with the inductive method alone, since even the most widely accepted doctrines of Scripture were originally formulated on the basis of the phenomena of Scripture. Thus Frame believes an inductive approach is sometimes valid; but, *contra* Enns, it is not acceptable as a method for determining the *character* of Scripture. It is here, especially, that the divergence between Frame's and Enns's bibliologies is most apparent. For in Enns's view, the tensions and

discrepancies that are so often to be discovered in the Bible are, indeed, part of the very character of Scripture. And this is so, because Scripture reflects the character of God, a God who accommodates himself and his message to the intellectual and cultural mores, and the human weaknesses, of the time.

If it is the case that one cannot associate the concept of 'phenomena' with only one of these methodologies, the same is true of the function of a prior foundation of biblical belief. Both Enns and Frame work from their chosen foundation. The more critical observation relates to how each scholar relates problematic texts to that foundation. For Frame, since all Scripture is inspired and every text therefore inerrant, every text is intrinsically in harmony with the foundation, even if that harmony is not yet apparent. For Enns, some texts may be accepted as *not* aligning with the foundation: they bear witness, perhaps, to God's way of speaking to fallible and weak human minds, but they do not represent or reflect the eternal truths that constitute the foundation he accepts.

Finally, if the preceding comments have any validity they would suggest caution in concluding that the widely divergent understanding that Frame and Enns have of the nature of Scripture is entirely the result of their respective methodologies. It may be closer to the mark to suggest that one's precommitments determine the application of any particular methodology at any particular moment. Enns, for example, has concluded that some form of Darwinian evolution has been occurring in the history of life on earth. As with many others, he accepts the integrity of the science that appears to demonstrate this. But his precommitment to the existence of God forbids him from extending his acceptance of scientific observations to the point that

he denies the presence of God in the evolutionary process. That precommitment, which is part of his ‘foundation’, is the guiding force behind his methodology.

Obviously, a precommitment or presupposition can be modified as further evidence comes to light; there would seem to be an interplay between presupposition and methodology, and who is sufficient to determine exactly when and how these operate and whether the interplay is the same in all people? Ultimately, only God is able to judge whether one has rightly appropriated their gifts of intellect and spirit as they have sought to understand Scripture. Enns and Frame have at least shown us that there are two quite different paths that may be followed in seeking to understand the nature of God’s Word. Ordinary believers–those whom Enns claimed to be writing for–are more likely to evaluate the two theologians less on their methodologies than on their conclusions.

The preceding summary points, in the first place, to the conclusion that a not inconsiderable gulf exists between two scholars who both claim to be evangelical. More important, however, is the realisation that a standard evangelical doctrine of Scripture appears to be elusive. To this date, certainly, one does not exist. The following chapter, the Conclusion, will draw together the threads of this research, and suggest specific areas to which future research might profitably be directed.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research in this thesis has attempted to grapple with a topic that has bedeviled evangelical theologians for well over a century: the nature and function of biblical inspiration. Since the late 1800s, three 'waves' in the 'Bible wars' have been evident, occurring in the late nineteenth century, the mid-twentieth century, and the early twenty-first century. This paper has focused on the most recent of these, examining the work of two theologians, Peter Enns and John Frame, whose views represent strongly divergent approaches to the issue of biblical inspiration.

The essential thrust of chapters One through Four will now be summarised. Areas for further research will then be suggested, following which some general concluding statements will be offered.

1. General Summary of Findings

A brief historical survey found that matters relating to biblical inspiration were not a significant concern for the Protestant reformers. From the eighteenth century onwards, however, a combination of historical and theological forces, namely, the Enlightenment, theological Liberalism, and Darwinism, resulted in new assessments of the nature of Scripture. Within the Christian church, liberal scholars challenged long held understandings relating to the divine authorship of Scripture. Their views were opposed by the branch of Christianity that came to identify itself as evangelical. By the middle of the twentieth century, disagreement as to the nature, authority, and divine inspiration of the Scriptures had become apparent. Internecine discussions in the early years of the twenty-first century suggest that consensus seems unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Two recent publications, Peter Enns's *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* and John Frame's *Doctrine of the Word of God* represent polar opposites of evangelical understandings of Scripture. These two publications have been the focus of the present dissertation, with a view to elucidating issues in the ongoing so-called evangelical Bible Wars and exposing areas that may require further study.

In *Inspiration*, Enns articulated three issues, or challenges, that he believes evangelicals have not handled well. These issues relate to Scripture's uniqueness, its integrity, and its interpretation. The way to understand all three of these challenges, according to Enns, is through the incarnational analogy. The example of Jesus Christ demonstrates God's way of communication: he enters the messiness of human history, identifying completely with human beings and their modes of thought. The Old Testament demonstrates an accommodated revelation: each of the three challenges Enns presents simply exemplify, in his judgment, a divine revelatory principle that would reach its apotheosis in the incarnation of Jesus.

By contrast, theologian John Frame sets forth a conservative, inerrantist position. For Frame, God's lordship is crucial to understanding the nature of his Word, which always reflects God's lordship qualities of control, authority, and presence. It reflects also God's personhood: God's Word comes to us as a personal word, and is to be accepted as though God himself were standing before us and speaking directly to us. Since God himself always speaks only the truth, his personal Word as found in Scripture must also be considered as consistently truthful, that is, inerrant. Frame deals directly with Enns's three challenges and finds that, for the most part, they do not constitute the serious challenge that Enns imputes to them. Even where there are

undeniable difficulties, as with how the NT writers sometimes cite the OT, the issue is far more nuanced than Enns suggests, and there are, in Frame's view, better ways of dealing with it.

In attempting a comparative assessment of these two writers' works, this dissertation selected two broad aspects: first, the incarnational analogy and how it might be able to elucidate an understanding of the nature of Scripture and, secondly, the contrasting deductive and inductive methodologies.

It was found that Enns has clearly described one aspect of the incarnation, namely, the fact that God has drawn near to his children. God drew near in Christ, who came as a first century Jew; similarly he came near in the revelations of Scripture, which reflects the customs, concerns, and culture of the ancient Near East. It was also found that Enns had practically nothing to say about the divine aspect of incarnation. That might not have been his purpose–which was to demonstrate how God enters the "messiness of history"–but it is judged here that any treatment or application of the incarnation that focusses on just one side of it to the virtual exclusion of the other cannot fail to result in a skewed understanding. The Christological controversies in the early church amply demonstrate that danger. This assessment is valid because Enns repeatedly claims to be offering a synthesis by which the nature of Scripture might be understood.

Frame, by contrast, strongly emphasises the divine aspect of Scripture, and shows that Scripture itself explicitly demands this emphasis. While the human aspect is not denied, there is nevertheless reason to claim that Frame passes too quickly over the very real difficulties that the so-called 'phenomena' of Scripture present. Frame defends his position on this point via his 'top down' deductive approach to Scripture.

Scripture testifies to its own divinity; the phenomena cannot be permitted to overturn this fundamental understanding.

Enns's 'bottom-up' inductive method entails allowing the phenomena of Scripture–the "diversity," the evident discrepancies, the revelatory accommodations–to inform a doctrine of Scripture. Preconceived ideas of what Scripture is (derived from deductive reasoning) must be laid aside; how Scripture actually behaves is determinative.

In both cases, the method is applied to the *text* of Scripture. Enns is concerned with determining how Scripture "behaves" and forming conclusions regarding inspiration on that basis. The possibility that the Spirit of inspiration might have been able to lift the biblical writers above their own culture, in some way able to convey through them truths beyond their personal understanding is not addressed. Frame likewise eschews any real focus on the Spirit's work upon the mind of the biblical writer, preferring instead to focus on an inspired text that, as originally written, is free from error. This, of course, carries the implication of a divine power acting upon the writer, but Frame declines to consider in any detail what it means for a *person* to be inspired and what effect that might have upon the text.

2. Suggestions for Further Research

2.1 The incarnational analogy

The incarnational analogy invites deeper reflection than many contemporary theologians seem willing to accord it. Enns is to be commended for at least being willing to consider its implications for theology when others decline to do so. As noted earlier (Chapter Four, sec. 4.2.2), however, one criticism of Enns's treatment of

the analogy relates to how an overemphasis on God's nearness can, ironically, make him effectively distant from the revelatory process. The antidote to this imbalance may lie in understanding that when God comes near, his divine presence and influence, though accommodated to the human situation and weakness, is not compromised; instead, the divine presence elevates that which it touches. When Jesus spoke, receptive hearts burned within and the mind was given power to understand what it did not previously understand (Lk 24:32, 45).

Thus, a doctrine of inspiration that truly recognises an analogy with the incarnation of Jesus Christ must consider more carefully what the nearness of God really means in terms of its impact upon the inspired writer.

2.2 The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Inspiration of the *Person*

There is a need to place greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit's work in the inspiration of the person. As noted above (sec. 1, "General Summary of Findings"), neither Enns nor Frame accorded much attention to this aspect of inspiration. This would seem to be less an oversight or the product of space constraints than the understanding that the *text* is paramount. Consequently, the Holy Spirit's role relates (if at all) to the production of a text.

While it is valid to speak of an inspired text (as inerrantists, in particular, do), that text is the outworking of the Spirit's prior activity in the mind of the human writer. Because that divine activity is prior, a proper understanding of the character of the text depends upon a proper understanding (as far as this is possible) of that divine activity from which it sprang. This must be so unless one is to posit a substantial gap between the *activity* of inspiration (that is, the Spirit's work in the mind) and the *product* of

inspiration (that is, the text). But if there is such a gap, the activity of inspiration becomes virtually pointless vis-à-vis the text.

Further research could consider whether locating inspiration in the person rather than in the text weakens or strengthens a 'high' view of Scripture. Rather than understanding inspiration as the 'breathing out' of a text, one could suggest that the Holy Spirit's 'breathing' into a human mind (cf. Ez. 2:2) equally well explains–perhaps *better* explains–and allows the concept of a truly 'concursive' work. If it is understood that this being "moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:21) does not dehumanise the recipient of even the most exalted revelations, then certain human lapses, such as memory fails, need not be seen as impugning the truthfulness of God. Arguably, understanding inspiration as being primarily the breathing out of a *text* cannot easily accommodate this condition. This suggested understanding might also explain why the content (and not just the intent) of a passage of Scripture can be considered as being divinely revealed even while containing evidence of human lapses in minor details.

Focusing on the activity of the Spirit may also provide different grounds for an analogy between inspiration and the incarnation of Christ. Whatever value lies in considering an analogy between the text of Scripture and the person of Jesus, seeking an ontological analogy between an object and a person is in some ways problematic. Helpful insights may be available in exploring the analogy between the means God used to bring forth both the incarnated Word and the written Word: that is, through the activity of the Spirit. Such an investigation would be consistent with the emphasis previously noted: that the activity of the Spirit in inspiration produced a resulting text that is then considered inspired. The biblical statements relating to the Holy Spirit's

activity in various stages of the incarnation seem to support the validity of such an enquiry.

2.3 The Prophetic Aspect of Inspiration

There needs also to be a more thoroughgoing investigation into the prophetic, revelatory quality of inspiration. This grows out of the previous suggestion. Scripture makes the connection between the Holy Spirit and the prophetic word when it speaks of "the spirit of prophecy" (Rev 19:10; 22:9; 1 Pet 1:10-12; 2 Pet 1:19-21). What *is* the connection between prophecy and inspiration? The detailed content in many of the biblical narratives (especially those of the Old Testament) hints at something more than 'mere' theological enlightenment, to something more than an elevated understanding (however divine its origin).

How, for example, was the biblical writer made aware of the details relating to the fleeing of the Syrian soldiers before dawn and before the arrival of the lepers (2 Kings 7:6-7)? Neither the lepers nor the Israelites within the city walls were aware of them. Are they fictional details, a fleshing out of the core historical account, or were they somehow conveyed to the biblical writer through inspiration? If the latter, does this suggest that the process of inspiration has a de facto prophetic element?

While both Old and New Testament scholars accept that the biblical narratives were based on sources, further investigation may reveal that many details of these narratives are not well accounted for by this means. This may suggest that significant details of the biblical text owe their origin either to imagination or to a revelatory experience that is virtually indistinguishable from the prophetic. Scholarly investigation into this aspect of the biblical narratives has the potential to further illuminate scholarly understanding of inspiration.

3. Concluding Remarks: The Concept of Mystery

To ponder the subject of divine inspiration is to ponder something that is inherently mysterious, for it concerns the inscrutable activity of the invisible Spirit of God (Jn 3:8) upon unseen minds. Theologians have expended considerable effort–and not without justification–in expounding what they believe they know of inspiration. There has been much less willingness to confess that the precise manner in which the Holy Spirit engaged the mind of the biblical writer, or the biblical character, is often indeterminable. Such a confession has the potential to bear fruit not only in an appropriate humility but in the surprising revelation that the very mystery of it all bespeaks a higher view of inspiration, a higher conception of God's involvement in the production of the Scriptures than we had previously entertained. For the more we emphasise the human element of Scripture, the more, surely, we are attempting to dispel the mystery. Conversely, the fact of the mystery–and it is a fact–bespeaks a divine presence behind and within the text, a divine presence that ought to force from our lips the confession of Job: "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:3).

The mysteriousness that adheres to Scripture is not limited to the matter of inspiration. There are implications for all that has to do with Scripture itself, with the truths it contains, and (above all) of the God it partially but powerfully reveals. The mysteriousness that is, or should be, evident in Scripture is actually evident in all God's works. More specifically, *this mysteriousness often manifests itself as contradiction*. It is not always easy to align Scripture's unambiguous 'didactic' statements about God's righteousness (Ps 145:17), his perfection (Ps 18:30), his justice (Deut 32:4), or his tender mercy towards even the animal creation (Ps 145:9), with the

evidence that confronts us in the nitty gritty episodes of life and in the noticeable works of the natural world. And in his word. There, too, one may find episodes that seem to run counter to our expectations of God and his word–expectations both created and confounded by that word.

It is not only natural, but laudable for the reader of Scripture to seek to understand its mysteries (Prov 25:2; Deut 29:29). Seeming contradictions may dissolve before the light that results from earnest enquiry. But it is not the voice of faith that triumphantly proclaims a theological "theory of everything." Even science has not achieved that; should we expect it in respect to a revelation from him whose ways are higher than our ways, whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts?

We must never lose sight of the profound paradox of revelation: the God who speaks with a "loud voice" at the same time surrounds himself with "cloud, and the thick darkness" (Deut 5:22). This is inspiration's impenetrable irony. If the incarnational analogy has anything to teach us, it is not that God in Scripture has so accommodated himself to the human condition that the divine is scarcely discernible; rather, it is that God has revealed himself in certain mystery, yet with mysterious certainty. The glory that is veiled is glory nonetheless; indeed, it is glory all the more. If it is the "*glory* of kings to search out a matter," that glory lies not in seeking to tear from God the mystery that surrounds his revealed presence, but in perceiving that his revealed presence is surrounded with mystery. When it comes to biblical revelation, as with the divine Revealer himself, it may well be that, in the end, our own glory may lie less in proclaiming what we know as in confessing what we *don't* know. *How* the things of Scripture were revealed and recorded may be one of those secrets that "belong to the LORD our God." Thankfully, *what* has been revealed belongs "to us and

to our children" and may be known with sufficient certainty as to lead us to life eternal in Christ the Lord.

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