The following statement comes from Dr. John White, chairman of the Westminster Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, April 15, 2008:

I wish to report to the Westminster Theological Seminary community that the Institutional Personnel Committee (IPC) has determined to meet in executive session in order to carry out its mandate given by the WTS board on March 26, 2008. The IPC, therefore, will report to the institution and broader community through its chairman, board member Rev. Dr. Charles McGowan. Please keep the IPC committee in your prayers as they carry out their mandate, and as they release any information and documentation on timing they determine.

Furthermore, inasmuch as theological and procedural documentation has been before the board, the members of the IPC, and the faculty for several months, and in interest of theological clarity, educational growth and institutional transparency, I have requested that the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Carl Trueman, ask the faculty to share several key documents with all interested parties:

1. The official theological documents produced out of theological discussions over the last two and a half years, which address the theology of *Inspiration and Incarnation*.
2. Any explanatory preface regarding changes that the committee have made to their statements, in light of the discussions which those documents have generated.
3. The Edgar-Kelly Motion and the associated Minority Report.

I have also asked the President, Rev. Dr. Peter A. Lillback, to release his essay, entitled, “‘The Infallible Rule of Interpretation of Scripture’: The Hermeneutical Crisis and the Westminster Standards.”

These documents are now available to interested parties at the Westminster Theological Seminary campuses in Philadelphia and Dallas, and will soon be released on the WTS website.
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Preface to "Inspiration and Incarnation: A Response"
written by the Historical and Theological Field Committee (HTFC)

This document is being released to the public as it was originally written, with the following prefatory and explanatory remarks:

1. The publication of I&I in 2005 was deeply troubling. We were concerned with both the actual content of I&I and its implications for pastoral ministry. As the document indicates, it was originally constructed as an initial elaboration of five points of concern that were first raised by the HTFC in a meeting of the faculty on February 6, 2006. The intent of this document was that it would focus our initial concerns for purposes of faculty and board discussion. The document was meant to be preliminary, and it was agreed among the faculty that members of the Hermeneutics Field Committee (HFC) would provide a written response. This document was finalized in April 2006, to go to the seminary's Board of Trustees for its May 2006 meeting. For various reasons, that schedule had to be delayed.

2. As the HFC "Reply" makes clear (in "Section Five," on p. 62), this document misquotes I&I. We erroneously attributed the phrase "the living Christ" to I&I. We acknowledge that this was a misquotation, and we have apologized, in our discussions, for this error.

3. Toward the end of our faculty discussions, William Edgar, who had signed this document and shared its concerns, changed his views. In light of that change, and in line with it, Dr. Edgar co-authored the "Edgar/Kelly Proposal."
Inspiration and Incarnation
A Response
The Historical and Theological Field Committee

This document is formulated by the Historical and Theological Field Committee (HTFC) for the Faculty Theological Fellowship (FTF). It is, in the main, our response to the book, *Inspiration and Incarnation* (I&I). It is also, tangentially, a response to the “Proposed Statement on Scripture by the Biblical Studies Department” (PS). This document has been approved by and represents the views of the undersigned at the end of the document.

In the February 6, 2006 FTF meeting, the HTFC raised five fundamental concerns regarding I&I as a whole. Those concerns, listed in what the HTFC considers to be their order of importance, are:

1) a doctrine of Scripture that diverges from the classic Reformation doctrine, in particular the tradition of Old Princeton and Westminster and specifically, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF), chapter 1;
2) a reductionistic Incarnational model;
3) a Post-Conservative Evangelical (PCE) approach to the discipline of theology;
4) a lack of clarity;
5) the appearance of speaking for the entire faculty.

The present document is designed to supplement and illustrate the above basic concerns outlined in the initial presentation, focusing on the foundational theological and hermeneutical problems that appear to us to bring I&I into conflict with WCF, chapter 1. Our primary focus, therefore, will be on (1)-(3) above, with some reference to (4) as well.

This expression of our concerns is not to say that the book is without value. A concern “not to shirk the difficult questions” (R. D. Wilson), such as those addressed in it, is in the WTS tradition. For instance, various interpretive strategies used by the NT authors have long raised questions for readers and need to be addressed. Also, the book is helpful in alerting uninformed readers to some of the historical data that biblical scholars have to wrestle with in understanding the biblical documents in their original settings. Further, its Glossary at the end provides much useful information, particularly for others than the OT scholar. Its strengths, however, are overshadowed by the following concerns.

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2 I.e., where and when Old Princeton is consistent with WCF I.
3 Because the "Proposed Statement on Scripture by the Biblical Studies Department" of 10/19/2005 (PS) approaches its subject matter primarily psychologically, there is little to which to respond directly. That is, our concerns are not with attitudes toward Scripture. It is good, therefore, that PS sees itself as "Pre-committed..., awed..., bound to be diligent..., convinced..., aware..., grateful..., and confident..." Just how these attitudes are expressed is of central concern. Because, as well, the concerns below are made with reference to the doctrine of Scripture, and not specifically to our attitudes toward Scripture, I&I will be our central concern, with tangential reference, at points, to PS.
The concerns of the HTFC can be stated under two broad categories, categories that are in keeping with the book’s title. These two broad categories include subdivisions as well, and are listed in order of importance. I. **Inspiration**: It appears to the HTFC that I&I compromises the doctrine of Scripture as presented in WCF I. The two particular points to be made in this regard focus on the divine authorship of Scripture, and on its unity. II. **Incarnation**: It seems to us that the Incarnational model advanced in I&I is confused at best, and serves to contribute to I. There are two concerns relative to this confusion. The first concern is illustrated in the notion of apostolic hermeneutics presented in I&I. The second concern is the apparent affinity with post-conservative evangelicalism of I&I. If II is true, then the Incarnational model utilized in I&I contributes to the incompatibility of I&I with the doctrine of Scripture as presented in WCF I (specifically, at least, WCF 1 4/5).

**I. Inspiration: Divine Authorship and the Unity of Scripture**

The initial focus of the HTFC is on the doctrinal (and methodological) formulations offered in I&I. This concern is parallel to the announced purpose of I&I in the opening sentence of the first chapter:

> The purpose of this book is to bring an evangelical doctrine of Scripture into conversation with the implications generated by some important themes in modern biblical scholarship—particularly Old Testament scholarship—over the past 150 years (13; emphasis added).

One of the main focuses of the book, in terms of its own stated purpose, reflected in its title is that it is *doctrinal*. What I&I undertakes, as one of its primary objectives, enters into the specific domain and concerns of systematic theology. The book is clear: doctrinal implications are one of its central concerns. Though we understand that I&I hopes to help strengthen confidence in the Bible in the face of certain difficulties encountered within it, in this undertaking the book itself raises important doctrinal concerns which create serious problems and, therefore, which we feel must be addressed.

I&I continues,

> In my view, however, what is needed is not simply for evangelicals to work in these areas, but to engage in the *doctrinal implications* that work in these areas raises (13; emphasis original).

I&I focuses precisely on evangelicals who want to maintain “a vibrant and reverent doctrine of Scripture...” (13; emphasis added). In this focus, we ask, what is it about a traditional evangelical doctrine of Scripture that I&I is eager to affirm? I&I says,

> ...I am very eager to affirm that many evangelical instincts are correct and should be maintained, for example, the conviction that the Bible is *ultimately from God and that it is God’s gift to the church*. Any theories concerning Scripture that do not
arise from these fundamental *instincts* are unacceptable (13-14; emphasis added).\(^4\)

In articulating what I&I means by “doctrine,” fundamental *instincts* (as opposed to exegetical conclusions?) seem somehow primary. But regardless of precisely how I&I understands the nature of doctrine,\(^5\) the focus of the book is on the formulation of an improved doctrine of Scripture, specifically on implications of the problems it discusses for the doctrine of Scripture. This focus, in the way that it is expressed and worked out, is a deep concern to the HTFC.

Along with our general concern, what becomes a more particular matter of concern with respect to the methodology employed in I&I arises when I&I adds comments to the effect that,

...my aim is to allow the collective evidence to affect not just how we understand a biblical passage or story here and there within the parameters of earlier doctrinal formulations. Rather, I want to move *beyond that* [emphasis added] by allowing the evidence to affect how we think about what Scripture as a whole *is* [emphasis original] (15).

This statement raises a number of troubling questions. For example, what “earlier formulations” are in view here? Why is the very thing I&I wants to “reassess” (i.e., an evangelical doctrine of Scripture) not ever set out or expressed? Precisely in what sense does I&I envision “moving beyond” previous doctrinal formulations in coming to an (always provisional) account of what “Scripture as a whole” is? Perhaps I&I doesn’t mean to encompass all previous doctrines of Scripture, such as what we find at Old Princeton and Westminster, but then it would be necessary to clarify the “that” of “beyond that” from the start.

Given the focus on a “reassessment” of the doctrine of Scripture (14), central and crucial problems become evident. The proposals of I&I with respect to the doctrine of Scripture imply various denials of the historic, Reformed doctrine of Scripture. These denials emerge in a number of ways.

**I.1 Divine Authorship** - First, it seems to the HTFC that I&I effectively denies, in that it does not presuppose in its argumentation, that Scripture is *foundationally* and *essentially* divine. There seems to be a fundamental incoherence between what I&I offers and what is affirmed in WCF.

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\(^4\)The language of something being “ultimately from God” and “God’s gift to the church” is fuzzy at best in that it can accrue to an almost infinite number of things. In that sense, it is not an affirmation of the church’s historic understanding of inspiration.

\(^5\)This is one illustration of basic ambiguity (see #4 on p. 1 of this document) in I&I. Is doctrine the settled result of exegesis, as expressed normatively in confessional symbols and elaborated by systematic theology, or is doctrine a basic “instinct” internal to the believer or believing community? Are confessions, which express doctrine, really the expression of basic instincts? Are doctrines religious feelings or instincts set forth in speech (cf. Schleiermacher)? Is doctrine the socially and linguistically embedded expression of basic religious instinct (cf. analogous to Lindbeck’s Post-Liberal proposal)? If not, why not? This ambiguity proves quite unhelpful to the reader.
I/4. It is worth noting that in WCF I, there is no mention of the human authors of Scripture. This is not an oversight in the Confession; it is not that the Reformers and their progeny did not recognize the human element of Scripture. It is not that they were not privy to extra-biblical sources and other cultural, contextual and human elements. Rather, it is in keeping with the testimony of Scripture itself about itself that the WCF affirms that Scripture is foundationally and essentially divine (though contingently, secondarily and truly human).

For the Reformed, God was the author of Scripture, and men were the ministers, used by God, to write God’s words down. Scripture’s author is God, who uses “actuaries” or “tabularies” to write His words, who are themselves instrumental secondary authors. Reformed thought has been careful to see God as the primary author, and men as instrumental secondary authors. And, if instruments, then what men write down is as much God’s own words as if He had written it down without human mediation (a point that will be mentioned below with respect to Kuyper’s discussion of an Incarnational analogy). So, WCF I/4 notes that Scripture's author is God, not God and man. “The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof…” This notion of divine authorship is in keeping with the Scripture’s notion of itself, i.e., that it is theopneustos (“God-breathed,” 2 Tim 3:16); it is not theo- and anthropopneustos.

This means for the WCF (and Reformed theology faithful to it) that the doctrine of Scripture is to be formulated and framed only according to itself as God’s word (i.e., its self-witness). According to Richard Muller:

The entire discussion [of the causes of Scripture] appears to be an outgrowth of the language of Scripture as the self-authenticating and self-interpreting ultimate norm for faith and practice - and, therefore, the sole norm for the framing of a doctrine of Scripture.

That such seems to be denied in I&I is attested to, for example, in the statement that we need to determine what the Bible as a whole is “on the evidence that comes from within the Bible itself, as well as from the world surrounding the Bible.” (15; emphasis added).

I.1.a Scripture’s Self-Witness - Second, and building on the first point, I&I’s proposals with respect to “evidence” do not presuppose the truth of WCF I/4, but rather lay out a methodology

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6Therefore, it is difficult to reconcile I&I, especially with respect to sections 4 and 5 of WCF I, with PS in the latter’s assertion that it can uphold, "the affirmations outlined in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 1."

7Muller observes that: “(T)he Protestant scholastics [which includes the Divines at Westminster] looked both to the medieval scholastic tradition and to the works of the Reformers. From the medieval teachers they received the definition of God as the auctor principalis sive primarius Scripturae and of human beings, the prophets and apostles, as secondary authors or instruments. From the Reformers they received no new language, but they did find confirmation of the point in the repeated identification of Scripture as God’s Word, as given by God.” Richard A. Muller, Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics : The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725, 4 volumes (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2003), II.226.

8Muller, PRRD, II.230 (emphasis added).
that, if applied, would deny it. It does this by allowing cultural phenomena, *rather than Scripture’s self-witness*, to establish a *doctrine* of Scripture. The “evidence” in view is *both* internal to Scripture and external to Scripture (i.e., the surrounding cultural milieu). In other words, I&I reasons that we must be willing to “engage the evidence and adjust our doctrine [of Scripture] accordingly.” (14; emphasis added). I&I also adds, “Rather, I want to move beyond [understanding stories within the parameters of earlier doctrinal formulations] by allowing the evidence [emphasis added] to affect how we think about what Scripture essentially is. This methodology incorporates cultural phenomena in order to determine what the Bible is, rather than affirming Scripture as the *sole norm* for the framing of a doctrine of Scripture.

Elsewhere I&I says, “What the Bible is must be understood in light of the cultural context in which it was given” (41). While it is appropriate and important to seek to understand biblical passages in terms of their cultural context, it is inappropriate, in a Reformed, confessional context, to let those phenomena determine what the Bible is (i.e., a doctrine of Scripture). Such a methodology denies that we determine our doctrine of Scripture in terms of its self-witness alone; it denies that a *doctrine* of Scripture is gleaned by virtue of what Scripture says about itself.

It is difficult to see how the previous statements found in I&I can be made compatible with the classical Reformed position, as understood, for example, by B.B. Warfield.

If they are trustworthy teachers of doctrine and if they held and taught this doctrine (i.e., of inspiration), then this doctrine is true, and is to be accepted and acted upon as true by us all. In that case, *any objections brought against the doctrine from other spheres of enquiry are inoperative*; it being a settled logical principle that so long as the proper evidence by which a proposition is established remains unrefuted, all so-called objections [based on the data or “phenomena” of Scripture] brought against it [Scripture’s self-witness] pass out of the category of objections to its truth into the category of difficulties to be adjusted to it... The really decisive question among Christian scholars (among whom alone, it would seem, could a question of inspiration be profitably discussed), is thus seen to be, “What does an exact and scientific exegesis determine to be the Biblical doctrine of Inspiration?”

I&I’s espoused methodology seems to fall under Warfield’s criticism because the relationship between the doctrine of Scripture and its phenomena has been fundamentally reversed. For I&I, contrary to Reformed orthodoxy (as represented not only by Warfield, but by Kuyper, Bavinck, R. D. Wilson, Young and others), it is not the biblical self-witness alone which determines the doctrine of Scripture. In fact, I&I is virtually silent on that self-witness and its role in articulating a biblical doctrine of Scripture. Instead, I&I is explicit: it is data deriving from the human-ness of the biblical authors and of what they write as well as extra-biblical evidence that is to determine what Scripture, as a whole, is as God’s word. Entirely missing, even implicitly called

into question, in I&I is the note sounded by the apostle in his assessment of his own preaching, an assessment that is directly applicable to Scripture as a whole, that, ultimately considered, it is to be received "not as the word of man, but as it is truly (avlhqw/j) the word of God" (1 Thess. 2:13).

I.1.b Unqualified Provisionality - (This will be discussed again under III so is simply introduced here). Third, and following from the previous two points, it seems clear that because of the notion of "evidence" given in I&I, and of the intrinsic humanness of Scripture, the concept of truth, and its content, appear to us to be anti-confessional. For example, in the estimate of I&I "...attempts to articulate what God's word is have a necessarily provisional dimension" (49, "a provisional quality,"167). This seems to indict confessional and Reformed theology, which has thought it has something final to say on what the Bible is - it is the very Word of God. And this affirmation has meant that the words given were themselves God's words, in the text itself. As we will note below, in the context of the rest of the book, this attitude toward truth seems consistent with post-conservative evangelical (PCE) notions of theology (as in J. Franke, for example). Elsewhere the fundamentally provisional nature of all doctrinal assertions is expressed again: "One would have to be somewhat self-absorbed to think he or she can have anything final to say about what the Bible is and what we should do with it" (167). It is difficult to see how one can hold to the theopneustos of Scripture and affirm such unqualified provisionality.

To summarize, the consensus of Reformed thought has always been that Scripture is the Word of God; God is its primary author. Problems, interpretive and otherwise, are understood and worked out within that overarching context, so that evidential and extra-biblical phenomena are never meant to determine the doctrine of Scripture. In that sense, just how one handles extra-biblical material (important as those data are for other matters) is irrelevant to the doctrine of Scripture. However one chooses to work with those issues, the Reformed have insisted that, when working with Scripture, one is handling the very Word of God written. Thus, the doctrine of Scripture is something that can be gleaned only from Scripture itself. To move, even slightly, beyond Scripture in order to re-formulate a doctrine of Scripture is to take away from Scripture's authority.

I.2 The Unity of Scripture - Fourth, and this seems to follow from the analysis above with respect to WCF I/4, HTFC believes that the unity of Scripture, as expressed in WCF 1/5, is also at variance with certain affirmations of I&I. Following on WCF I/4 and its affirmation of one primary author of Scripture is the notion, in I/5, of the unity and perfection of Scripture. I&I affirms a unity of Scripture, but the unity affirmed in I&I does not reside in the text of Scripture itself. Rather unity is to be found only in the person of Christ.

10Is this what PS means when it states that it is "Aware that we, like all other fallen human beings are quite capable of erroneous interpretation..."?
11Note, for example, the same emphasis from Karl Barth. To use just one example, according to Barth, "...a biblical theology can never consist in more than a series of attempted approximations, a collection of individual exegeses" (Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics; Eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance [2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975]), I/2, 483).
12The notion of unity present in I&I is also present in Barth. In his affirmation that Scripture is the Word of God, Barth is also opposed to any notion of a unity to the text of Scripture. Rather, for Barth, unity resides in God's revelation, which, for Barth, is only and always in Christ; see
For example, I&I implies that the meaning of Scripture passages can be ascertained by virtue of what a particular passage says, regardless of what the rest of Scripture, taken as a unified whole, might say. So, in trying to understand the meaning of a passage in Gen 6:1-4 for example, I&I says:

(1) God creates everything good; (2) wickedness and evil enter; (3) God reacts (emphasis original) by intending to wipe out everything he made. Of course, it is possible to say that God already anticipated step 3 in step 1, that is, he knew what was going to happen, and so step 2 does not take him by surprise. That may be so, but that is only a guess that goes far beyond what we read (emphasis added). The story is told in such a way... (104).

Is it really “only a guess” that God knew what was going to happen? If all that we have is "the story," then perhaps. But, we only have "the story" if the individual, human authors of Scripture, as well as the immediate context of the passage, take precedence over (or even determine) what the divine Author is saying. It is “only a guess” if “the story” is so locked into its own culture and context as to be indeterminate with respect to anything else that other passages, with their own authors, contexts, circumstances, etc. say. So also, I&I says:

So, for the Old Testament to speak of God as changing his mind means that this is his choice for how he wants us to know him. ...Christian prayer...operates on the assumption that our words will have some effect on God. But do they really? That is for God to know, not us.... There are diverse portrayals of God in the Old Testament. He is, on the one hand, powerful, one who knows things before they happen and who causes things to happen, one who is in complete control. On the other hand, he finds things out, he can feel grieved about things that happen, he changes his mind. If we allow either of these dimensions to override the other, we set aside part of God’s word in an effort to defend him, which is somewhat of a self-contradiction (106-07).

But what if we allow all dimensions to speak? Do we then conclude with some kind of human, “such-is-life,” result that God changes his mind and that he doesn’t? Are we simply left with contextual, human, evidential contradiction because of what the Bible says in one place, with one author and context, compared to what it says in another, with another author and context? Conclusions of this nature surely cannot be helpful to evangelicals for their doctrine of Scripture.

Further, I&I states:

Church Dogmatics, 1/2, 482f.

13It should be said here that one of the chief characteristics of Reformed and evangelical thought is that it has sought, not to “set aside” any part of God’s word with respect to the matters at hand, but rather to show how all of these elements cohere. To think otherwise is to think that Reformed and evangelical theology has ignored a full-orbed doctrine of God. On the other hand, just what does I&I mean when it speaks of allowing “either of these dimensions to override the other”? Surely, in all of Reformed thought, the “dimension” of God’s sovereignty “overrides” the dimension of his covenant interaction with his people in such a way that his plan and purposes do not, and have not, changed, even from eternity.
The messiness of the Old Testament, which is a source of embarrassment for some, is actually a positive. On one level it may not help with a certain brand of apologetics, where we use the so-called perfection of the Bible to prove to nonbelievers that Christianity is true. But this method is as wrongheaded as it is to argue that Christianity is true by downplaying the humanness of Christ (109).

In Van Til’s approach, and behind him the entirety of Reformation thought, it is just the perfection of Scripture that, in part, attests it to be the word of God and constitutes it as the principium cognoscendi. Without this perfection, there can be no knowledge of anything, and certainly not of God. The natural question might come - just how do we prove to nonbelievers that Christianity is true if not by the fact of Scripture’s self-attesting perfection?

These examples indicate that I&I denies what is affirmed in WCF I/5 (emphasis added), i.e., that in Scripture we have “the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof...” Is it really the case that we do not know if prayer has some effect on God, or if God changes His mind? This leaves the question of whether an Arminian or a Reformed view of God is correct open to anyone’s particular “guess.” Not only so, it gives the impression that such debates are far from the concerns of Scripture, as those concerns are conceived in I&I. At best it indicates that such debates are so grounded in modernist notions as to be far from the concerns of the Bible.

In keeping with its denial of WCF I/5, I&I affirms that the unity of Scripture rests in its “Christotelic” focus. That is, to put the matter plainly, the unity of the Bible is found in Christ, rather than in the text of Scripture itself. According to I&I, “(T)he unity of the Bible is sought in the living Christ. It comes together in Christ “(110). This has the effect of denying the unity and coherence of the text of Scripture, referring such unity instead to the “living Christ.” I&I does give some expression to the unity of the text: “...what gives the written word its unity is not simply the words on the page, but the incarnate word who is more than simply the sum of the biblical parts” (110). In the context of this affirmation, however, the “words on the page” are those that “bear witness” to Christ. Given the rest of the context of I&I, it is difficult to separate this notion of “bearing witness” from a neo-orthodox construal of revelation. I&I’s unity, therefore, undermines the unity of biblical teaching as a whole, and so the systematic theological task as well. There is no room for such a notion in a confessionally Reformed context.

It would seem then that I&I’s notion of unity and coherence seeks to replace the unity found in Scripture (according to WCF 1/5), a unity grounded in divine authorship (1/4). This confessional unity is replaced with a notion of unity that is somehow found in the person of Christ. However, rather than Christ as the unity to Scripture, which is understood to overcome the essential, textual “messiness” of Scripture as a collection of humanly and historically conditioned docu-

14Is this what PS means when it states that it is “Confident that only in the light of Christ and the Gospel that the majestic coherence of the Old and New Testaments will be fully displayed”? 
15See, for example, Barth’s section, “Scripture as the Word of God,” Church Dogmatics, I/2, 473-537.
16See, in particular, 109-11, where this “messiness” is accented (the word is used three time)
ments, WCF sets forth a unity of Scripture that rests on inspiration, as theopneustos, and an affirmation of one primary, divine author. This affirmation, though formally present in I&I (as in Barth), is not brought to bear on the doctrine of Scripture it presents and argues. It is difficult to see how the methodological commitments present in I&I and the “doctrinal implications” it hints at allow for an affirmation of textual unity. The unity of Scripture in I&I is conditioned in such a way that it is not found in the text of Scripture itself (as a result of the primacy of divine authorship and thus of divine inspiration) but located rather in the “living” Christ. We maintain that the divine authorship of Scripture (WCF I/4) is the proper starting point for understanding the difficulties of theological diversity within the Scripture. I&I’s “living Christ” unity displaces the confessional, textual unity of Scripture. This seems inconsistent with an ex animo subscription to WCF 1/4, 5.

II. Incarnation: Analogical Heresies, Apostolic Hermeneutics, and Post-conservative Evangelicalism

In an effort to employ an Incarnational analogy with respect to Scripture, I&I rightly affirms emphatically that Jesus is “both God and man”:

... as Christ is both God and human, so is the Bible. ... Jesus is both God and human

and discussed.

17Lurking in the background of this discussion is the question: “Can I&I distinguish its view of Scripture from Barth’s?” Barth himself referred to the Bible as the Word of God. He says, “Scripture is holy and the Word of God, because by the Holy Spirit it became and will become to the Church a witness to divine revelation” (Church Dogmatics, I/2, 457). Elsewhere Barth says, “A free divine decision is made. It then comes about that the Bible, the Bible in concreto, this or that biblical context ... is taken and used as an instrument in the hand of God, i.e., it speaks to and is heard by us as the authentic witness to divine revelation and is therefore present as the Word of God” (Church Dogmatics, I/2, 530). Barth’s esteem for the Bible as Word of God is so high that he says at one point, “We have been speaking of three different forms of the Word of God and not three different Words of God. In this threefold form and not otherwise - but also as the one Word only in this threefold form - the Word of God is given to us and we must try to understand it conceptually. It is one and the same whether we understand it as revelation, Bible, or proclamation. There is no distinction of degree or value between the three forms” (Church Dogmatics, I/1, 120; emphasis added). Is this, in effect, the “high view of Scripture as the Word of God” advocated in I&I? If so, we must also remember that Barth views the essence of Scripture in the fact that it is “fallible human witness” to revelation, but not intrinsically or essentially the Word of God. In this regard, we note, unless we have missed it, that I&I nowhere clearly affirms biblical infallibility or inerrancy. Certainly it is not discussed.

18A brief word of clarification with respect to the notion of “model” and “analogy.” As it is used here, a model is designed to give an account of just how something could be true. The notion of analogy, as used here, posits a similarity between things otherwise dissimilar. An Incarnational model/analogy, then, is designed to show just how Scripture, as a divine and human document could be similar to Christ as a divine and human person. In this sense, the analogical aspect of comparison with respect to the Incarnation is primary, whereas the notion of the Incarnation as model is secondary. We will use the term “analogy,” therefore, rather than “model.”
at the same time. He is not half-God and half-human. He is not sometimes one and other times the other . . . Rather, one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, worked out as far back as the council of Chalcedon in AD 451, is that Jesus is 100 percent God and 100 percent human - at the same time.... In the same way that Jesus is - must be - both God and human, the Bible is also a divine and human book (17; emphasis original).

This is basically true (although the language of “100 percent” can be confusing). But statements of this kind do not even begin to stipulate precisely how Christ is both God and human and further how the divine and human relate. Therefore, even the statement that Christ is “both God and human” is insufficiently precise to help us apply such an analogy to Scripture. What is troubling in the discussion of I&I, is that the relation of the divine and human in the Incarnation, and thus analogically in Scripture, is confusing at best. What is not affirmed in I&I is that the locus of the unity of the divine and human in Christ is the essential divinity of the person of the Logos.

This is all the more important, since the Incarnational analogy, according to I&I, is the contextual starting point in terms of which the doctrinal formulations, proposals, reassessment, etc. in I&I proceed. I&I explicitly identifies this analogy as its starting point:

The starting point for our discussion is the following: as Christ is both God and human, so is the Bible. In other words, we are to think about the Bible in the same way that Christians think about Jesus. Jesus is not half-God and half-human. He is not sometimes one and other times the other. He is not essentially one [emphasis added] and only apparently the other (17).

The Incarnational analogy is accordingly of central significance for the formulations, proposals, etc. that are given in I&I. It is therefore critical that the Incarnational analogy as utilized in I&I avoid fundamental ambiguities or errors.

This analogical way of reflecting on Scripture’s attributes has precedence in the Reformed tradition. This tradition has, in the past, argued in a way that offers penetrating applications of the Incarnational analogy to the doctrine of inspiration. However, a couple of caveats are in order with regard to the Incarnational analogy.

First, as B. B. Warfield notes,

It has been customary among a certain school of writers to speak of the Scriptures, because thus “inspired,” as a Divine-human book, and to appeal to the analogy of Our Lord’s Divine-human personality to explain their peculiar qualities as such...But the analogy with Our Lord’s Divine-human personality may easily be pressed beyond reason. There is no hypostatic union between the Divine and human in Scripture; we cannot parallel the “inscriptionation” of the Holy Spirit and the incarnation of the Son of God. The Scriptures are merely the product of Divine and human forces working together to produce a product in the production of which the human forces work under the initiation and prevalent direction of the Divine.... Between such diverse things there can exist only a remote analogy; and, in point of fact, the analogy in the present instance amounts to no
more than that in both cases Divine and human factors are involved, though very differently.19

Any analogical use of the Incarnation, therefore, is tenuous and at best loosely illustrative. It is likely for this reason, at least, that Warfield preferred to talk of “concurrus” with respect to the Divine-human activity of inscripturation. Concurrus is typically discussed within the context of causality with respect to God’s providence, and is set against such notions as occasionalism and conservationism. Warfield used the word to highlight the fact that God used secondary causes in much of the process of inscripturation, and did not eliminate or override (occasionalism) the human elements, neither did the human elements take precedence (conservationism). It should be noted that concurrus is another model for thinking of the writing of Scripture, and in that sense is not easily included in an Incarnational analogy.

Second, and following on the first, with regard to the limitation of the analogy between incarnation and inspiration, we can never lose sight of the central point of the Incarnation, i.e., the radical centrality and essential divinity of the Logos, who (contingently, but really) assumes a human nature. But, as Warfield says, no hypostatic union of divine and human occurs in the act of inspiration.

In light of a biblical, Chalcedonian and Reformed Christology, the divine is essential and the locus of personality, and the human is contingent, dependent on the divine (yet real). At least along these lines, Christology can, if carefully and accurately applied, prove useful in demonstrating more concretely both the limitations and utility of the Incarnational analogy. Though there is no hypostatic unity with respect to the divine and human in Scripture, it is, nevertheless, (as Reformed theology has historically affirmed) the case that in Scripture the divine is essential, the human is contingent (yet real). Abraham Kuyper’s application of an Incarnational analogy is helpful in pointing out this crucial distinction.

When discussing the authority of Scripture, Kuyper reminds us that “(t)he speaker in the Holy Scripture is not a creature but God himself.”20 Kuyper notes that the Word of God can, and in fact at times does, come to creatures “without instruments (sine instrumento). This could happen, not only because of his omnipotence but also in view of the luchos.”21 Kuyper elaborates this point as follows,

In Christ and in Holy Scripture we have to do with related mysteries. In the case of Christ there is a union of divine and human factors. The same is true of Scripture; here, too, there is a primary author and a secondary author. To maintain properly the relationship between these two factors is the great work of dogmatics... Everything depends here on the right insight that the Word has become flesh in Christ and is stereotyped in Scripture.22

19Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, 162 (emphasis added).
21“OAI,” 266. Gaffin (n.66) notes that luchos refers to “to the tables on which the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments, without human mediation of any sort.”
22“OAI,”267 (emphases added).
As Gaffin comments,

The basic thrust of these passages is plain: Scripture, like Christ, is both truly human and truly divine. Yet in the case of Scripture, as for Christ, these two factors are not equally ultimate; the priority and originating initiative belongs to the divine, not the human. Specifically, the Word, in his antecedent identity as the Word, became flesh; and God is the primary author of the Bible, in distinction from the secondary human authors. This specifies the “related mysteries” of Christ and the Bible.

Thus, the priority and originating initiative belongs to the divine, not the human. And this entails that God is the primary author of Scripture, with human authorship being contingent (yet real) and secondary.

However, this necessary and central distinction—a distinction between that which is primary or essential and that which is secondary or contingent, a distinction entailed by Chalcedonian Christology and present in the Reformed tradition’s use of the Incarnational analogy—is not only absent in I&I, but is, in effect, denied at critical junctures.

II.1 Analogical Heresies

Here, then, is the concern of the HTFC with respect to the Incarnational analogy: To the extent that one’s understanding of the Incarnation is orthodox/unorthodox, to that extent will the analogy with respect to Scripture be orthodox/unorthodox.

I&I understands this concern in that it seeks to tie an orthodox view of the Incarnation to an orthodox view of Scripture. For example, in its use of an Incarnational analogy, I&I notes that we should avoid a Docetic view of Scripture. That is, as go Christological errors, so (analogically) go errors with respect to Scripture:

The ancient heresy of Docetism stated that Christ was fully divine and only seemed to be human (the Greek verb dokein [“to seem”] is the root of the word Docetism). The Council of Chalcedon rightly concluded that if Christ only appeared to be human, then the death and resurrection are not real.... when confronted with some of the problems addressed in this book, “scriptural Docetism” rears its head (18).

This concern to avoid the Docetic heresy is apparently motivated, at least in part, by the audience I&I has in view, i.e., evangelicals. It may be that there are evangelicals who tend toward a theology of Scripture that is Docetic. Given the lack of references to such people, we are simply left to guess who these Docetic evangelicals might be.

23According to Kuyper, “The Logos is incarnated in Christ, but is likewise engraved in Scripture” (“OAI,” 267, n. 37).
24“OAI,” 267 (emphasis added).
25The HTFC knows of no published evangelical who advocates a Docetic view of Scripture, although many Barthians believe this is precisely the problem of the evangelically Reformed...
To the extent that one can apply Christological heresies to aberrant views of Scripture, we agree with the concern to avoid a Docetic view of Scripture; that concern is commendable. But it seems to us (to use the categories of I&I with respect to an Incarnational/Christological analogy) that I&I is not equally concerned to avoid the problem of kenoticism with respect to Scripture.

Let us examine two statements that seem to us to indicate a kenotic view of Scripture. The problem emerges in the statement that Christ is not “essentially one [i.e., divine] and only apparently the other” (17; emphasis added). This is at best confusing, given the methodology of I&I discussed above, regardless of additional statements and qualifications that follow in the coordinating conjunctive clause. As the Son of God, Christ is essentially divine, given his preexistence as the divine Logos, and he assumes a contingent, yet true, human nature in the Incarnation. It is not helpful, even if qualified, to assert that the Son of God, as Christ incarnate, is not essentially divine, since that is precisely what he is. A denial that the Son of God is essentially divine is a fundamental tenet of kenotic Christology (since Christ could empty himself of his deity), and such a mistake made at the level of the Incarnation betrays a lack of agreement with Chalcedonian Christology and falls outside the parameters of catholic orthodoxy.

If one were to use Christological heresies to point out deficiencies in a doctrine of Scripture, the formulation could be properly restated in a couple of ways. First, “The incarnate Son of God is not merely essentially divine, and only apparently truly human.” Or to put the second clause positively, “The Son of God is not only essentially divine but is also contingently and truly human.” Chalcedon has helped us understand without ambiguity that the Son of God is the preexistent second Person of the ontological Trinity and contingently, yet truly, human, given the reality of the hypostatic union.

In other words, it is to the extent that we seek to employ an Incarnational analogy, so that we are to understand “the Bible in the same way that Christians think about Jesus” (17; emphasis added), that we are obligated to begin with the essential divinity of both the incarnate Word and the

dition. Such a concern should have been documented so that the readers are made aware of just exactly what this problem looks like in specific individuals.

26I&I does not employ the notion of “docetism” extensively with respect to one’s views of Scripture, and wisely so. To the extent that such labels (docetism and kenoticism) are meaningful within an analogical model, they may be useful. However, they are only minimally useful given the discontinuities between the divine and human in Christ, on the one hand, and the divine and human in Scripture, on the other. Nevertheless, since I&I uses such labels, we will employ them here. Here kenoticism is meant to include any notion with respect to Scripture where the divine is in some way inoperative (as, for example, in a Nestorian or Ebionite view of Christ), even if affirmed in some form. We are using it, therefore, in a less precise way than it is used with respect to the Incarnation per se. This looser usage is not inappropriate, since I&I uses the notion of “docetism” with respect to Scripture rather loosely.

27And such a fundamental oversight does not cohere well at all with the other apparent affirmations of Chalcedon in the book. Perhaps I&I is not familiar with the details of what it seeks to affirm in principle, yet denies in formulation and implication.
inscripturated Word - the precise place where WCF I begins in its discussion of Scripture. Scripture is therefore essentially divine in its origin, meaning and reliability, while remaining contingently (yet truly) human.

To the extent that the Incarnational analogy can participate in Christological heresies (and I&I believes that it can, at least to some extent) I&I offers a doctrine of Scripture analogically comparable to a kenotic Christology; Scripture seems to be empty, at least functionally, of its essential divinity. A truly Chalcedonian and Reformed Christology must affirm explicitly and at every point the full implications of essential divinity, contingent humanity and unipersonality in the God-man. A failure to affirm these entails a formulation that falls prey to some form of thinking that submerges the divinity for the sake of humanity, i.e., kenoticism.²⁸ We may not fail to state or at least clearly imply - we may not remain ambiguous about - the essential divinity and contingent, yet true, humanity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.²⁹

II.2 Apostolic Hermeneutics - This kenoticism with respect to Scripture appears when the Incarnational analogy is applied to the issue of inspiration and the NT use of the OT. The particular problem of non-functional divine authorship (i.e., an Incarnational analogy that is kenotic in function) is explicit in the discussion of “Apostolic Hermeneutics” in chapter four of I&I. Put succinctly, the functionally kenotic Incarnational analogy yields final formulations in chapter four in which divine authorship plays no role in accounting for the NT use of the OT.

I&I seems to be in a completely different theological paradigm when it speaks of the apostles as possessing “an intuitive, Spirit-led engagement” of Scripture with “minds … illumined” (160), as witnesses to the “event by which God himself determined to punctuate his covenant: Christ” (154). This language, without additional qualification and clarification not provided in the book, is in conflict with Reformed thinking on the Incarnational analogy in relation to inspiration, and seems to display basic affinity with a Barthian view of Scripture.

It is not adequate to say that “the driving force behind their Old Testament interpretation was their belief that Jesus of Nazareth was God with us and that he had been raised from the dead” (152; emphasis added). Hence, “the reality of the risen Christ drove them to read the Old Tes-

²⁸In other words, a more adequate understanding of the Incarnation would have enabled I&I to avoid a confused or misapplied Incarnational model. Orthodox Christology affirms that the human nature of Christ has no personality or subsistence of its own, but subsists only in its union with the Logos. But the same cannot be said of the divine Logos. Instead, the divine Logos is both the locus of personality in the incarnate Son, as well as the ground for the subsistence of the human nature, which itself does not exist apart from the union with the Logos. ²⁹Again, this is not to be taken in such a way that Christ did not assume a true human nature. Christ is essentially and eternally the second person of the Godhead, and his humanity is contingent, assumed, and wholly dependent upon the union with the divine Person of the Logos. It is simply not competent to assert that Christ is not essentially divine, even if the concern is to avoid Docetism (i.e., and only apparently human). We do not avoid Docetic Christology by in any way compromising the essential deity of the Son of God. Docetism is avoided by a clear affirmation that the Son of God is essentially divine in the sense that the divine Logos preexists the assumed human nature, and the preexistent divine Logos assumed a contingent, yet truly human nature, in the hypostatic union.
tament in a new way" (153; emphasis original). What else “drives” the apostolic hermeneutic? Answer: “Spirit-initiated intimacy with the crucified and risen Christ” (152; emphasis added).

So, piecing together the notions above, the thrust of this discussion of apostolic hermeneutics is that the apostles possessed an intuitive, Spirit-led engagement with Scripture based on a Spirit-initiated intimacy with Jesus. When the pneumatic category is invoked in this way, it is not with respect to the Spirit of God as the primary author and producer of Scripture; rather, the Spirit is merely the illuminator of the apostolic consciousness who leads them into fresh engagement with the OT text in light of the Christ-event.

It is at this point that I&I sees continuity with the apostolic hermeneutic and the church’s attempt to follow it. The same Spirit who leads the apostles, also leads the church in an intuitive, Spirit-illuminated acquaintance with the biblical text (and Jesus). Hence, there seems to be no substantial distinction made in I&I between apostolic interpretation and our own. This indicates that the reference to “illumination” in the case of the apostles is likely not an unfortunate terminological slip, but is a consistent outworking of I&I’s Incarnational analogy (and Barthian view of Scripture?). In other words, precisely where we would expect a discussion of the sensus plenior - the hermeneutical implication of inspiration that requires us to deal with the dual authorship of Scripture in which God is the primary author and the human agent the secondary author - we find no mention of either inspiration or the sensus plenior. In classical categories, Spirit-led illumination cannot be in any sense equated with inspiration and the divine authorship of Scripture.30 But a bona fide Incarnational analogy must account for both primary divine authorship and secondary human authorial instrumentality in the production and meaning of Scripture (with primacy given to the essentially divine origin and meaning of Scripture).

Richard Muller points out that the implications of sensus plenior, as a function of divine authorship, provided deep structures in the Protestant Scholastics’ reflections on topics pertaining to inspiration and hermeneutics. He observes,

The inspiration of Scripture appears in the debates of the seventeenth century not only as a doctrinal but also a hermeneutical issue. An inspired text can - more easily and predictably than an uninspired one - point beyond itself and its original situation. When the human author of the text is an instrumental cause and God is identified as the auctor primarius, the historical situation of the human author cannot ultimately limit the doctrinal reference of the text.31

30Old Princeton carefully distinguished between illumination and inspiration: Inspiration "differs from spiritual illumination, in that spiritual illumination is an essential element in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit common to all Christians. It never leads to the knowledge of new truth, but only to the personal discernment of the spiritual beauty and power of truth already revealed in the Scriptures...Inspiration is a special influence of the Holy Spirit peculiar to the prophets and apostles, and attending them only in the exercise of their function as accredited teachers" (A. A. Hodge, Outlines of Theology [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983 reprinted], 68-69).
31Muller, PRRD, II.254.
How would I&I’s formulation look with a robust affirmation of inspiration, dual authorship (with primacy given to the divine) and the sensus plenior in the tradition of a Reformed Incarnational analogy? It would reckon with the fact of divine authorship as the ultimate explanatory context for the way the human authors in the NT interpret the OT, with other features (e.g., historical and psychological factors) being important, yet secondary.

Abraham Kuyper again offers characteristic insight regarding the implications of a Reformed Incarnational analogy for our theology of inspiration that has decisive significance for the way the NT authors use the OT. He says that, whether or not OT or NT authors were conscious of the reality,

the Holy Spirit directed them, brought to their knowledge what they were to know, sharpened their judgments in the choice of documents and records, so that they should decide aright, and gave them a superior maturity of mind that enabled them always to choose exactly the right word. . . .

Kuyper continues,

He [the Holy Spirit] caused such thoughts, meditations, and even words to arise in their hearts as the writing of the New Testament Scripture required. And while they were writing these portions of the Holy Scripture, that one day would be the treasure of the universal Church in all ages, a fact not understood by them, but by the Holy Spirit, He so directed their thoughts as to guard them against mistakes and lead them into all truth. He foreknew what the complete New Testament Scripture ought to be, and what parts would belong to it.

Apostolic interpretation as a human activity is therefore at the same time (and essentially) divinely inspired revelation - of divine origin, character and reliability (2 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Pet. 1:20-21). I&I does not seem to apply this Reformed notion of dual authorship in the context of the most vexing of hermeneutical issues that arises from a robustly Chalcedonian and Reformed Incarnational analogy.

These insights are perfectly compatible with the thought of John Calvin on the matter. These

32Gaffin, “OAI,” 270 (emphasis added).
33“No other word is to be held as the Word of God, and given place as such in the church than what is contained first in the Law and the Prophets, then in the writings of the apostles; and the only authorized way of teaching in the church is by the prescription and standard of his Word. From this we also infer that the only thing granted to the apostles was that which the prophets had of old. They were to expound the ancient Scriptures and to show that what is taught there has been fulfilled in Christ. Yet they were not to do this except from the Lord, that is, with Christ’s Spirit as precursor in a certain manner dictating the words,” (Institutes of the Christian Religion, vol. 20 of Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics [London: SCM Press, 1960], IV.viii.8). Richard Muller explains Calvin as follows: “Calvin assumed both that Scripture was ‘dictated’ and that it was reflective of the individual style and characteristic patterns of perception belonging to its human authors. Thus…Calvin argues a verbal, both not a ‘mechanical’ inspiration” (PRRD, II.237).
theological and hermeneutical structures are resident at the deepest level of Reformed theology and hermeneutics, whether the Protestant Scholastics, Old Princeton, Old Amsterdam or Westminster comes into view.

I&I does speak of divine authorship (160); however, it seems to have no hermeneutical function in I&I and is not a central theological and hermeneutical category.34 I&I does not account for this entailment of a full-orbed, Reformed Incarnational analogy. Insofar as divine authorship is mentioned once in passing and is missing altogether as foundational in the discussion of apostolic hermeneutics in chapter four of I&I, we detect the application of a functionally kenotic Incarnational analogy that mutes the divine origin, authorship and meaning of Scripture.

Along these lines Vern Poythress offers some useful comments when warning about a neo-orthodox view of biblical interpretation. He suggests a skewed formulation that seems to us to be consistent with the approach in I&I, for which he offers a sobering warning:

But couldn’t we still stick to a single interpretation? Couldn’t we say that interpretation in the light of the human author is all that we need? Then, after we complete the interpretation, we assert that the product is, pure and simple, what God says. First, the strongest starting point of the “single interpretation” approach is its insistence on the importance of grammatical-historical exegesis. But it has now ended by hedging on one of the principles of grammatical-historical exegesis, namely the principle of taking into account the person of the author. When we come to interpreting the Bible, we must pay attention to who God is. Secondly, this view seems dangerously akin to the neo-orthodox view that when God speaks, his attributes of majesty are somehow wholly hidden under human words.35

Poythress’ remarks seem pertinent to the formulations found in I&I. This Incarnational analogy yields a doctrine of Scripture that seems to us to be consistent with a Barthian understanding of Scripture as a Spirit-led, human witness to the Christ event. And the failure in I&I to offer additional, and foundationally important, information regarding precisely how the truly human instrumentality of Scripture relates to the essential divinity of Scripture (as “breathed-out” or authored by God; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; WCF I, 4) only compounds the problem. Given Poythress’ comments, it seems to us necessary that I&I be explicit about precisely how its proposal for reformulating the doctrine of Scripture differs from a Barthian view.36

34 In his “Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse,” Westminster Theological Journal Fall (2003): 274, 279, Enns shows awareness of sensus plenior, even though he does not develop it in line with a Chalcedonian Incarnational analogy. The omission of this category in I&I suggests a basic dissatisfaction in light of the implications of its own reductionistic Incarnational analogy.
36 Troubling in this regard are the following: language akin to neo-orthodoxy’s view of Scripture is not clearly distinguished in I&I from that view. In using such language, it is crucial and necessary to articulate precisely where a Reformed and Neo-orthodox view of Scripture differ.
The failure in I&I to distinguish its doctrine of Scripture from a neo-orthodox (Barthian) view of Scripture is confusing, at best, particularly when I&I offers a theological method that is incompatible with WCF 1/4.5. And since I&I’s focus is on reformulating or reassessing the doctrine of Scripture as traditionally understood by evangelicals, it is necessary to show in sufficient detail how the formulations do not concede the neo-orthodox view of Scripture - also a (radical!) reformulation of the standard evangelical view.

To summarize, the Incarnational analogy in I&I is kenotic in function. The primacy of essential, divine authorship is not relevant to the hermeneutical task. Given the clear articulation of the Incarnational analogy in the Reformed tradition, exemplified by both Kuyper and Bavinck, it seems clear to us that the Incarnational analogy in I&I is not Chalcedonian or Reformed in any functional way. In this sense, then, the affirmation of divine authorship in I&I (160) appears to have no function in the hermeneutical and theological formulations offered in the book. There is a troubling incoherence between what I&I offers and what is affirmed in the relevant sections of the WCF.

III. Post-conservative Evangelicalism

Thus far, the concerns we have addressed in I&I have been more or less theologically or doctrinally driven. The problems addressed now, while having serious and deep theological implications, might be best placed in the context of cultural concerns. We see these concerns, not as tangential to the previous ones, but rather as perhaps providing one of the reasons why I&I’s views, discussed above, are beyond the pale of Reformed orthodoxy.

The particularly troubling cultural concern is the fact that I&I offers a doctrinal reformulation of Scripture in the language and conceptual framework that is utilized by Post-Conservative Evangelicalism. PCE positions itself theologically in such a way that it seeks to move beyond a “modern” view of Scripture (whether Liberal or Conservative formulations come into view). For instance, in the opening pages of I&I, we read the following,

Second, Enn’s endorsement of Franke’s The Character of Theology, as “self-consciously and broadly Calvinist in orientation” - a work that explicitly articulates and applies core Barthian premises to a PCE understanding of the nature and task of theology – suggests some affinity with that view. It is worth noting in addition the forthcoming work by John Franke, entitled The Promise of Postmodern Dogmatics: Karl Barth and the Future of Theology (Eerdmans, forthcoming). The title seems to indicate a positive connection in Franke’s mind between PCE dogmatics and the structural significance of Karl Barth’s theology. See also Franke’s “God Hidden and Wholly Revealed: Karl Barth, Postmodernity and Evangelical Theology,” Books and Culture: A Christian Review, 9:5 (Sept/Oct. 2003), 16-17, 40-41.

37This is not to deny that Christ is “essentially human” if we mean by essential that he lacks no properties that constitute true humanity. Rather, it is to affirm that the person of Christ is essentially divine, and the human nature that the Logos assumes is real, yet contingent, subsisting in his eternal person.

38Without arguing that I&I is consciously PCE in its formulations, if the language and conceptual framework used is identical to that used in PCE literature, then it is, consciously or not, embedded in, and thus participant with, much of what PCE wants to do.
Much of the evangelical theological landscape of the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries was dominated by a ‘battle for the Bible.’ The terms are familiar: liberal vs. conservative, modernist vs. fundamentalist, mainline vs. evangelical, progressive vs. traditionalist. Such labels may serve some purpose, but they most often serve to entrench rather than enlighten. I want to contribute to a growing opinion that what is needed is to move beyond both sides by thinking of better ways to account for some of the data, while at the same time having a vibrant, positive view of Scripture as God’s word (14-15; emphasis added).

This description of “moving beyond” the old conservative/liberal divisions appears at least seven times in I&I (14-15, 21, 47,48, 73, 107-108, 171). And this language of overcoming the modernist/fundamentalist impasse introduces an over-arching context for I&I. The desire, then, is to move beyond the previous theological impasse that separated evangelicals from liberals on the doctrine of Scripture. This forces us to ask a fundamental question: Who shares this “growing opinion” to which I&I alludes? Who else desires to move beyond the so-called conservative/liberal divide? What are the implications for this new movement?

The late Stanley Grenz and John Franke, who are together representative of a PCE approach, write as follows:

The results of the foundationalist approach of modern liberals and conservatives have been astounding. In different ways both groups have sought to respond to the challenge of the Enlightenment and rescue theology in the face of the secularist worldview of late modernity. Although the liberals and conservatives routinely dismiss each other’s work, they share the single agenda of seeking to maintain the credibility of Christianity within a culture that glorified reason and deifies science.

PCEs such as Grenz and Franke argue that the postmodern context paves the way for non-foundationist approaches to theology. This approach is thought to move us beyond the rigid theological divisions of the modern era. Grenz and Franke continue:

...a growing number of theologians are coming cognizant of the demise of foundationism in philosophy and are increasingly concerned to explore the implications of this demise for theology. They believe that theology must take seriously the postmodern critique of Enlightenment foundationalism and must capitalize on the attempts of philosophers to formulate alternatives. Convinced that the

39This same language emerges in the subtitle of the WTJ article “Apostolic Hermeneutics: Moving Beyond the Modernist Impasse.”

40Stanley Grenz and John Franke, Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), 37. It should be noted that the Grenz-Franke thesis is a repristination of Nancey Murphy’s Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda (New York, N.Y.: Continuum International Publishing Group-Trinity, 1996).
quest to move beyond foundationalism [i.e. Conservative and Liberal theologies] is crucial for theology, they draw insights for their own work from the emerging nonfoundationist theorists.\textsuperscript{41}

In critiquing the liberal and conservative doctrines of Scripture, I&I follows the same PCE method. I&I says,

It is somewhat ironic, it seems to me, that both liberal and conservatives make the same error. They both assume that something worthy of the title \textit{word of God} would look different from what we actually have. The one accents the human marks and makes them absolute. The other wishes the human marks were not as pronounced as they were. They share a similar opinion that nothing worthy of being called God’s word would look so common, so human, so recognizable (21).

I&I proposes to construct a doctrine of Scripture that will overcome both of these errors. Like the PCE theological project, it hopes to construct a doctrine that discards liberal and conservative distinctions. Here the similarity between I&I and the PCEs is \textit{more than} just language and method. I&I displays a more substantive agreement with PCEs on the nature of theological doctrines. I&I claims,

All attempts to articulate the nature of Scripture are open to examination... I firmly believe...that the Spirit of God is fully engaged in such a theological process \textit{and at the same time} that our attempts to articulate what God’s word is have a necessarily provisional dimension. To put it succinctly: the Spirit \textit{leads} the church into truth -- he does not simply drop us down in the middle of it (48-49; emphasis original).

Such a bold and unqualified statement seems to open up a host of theological problems. That Scripture is divine - is \textit{that} open to examination? That Scripture is authoritative - is \textit{that} also open to examination? This is a common theological claim consistently advanced by PCEs. Franke makes the same sort of claim in his critique of traditional confessional systematic theology. He writes,

Such an approach is characteristic among those who hold confessional statements in an absolutist fashion and claim such statements teach the “system” of doctrine contained in Scripture. The danger here is that such a procedure can hinder the ability to read the text and to listen to the Spirit in new ways.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41}Grenz and Franke, \textit{Beyond Foundationalism}, 46.
\textsuperscript{42}John Franke, \textit{The Character Of Theology: An Introduction To Its Nature, Task, And Purpose} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 135. Two things are worth noting here: first, as noted earlier (n. 36), this book has been endorsed by Enns as providing a “self-consciously and broadly Calvinistic” approach; second, Franke’s reference to “those who hold confessional statements...” is a direct reference to, and indictment of, all confessional churches and theology since the Reformation, including WTS as an institution.
Franke likewise concludes that confessions (which potentially include all doctrines) have a second-order, subordinate and provisional character. I&I argues that any doctrine of Scripture must be provisional; Franke comprehensively claims that all doctrines are provisional. In fact, as we noted earlier but do so again, I&I comments, “One would have to be somewhat self-absorbed to think he or she can have anything (emphasis added) final to say about what the Bible is and what we should do with it” (167; emphasis original). Can such a statement cohere in any sense with an ex animo subscription to WCF, I?

It is important to note that the HTFC recognizes that the catholic creeds and the Westminster Standards were formulated in various historical contexts. But the HTFC also affirms that catholic creeds and the Westminster Standards faithfully summarize the unchanging and infallible system of doctrine set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore we recognize that creeds and confessions are subordinate standards; yet there is no intrinsic incompatibility between their historically conditioned character, on the one hand, and the theologically perennial system of biblical truth that they summarize, on the other. The Westminster Standards express a theologically perennial system of biblical truth in the form of fully historical (17th century) documents. John Murray summarizes this well:

What of the consideration mentioned...that every creed is historically complexioned in language and content, that the progressive understanding of the truth of which the Confession is a conspicuous example did not terminate with 1646, and that the Confession is fallible and shows the marks of human infirmity? When the Confession is examined carefully in the light of Scripture and in relation to the demands of confessional witness in the church today, the amazing fact is that there is so little need for emendation, revision, or supplementation. And of greater importance is the fact that justifiable or necessary amendments do not affect the system of truth set forth in the Confession. In other words, the doctrine of the Confession is the doctrine that the church needs to confess and hold aloft today as much as in the 17th century.

Likewise Harvie Conn, while emphasizing the need to contextualize Reformed theology, affirmed the binding authority of historic confessions:

Creeds, as an expression of the confessional character of theologizing, are "historically situational." They are human acts of confession of God's unchanging good news, addressed to specific human cultural settings. Insofar as they reflect divine teaching they demand binding commitment from those who have made them theirs.... None of this [the contextual character of confessions] is meant to deny the continued validity of any biblical truth the confessions seek to convey. Neither do we question the right of church-

43Character of Theology, 111.
44Remember also Barth’s assertion, quoted above (n. 11), “…a biblical theology can never consist in more than a series of attempted approximations, a collection of individual exegeses.”
Contrary to the confessional Reformed tradition, the PCE agenda displays hostility towards Christian confessions as subordinate standards or normed norms (along with an uncritical appropriation of the theology of Karl Barth). Given the close association between I&I and Post-Conservative Evangelicalism, I&I seems to be endorsing, whether consciously or not, the same PCE agenda in the attempt to move beyond the divisions that previously divided conservative and liberals over the doctrine of Scripture.

Therefore, there seems to us to be a connection between the PCE method and the doctrine of Scripture set forth in I&I. It is precisely in the attempt to move beyond the Liberal/Conservative impasse that I&I comes into sharp conflict with WCF I/4. How is it possible to affirm *ex animo* that which is self-consciously to be passed beyond? Without additional clarification that is not provided in the book, the HTFC believes one cannot reasonably distinguish I&I’s basic theological orientation from the PCE project, as elaborated by Grenz and Franke. Moreover, it is not possible to subscribe *ex animo* to the WCF while maintaining a PCE theological methodology.

I&I seems to us to position itself, both rhetorically and substantively, in terms of the basic commitments outlined in popular PCE theological literature. As such, I&I is explicitly precommitted to a theological methodology that seeks to move beyond the impasse of liberal/conservative debates over the nature of Scripture. Insofar as WCF I tersely articulates a clear statement of the so-called “conservative” or “fundamentalist” theology of Scripture that lay at the heart of the Liberal/Conservative debate in the 19th and 20th centuries, we are reluctantly brought to the conclusion that I&I is committed in principle to moving beyond the biblical and Reformed view of

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47Franke, *Character of Theology*, 110-11, 135. As we have said, we wonder if I&I does not offer a doctrine of Scripture that cannot be distinguished in any meaningful sense from a Barthian, Neo-orthodox view.

48An association evidenced additionally by the endorsement, noted above, of a PCE theologian’s book.

49Along these lines it is worth noting that Old Princeton (Warfield’s *Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* and Westminster (*The Infallible Word; Thy Word is Truth*, to name no others) were at the very center of the Modernist/Fundamentalist or Liberal/Conservative debate in the 19th and 20th centuries. Likewise, it is improper to assume that the doctrine of Scripture articulated by Old Princeton and Westminster was somehow tainted by the rationalism of modernity. There is a historical and theological continuity in the Reformed doctrine of Scripture, continuity that can be traced from the early Reformers, through the post-Reformation 17th century scholastics, to Old Princeton and Westminster. For a defense of this continuity see John Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1982), 69-140.
Scripture expressed in that chapter. 50

IV. A Final Overall Concern

Finally, we are troubled by the dismissive approach that the book exhibits towards other well-respected scholarly evangelical positions with which I&I disagrees. We are also troubled that at several points those scholars who hold these views are described variously as being irresponsible and verging on the intellectually dishonest, without citing any representative names, offering any evidence for this startling claim, or attempting in any way to outline their alternative positions or to engage constructively with their arguments (e.g., 47-48, 107). To give a specific example, I&I declares, “It is a distortion of the highest order to argue that Jesus must have cleansed the temple twice” (65). This position is, in fact, held by, among others, B F Westcott, R V G Tasker, Leon Morris, D A Carson, and Andreas Köstenberger; while Craig Blomberg considers the evidence to be indecisive and Ridderbos is ambiguous. It is regrettable that I&I makes such a categorical dismissal of a position held by such respected scholars (particularly given its claim to be writing for a broadly evangelical audience) and that it does so without any interaction with the relevant arguments of those with whom I&I disagrees. This is most surprising and unfortunate, given that it simply contradicts I&I’s closing appeal for theological discussion to proceed by means of humility, along with charitable listening to, and conversation with, the positions of others (172-73).

Additional Specific Concerns 51

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50 As already indicated, Old Princeton and Westminster are centrally significant in the conservative defense of the Bible in the Modernist/Fundamentalist controversy.
51 Here we plan to discuss the issues of Genesis and myth and of theological diversity in the Old Testament.
Preamble to the Hermeneutics Field Committee’s “Reply” (HFC Reply) to the Historical-Theological Field Committee’s “Response to Peter Enns’s Inspiration and Incarnation” (HTFC Response)

While we wish to state up front that we would have preferred the original HTFC Response and the HFC Reply to have been released without prefaces or other additional material, we will take the opportunity in this preamble to declare our continuing support for our defense of I&I and its author as within the bounds of Westminster’s confessional commitments and evangelical orthodoxy.

This is not at all to deny I&I could be improved, nor that at points I&I phrases things in ways that could, if read uncharitably and in isolation from their context, be taken to imply that there are errors or contradictions in what the Bible teaches. Even the book’s author acknowledges that at points he stated things in ways that could be subject to such misinterpretation. We do continue to think, however, that a reading that is charitable and does not run against the grain of the author’s intended purpose, or isolate statements from their context, will prove the book stands well within both our commitment to the Westminster Standards, and our tradition at WTS of theologically sound, hermeneutically conscious, and missionally driven biblical interpretation. This is especially true in the light of the subsequent clarifications posted elsewhere by the author of I&I.

Other accusations against I&I may have arisen since the production of the HFC Reply, but we believe we have demonstrated the groundlessness of those implied in the HTFC Response, and that any subsequent allegations of heterodoxy are likely to be rooted in the same wrong assumptions that pervaded the original HTFC Response. We also believe we have demonstrated that the approach of I&I and the signatories of HFC is not only in continuity with the Westminster-Old Princeton tradition of biblical investigation, but also provides a theologically sound, hermeneutically conscious, and culturally sensitive path for the church to continue to speak the unchanging Word of God into the changing worlds in which we live. It is, we might add, also likely to be more effective in persuading younger and more thoughtful Christians, and certainly those whom we wish to win to Christ, who are less likely than previous generations to be persuaded by appeals to authority, to perceive the divinity of the Bible clearly and powerfully.

We do apologize for the length of our Reply, but the concerns raised in the HTFC document were serious, and demanded a serious response. We believe we have shown the innuendos and implicit or potential accusations in the HTFC Response to be without warrant, but given the large number of them, and their sweeping character, we had a lot to respond to. It is our hope that, despite their length, interested parties will read both original documents carefully.
The Hermeneutics Field Committee’s Reply to The Historical and Theological Field Committee’s “Inspiration and Incarnation: A Response”

In December of 2006 members of the Hermeneutics Field Committee (Old and New Testament Departments) presented to the Board a précis of its mandated reply to a document prepared by members of the Historical and Theological Field Committee (HTFC) in April 2006, entitled “Inspiration and Incarnation: A Response” (hereafter the HTFC Response) which delineates a critique of Peter Enns’ Inspiration and Incarnation (I&I). In that précis we not only outlined our response, but also reviewed some of the history of development, which placed the HTFC Response in the context of larger theological and personal issues that have been polarizing the faculty for some time. We will not here rehearse that historical context, but refer readers to our précis.

The purpose of this paper is thus focused specifically on the response by members of the Hermeneutics Field Committee (HFC) to the HTFC Response. Despite our historical differences, we continue to hope that we can find a way forward, either by reaching some consensus on a middle while agreeing to disagree on other issues, or at least by a restoration of mutual respect and trust. Of course, as La Rochefoucauld is alleged to have observed, we rarely think people have good sense unless they agree with us. Nevertheless the nature of our communal task requires us to acknowledge that the people who disagree with us undoubtedly have reasons for doing so. It is therefore only with reluctance that we offer this reply in written form. No purely human document is flawless; and we recognize that I&I is not devoid of weaknesses and ambiguities. And we recognize that many readers have genuine concerns about the book.

We would therefore have much preferred to keep with oral discussion, where it is far easier to acknowledge mistakes, make concessions, correct misunderstandings, re-frame ideas, and seek common ground. Further it is easier to get at what the individuals involved think is important. However, as the President has instructed us to reply forcefully with a written response, we have reluctantly complied. As a result, this document may at times be more aggressive than it perhaps should, and it may at times reflect a misapprehension of the concerns expressed in the HTFC Response, or a failure to see what is most important. We regret it deeply if this document should contribute further to the antagonism and polarization, and hope that, despite its vigorous repudiation of the charges implicit in the HTFC Response, we may nevertheless by God’s grace return to collegial conversation.

We want to begin, therefore, with a point of vigorous agreement: we share the conviction that faithfulness to the Bible as the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, is not only important but crucial. On this we totally agree. If God has not spoken, if we have no authoritative and infallibly reliable word from God, then we are left floundering in relativism. We further agree that the authority of Scripture stems solely from the fact that God is its ultimate Author. WCF I says it well:
The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

It is for that very reason, however, that we believe it is also absolutely essential that we pay the closest attention to what the Bible says and does, and that it must have the last word on every matter of faith and doctrine (WCF I.10), including what it means when it says something. In other words, it is precisely our profound conviction that the Bible and it alone is the word of God that drives our concern to understand it on its own terms. The Bible is the real and ultimate authority, and it must determine what its statements about itself mean, not some notion of what the Bible "must" say or do since it's divine. Paying close attention to the Bible is our calling, and therefore we see our defense as not only a defense of a particular book or faculty member, but a defense of an approach to the Bible that is willing to read it in accordance with its character as a genuine communication to historical people.

It is for this cause that the study of the human dimension of Scripture is indispensable. God spoke to and through real people in real contexts, and understanding those real people and real historical contexts, and how they would understand the texts that God gave them, is the essence of the interpretive task before us. Such close attention to the human contexts does not entail a de-divinization of Scripture, or imply that God does not directly intervene in human events. Nor does it imply that human authors cannot be given supernatural knowledge by supernatural means. It rather recognizes that, however knowledge from God is conveyed, it comes to and through a human author in thought forms he can understand, and according to frameworks of knowledge that are available to him in his historical context. This is why the Ancient Near East (in the case of the OT) and Second Temple Judaism and Greco-Roman Hellenism (in the case of the NT) are crucial – not that the contemporary ancient texts determine what the biblical author says, but they do bear witness to the categories that determine how the author says what he says.

This is not to imply that we think the members of the HTFC are ignorant of the historical concreteness of God’s revelation, but it surely may be acknowledged that most members of that committee are not as deeply in daily contact with the “nitty-gritty” of what the Bible actually does and says as most members of the HFC. And we conversely recognize that many of us on the HFC are not as cognizant of theological and philosophical implications of ideas as HTFC members. It is not surprising therefore, and not even ultimately undesirable, that friction should occur. The church has always made progress through such friction. What is undesirable is our present environment of distrust, even, on occasion, to the point of

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1 C. Hodge, Systematic Theology, p. 153: “The nature of inspiration is to be learnt from the Scriptures; from their didactic statements, and from their phenomena” [emphasis added].

2 Cf. G. Vos, Biblical Theology, pp 8-9: "... He has caused his revelation to take place in the milieu of the historical life of a people ... All that God has disclosed of Himself has come in response to the practical religious needs of His people as these emerged in the course of history."

3 Communication of all kinds requires a shared context of ideas, concepts, language, forms, etc., and most misinterpretations happen because of a discontinuity in the interpretive matrix of author and reader. Cf. Peter Cotterell and Max M. Turner, Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation (InterVarsity Press, 1989), 283.
accusations of dissembling, which basically cuts us off from hearing each other, and thus from making progress. In specific, it seems to us that the HTFC Response, rather than seeking a path of rapprochement or understanding, has adopted a stance of implicit accusation of disconformity to the Westminster Standards, even though little or no effort was made to elicit clarification, and asseverations to the contrary on the part of the author of I&I have been dismissed.

It has thus become difficult to continue discussion. We nevertheless hope that we can begin to communicate again by way of examining the assumptions and asseverations of the HTFC Response, which we believe to be non-representative of the open engagement with the Bible and an openness to “reformanda” that has been the hallmark of not just Westminster’s tradition but indeed the best manifestations of Reformed thought.

Our response will consist of six major sections. The first section will argue that the HTFC Response represents a genre identification mistake. It mis-reads the intention and assumptions of I&I in ways that make it appear to be a rejection of the divinity of Scripture. The author of I&I has himself acknowledged that at points he could have prevented or minimized the possibility of such misreading by phrasing things differently, but we maintain it is only by virtue of certain assumptions, maintained despite evidence to the contrary, that such a misreading continues to take place. [this corresponds to Section “a” of our précis]

The second section comprises a response to the argument from WCF I's alleged “silence” regarding the human character of Scripture, and explains why this argument is neither conclusive nor in step with later Reformed orthodox scholarship, especially in the Princeton and Dutch Calvinist traditions. There is also in this section a brief survey of the progressive attitude that has characterized scholarship within our Confessional tradition. [section b, c, and f of précis]

Section three [corresponding to section h of the précis] follows up on this historical survey by presenting the case that it is I&I, not the HTFC Response, that most faithfully represents the WCF I acknowledgment that a) the Bible itself must be the ultimate court of authority on all matters of faith and life, and b) the proof of Scripture’s divinity does not lie in a rationalistic, phenomenological demonstration, but on the Holy Spirit’s conviction of the heart (WCF I.5).

Section four will deal with certain philosophical assumptions and ideas that we believe are either wrong or misapplied, particularly with reference to the “incarnation” analogy that is the backbone of I&I’s thesis regarding the nature of the Bible. [sections d and e of précis]

The fifth major section will discuss ways in which we see the HTFC’s criticism as an effective suppression of the biblical-theological emphasis and framework that has

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4 We should here note that Prof. Enns sought to bring some clarity to his position in faculty discussions and his inaugural lecture, as well as a paper he read at ETS, all of which seem to have been functionally ignored. (Readers may also wish to read the brief interview at http://greensoylent.blogspot.com/2007/01/interview-with-dr-peter-enns.html). If charitable hearing were the goal, we think these data should at least come into play in our discussions. It is for this reason that the inaugural lecture is attached.
characterized biblical study at Westminster for the last forty years or more. Here too we will note one of the more glaring problems of the *HTFC Response*, wherein they charge *I&I* with using “Barthian” language, a charge substantiated in one place by an out-and-out *misquotation* of *I&I*, and in another by leaving out crucial elements of Enns’ presentation. The *misquotation* in particular becomes the basis of the allegation that Enns, whether he realizes it or not, has capitulated to Barth’s notion of Scripture. Obviously no case made on such a basis can be sustained. [section g]

The last section briefly discusses an item not included in the précis distributed in December – that *I&I* and its author are guilty by association, in particular with the allegedly neo-orthodox theologies of the so-called “post-conservative evangelical” movement.

Our response will close with a sketch of our positive vision for biblical studies at WTS that is faithful to the Westminster Confession, submissive to the ultimate authority of Scripture, and sensitive to its actual character and teaching, and a personal note of hope for the future.

We realize that the length of this document may be somewhat intimidating. We apologize, but the diversity of concerns addressed in the HTFC Response, and the gravity of its accusations, seems to require a detailed response, even if some redundancy is entailed from time to time.
Section One:
The Importance of Recognizing the Genre, Purpose, and Target Audience of I&I

Since the first formal faculty discussion of I&I in February ’06, a number of faculty members (including some outside of the HFC) have been of the opinion that a fundamental difficulty with the HTFC Response (first oral and now written) pertains to its reading strategy of the book. It seemed to some that the book’s purpose and target audience were not being appropriately considered in the formulation of that Response. The matter has come up on several subsequent occasions, but the HTFC apparently remain convinced that how the author intended to be understood is at best a peripheral issue, and so has minimal relevance in any “substantive” interaction with the book.

To the contrary, we feel this is a very important matter to settle, since misreading a book’s intention will result in an unfair critique. In this section, we would like first to outline the book’s intention and purpose by flagging the relevant portions of the book, especially in chapter 1, and second, to point out several instances in the early portions of the HTFC Response where the faulty reading strategy is shown to result in an unfair reading. We realize this is a fairly lengthy section, but we believe it is important to lay out the data here at the very beginning of our response.

The Purpose and Target Audience of I&I

I&I is aimed at lay readers for whom a commitment to Scripture as God’s Word is deep and non-negotiable, but for whom things like the historical context of Scripture have been posed to them as a threat to inspiration, and therefore to the Bible as being God’s word. This is a very real, and we feel often neglected, population of evangelicalism.

It is certainly true that some evangelicals have never been exposed to the type of issues discussed in I&I, and so reading the book could have a jarring affect (although we can attest that this is not a necessary scenario), but this does not mean that books like I&I should not be written. There is pastoral wisdom in not rocking a settled faith, but there is also a true pastoral obligation to settle a faith that has already been rocked. I&I is not an attempt to turn evangelicals into liberals, but to help ensure that does not happen—which has been all too common an occurrence and to which most of us can attest from personal experience. The path from conservatism to liberalism is well worn, but far less frequently has the journey been taken in reverse. We believe, therefore, that evangelical authors need to be much more intentional in assessing why this is the case and what can be done about it. It is the Reformed faith, especially as it has been expressed in the WTS tradition, that has the necessary theological depth and subtlety to address this issue in ways other traditions do not.

The audience is a popular one and so the theological paradigm that undergirds the presentation is a likewise popular (and therefore bare-bones) sketch of an incarnational

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5 A more detailed interaction with this issue may be found in Peter Enns, “Response to G. K. Beale’s Review Article of Inspiration and Incarnation by Peter Enns,” JETS 49/2 (2006): 313-15.
approach, an approach that has been articulated in various ways throughout much of the history of the Christianity,\(^6\) and very intentionally in the Reformed tradition.\(^7\) We believe this approach is particularly timely in an age of ongoing, considerable, and significant historical discoveries. Such discoveries are often made the basis of attacks on Scripture as far too “human” a book to be something divine.\(^8\) The aim of I&I is to *speak into such a context* and to undercut the widespread (often implicit) notion among evangelicals (popular and also at times academic) and of much higher critical thinking, that “too much” history is a problem. The response offered by *I&I* is “No, history is not a problem. When God spoke, he incarnated himself, and the Bible he gave us looks exactly the way he wants it to.” The incarnation of Christ is, therefore, a metaphor, of an ancient and honored pedigree, of Scripture’s full divinity and humanity. Because of the audience, the divine aspect is stated at the outset, assumed throughout, and the focus is kept on the problem area, Scripture’s “human element” (to use Warfield’s phrase).

Since the HTFC Response spends some effort in citing *I&I* directly, we shall do likewise in order to lay out more fully the relevant portions of the book. By doing so we wish to put those portions cited by the HTFC in a more accurate light and, where necessary, to correct false conclusions. Citations to *I&I* are numbered for ease of reference.

The book begins:

[1] 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 (p. 9).

This first sentence of *I&I* states that the audience is lay oriented and the discussion will involve the implications of certain data for an evangelical doctrine of Scripture. It is particularly this latter point that has caused some difficulty for some of our colleagues, as it could suggest that an overhaul of everything evangelical is in view. It is admitted that a bit more clarification here and in one or two other places early on could have obviated some difficulty, but we are convinced that more charitable attention to the clearer statements that follow in the early portions of the book should have discouraged such a negative conclusion. It should also be stressed that by “evangelical,” Enns means “evangelical,” not Reformed. An incarnational approach to Scripture is something that is developed in Reformed theology in a much richer and more intentional way than in evangelicalism broadly considered.\(^9\) A subtext to the book—although never explicitly expressed—is that a Reformed approach to these problems has something to offer evangelical readers about how in principle to

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\(^8\) For example, such an attitude is found at a crucial juncture in Dan Brown’s *The DaVinci Code* (p. 231, middle) and is the engine that drives the thinking of such immensely popular biblical scholars as Bart Ehrman.

\(^9\) The HTFC Response’s lone reference to Warfield’s hesitations on the matter is an unfortunate truncation of our rich tradition and will be addressed later in this document (Sections Two and Four).
approach the very difficult historical issues that confront modern readers of Scripture. We trust that charitable readers would understand how indelicate it would have been to put the matter in the book as bluntly as we do here—or at the very least agree to respect the author’s rhetorical decision even if one disagrees.

The flow of thought continues throughout chapter 1, where the purposes of the book are outlined explicitly. We cite the relevant statements below in order of occurrence with comments where necessary to clarify.

Evangelical biblical scholars have certainly made many important contributions to the historical study of Scripture, but,

[2] what is needed is not simply for evangelicals to work in these areas, but to engage the doctrinal implications that work in these areas raises. Without wanting to overstate the matter, I have known or heard of a fair number of Christians who conclude that the contemporary state of biblical scholarship has made an evangelical faith unviable. These are the primary readers I envision for this book, those who desire to maintain a vibrant a reverent doctrine of Scripture, but who have found it difficult to do so because they have found familiar and conventional approaches to newer problems to be unhelpful (13).

For evangelical biblicists to address the doctrinal implications of their work would be immensely helpful to evangelical readers, for it is precisely these types of historical issues that have posed so challenging for traditional doctrinal formulations, many of which arose in isolation from modern developments in our knowledge of the world of the ancient Near East and 1st century Palestine. We must remember, too, that critical scholarship has not at all been reticent about drawing doctrinal conclusions on the basis of their historical work, and a defensive evangelical response is often wholly unpersuasive to those who have been exposed to these alternatives.

Addressing doctrinal implications, however, does not entail a flat rejection of past formulations—as if it is now time to leave the past behind. Rather, the point being made is that we allow the study of Scripture to affect how we articulate our doctrine of Scripture. Hence,

[3] I am very eager to affirm that many evangelical instincts are correct and should be maintained, for example, the conviction that the Bible is ultimately from God and that it is God’s gift to the church. Any theories concerning Scripture that do not arise from these fundamental instincts are unacceptable (13-14). 10

These are not minimalist or vague (or Barthian! – see Section Five below) claims, as the HTFC Response argues, but important, foundational, and non-negotiable as forming the proper starting point for further discussion.

The historical evidence brought to light in recent generations, however, has raised significant challenges for evangelicalism, going back at least to the late 19th century, and lay

10 See also p. 49, top half. The HTFC Response has raised a concern regarding the use of the word “instinct” here, and this will be revisited shortly.
readers have not been isolated from them. A defensive posture toward much of these discoveries has tended to dominate the discussions:

[4] For recent generations of evangelicals, this [defensive] tendency has its roots in certain developments in biblical scholarship during the nineteenth century, and made headlines in the so-called modernist/fundamentalist controversies around the turn of the twentieth century (e.g., Scopes Monkey trials). The affects of these developments can still be felt today (14).

And popular labels, however helpful and accurate they may be in the abstract, have exacerbated this tendency to avoid engagement with historical study of Scripture:

[5] Much of the evangelical theological landscape of the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries has been dominated by a “battle for the Bible.” The terms are familiar: liberal vs. conservative; modernist vs. fundamentalist; mainline vs. evangelical; progressive vs. traditionalist. Such labels may serve some purpose, but they more often than not serve to entrench rather than enlighten (14).

I&I intentionally wishes to move lay readers beyond such an impasse, not by absolutely denying the distinction between liberal and conservative, but by approaching the problems raised by an historical study of Scripture in a way that avoids the pitfalls of popular and customary evangelical approaches where an incarnational model is not functionally active:

[6] By focusing on three problems raised by the modern study of the Old Testament, my hope is to suggest ways in which our conversation can be shifted somewhat, so that what are often perceived as problems with the OT are put into a different perspective. To put it another way, my aim is to allow the collective evidence to affect not just how we understand a biblical passage or story here and there within the parameters of earlier doctrinal formulations. Rather, I want to move beyond that by allowing the evidence to affect how we think about what Scripture as a whole is (15).

A better, and we think necessary, starting point is to acknowledge that what might be considered “problems” with the OT may be more a function of reading it with faulty expectations:

[7] 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 (15).

This missional, lay reorientation is further explicated on pp. 16-17:

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11 We do not want to interrupt the flow of thought here, but it is worth pausing to give a word of explanation. This quote is one of a couple of examples in chapter 1 where Enns recognizes an infelicitous expression that actually does not express what he is after. Although we affirm that doctrinal formulations are topics for restatement, improvement, etc. (which appears to be an important area of disagreement we have with HTFC), the impression given here is that “earlier doctrinal formulations” simply have to go and that Enns will help readers construct a new one from the ground up. That is not what Enns is intending to say, yet he recognizes how this statement could cause difficulties for readers. If the phrase “earlier doctrinal formulations” were replaced by “customary, more defensive, explanations,” that would better have expressed Enns’s intention. We cannot recall whether this particular sentence in I&I has come up in faculty discussions, but Enns has on more than one occasion been very quick to acknowledge this general point.
Regardless of how we organize the data, the issue before us is not how we handle this verse, or this issue, one at a time. Rather, what needs to happen is that we take a step back from the details and allow these issues to challenge us on a more fundamental level. What is needed is a way of thinking about Scripture where these kinds of issues are addressed from a very different perspective—where these kinds of “problems” cease being problems but become windows that open up to new ways of understanding. It is not enough simply to say the Bible is the word of God, or that it is inspired, or 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 evidence affect how we flesh out descriptions such as “word of God” or “inspired?”

Again, what is being advocated here is not new way of thinking of Scripture in general as distinct from anything else that has been done in the past, and certainly not a challenge to the WTS tradition, but the more intentional application of a recognized and orthodox theological model for lay readers to help them look at historical issues differently. That model is an incarnational one, where the divinity and humanity of Scripture are non-negotiable as a starting point to help lay readers get over the hump. Admittedly, the analogy between Christ’s incarnation and Scripture’s incarnation by no means amounts to a complete identification, nor can all ambiguities be addressed, a point Enns himself stresses:

I do not want to suggest that difficult problems have simple solutions. What I want to offer, instead, is a proper starting point for discussing these problems, one that, if allowed to run its course, will reorient us to see these problems in a better light (17).

This way of thinking about the Bible is referred to in a number of different ways by different theologians. The term I prefer is the Incarnational Analogy: Christ’s incarnation is analogous to Scripture’s “incarnation.” As with any analogy, one could highlight places where the analogy does not quite fit. Moreover, we must reckon with the fact that the incarnation of Christ it itself mysterious; one could rightly question the merit of using an ultimately unexplainable entity to “explain” something else! That being said, my starting point is the orthodox Christian confession, however mysterious it is, that Jesus of Nazareth is the God-man (17).

Of course, [employing the incarnational analogy] does not make the issues float away, but it is the proper way to begin addressing those issues (21).

The purpose for employing this analogy is to put before lay readers a vital question:

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: how does the fact that Scripture is fully human and fully divine affect what we should expect from Scripture? (18)

This encourages a mindset where the human element of Scripture, with all it challenges, is an orthodox expectation rather than a problem that impinges upon it divinity.

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[This “earthiness” of Scripture is a point emphasized in our tradition particularly in Dutch Calvinism, a sampling of which will be addressed elsewhere in this response. We feel that this is a very important dimension of the Reformed tradition that, if allowed to factor into the HTFC Response, would have altered the nature of the current conflict considerably.]

12 This “earthiness” of Scripture is a point emphasized in our tradition particularly in Dutch Calvinism, a sampling of which will be addressed elsewhere in this response. We feel that this is a very important dimension of the Reformed tradition that, if allowed to factor into the HTFC Response, would have altered the nature of the current conflict considerably.
…the human marks of the Bible are everywhere, thoroughly integrated into the nature of Scripture itself. Ignoring these marks or explaining them away takes at least as much energy as listening to them and learning from them. The human dimension of Scripture is, therefore, part of what makes Scripture Scripture (18).

What is so helpful about the Incarnational Analogy is that it reorients us to see that the Bible’s “situatedness” is not a lamentable or embarrassing situation, but a positive: That the Bible, at every turn, shows how “connected” it is to its own world, is a necessary consequence of God incarnating himself (20).

When God reveals himself he always does so to people, which means that he must speak and act in ways that they will understand. People are time bound, and so God adopts that characteristic if he wishes to reveal himself. We can put this even a bit more strongly: It is essential to the very nature of revelation that the Bible is not unique to its environment. The human dimension of Scripture is essential to its being Scripture. This, I would argue, is the proper stating point for looking at the relationship between the Bible and the issues we will be discussing in this book (20).

Lay readers are further encouraged at the outset that, contrary to liberal thought (but fully consistent with Reformed doctrine), the human stamp in no way affects whether the Bible is of divine origin.

That the Bible bears an unmistakable human stamp does not lead to the necessary conclusion that it is merely the words of humans rather than the word of God (21).

…when God speaks, he speaks in ways we would understand. With this in mind, we can now look at some of the evidence that has been part of the scholarly conversation for several generations, not to determine whether the Bible is God’s word, but to see more clearly how (21).

This continued purpose of reorienting (and hopefully encouraging) lay readers is seen in the very structure of the book:

1. The historical and biblical data (chapters 2-4) are sketched very broadly without addressing the unending scholarly nuances and debates,
   ▪ The complete absence of footnotes,
   ▪ The presence of an annotated bibliography,
   ▪ A glossary of terms.

All of these clearly signal the book’s intended target audience and, therefore, the vantage point from which any criticism should commence.

The orientation of the book is revisited and summarized in the conclusion, chapter 5:

[13] …this book has not focused on giving the final word on any topic; I have tried to help begin new conversations about Scripture, not end them, by advocating a more open and curious posture toward the challenges contemporary readers of the Bible face. No doubt, this means wrestling with the difficult question, “How do we incorporate certain data with full

[11] The HTFC Response has concerns about the use of the word “essential” here, and this will be addressed on p.53ff.
integrity without sacrificing the truth that the Bible is God’s book for his people?” I believe the process of answering that question may be significantly aided for some by asking how the incarnation of Christ helps us build a better model for the inspiration of Scripture. Such an approach cannot help but have a provisional quality to it. As I mentioned at the very beginning, neither the issues addressed in this book (ANE evidence, theological diversity, and the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament) nor the perspective from which I have viewed them are novel. Interested readers can find similar ideas expressed much more fully in a number of other books, a very few of which are mentioned in the “Further Reading” sections. My aim throughout has been synthesis, not novelty, 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 (167-68).

Lay readers are further encouraged to remember that the articulation of what Scripture is will always have a provisional quality to it, which is not to present a weak or relativistic doctrine of Scripture to them, nor to threaten their own faith. It is, rather, a reminder that God is bigger than what we think and that exploration and investigation of Scripture are not a threat to faith: 

[14] That God willingly and enthusiastically participates in our humanity should give us pause. If even God himself expresses himself in the Bible through particular human circumstances, we must be very ready to see the necessarily culturally limited nature of our own theological expressions today. I am not speaking of cultural relativism, where all truth is up for grabs and the Bible ceases being our standard for faith. I simply mean that all of our theologizing, because we are human beings living in particular historical and cultural moments, will have a temporary and provisional—even fallen—dimension to it (168-69).

…the Bible has a dynamic quality to it, for God himself is dynamic, active, and alive in our lives and in the life of his church. Although the Bible is clear on central matters of the faith, it is flexible in many matters that pertain to the day to day (which is seen most clearly in our discussion of Proverbs in chapter three) (170).

As mentioned above, we do acknowledge that there are ambiguities in the opening chapter where, for example, all of evangelicalism could seem to come under attack, or where a

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14 We are enthusiastic in our affirmation of WCF I.5 in this regard: “We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the holy Scriptures…. Yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.” Although unstated, certainly the position expressed here in WCF is an undercurrent of the entire argument made in I&I. Enns could be faulted for not citing WCF I.5 at some point in the book. The fact that he did not, however, is not an implicit denial of this important theological point (which is the general argument the HTFC Response clearly attempts to mount), but concerns whether the target audience would have benefited from it or been distracted by it. We are more than willing to consider whether Enns’s rhetorical decision caused for some readers more problems than it solved, but it does not, in our view, call into question the orthodoxy or competence of the author.

15 For example, when saying “evangelical” it is not completely certain at a couple of points whether or not academic evangelicalism is in view. On p. 14, 2nd full paragraph, 4th sentence, we read “For recent generations of evangelicals,” which could imply more than just lay readers. Still, the very preceding sentence should make the lay focus clear (“My concern is that, at least on a popular level….”), but we do acknowledge the potential ambiguity such a wording could cause.
Likewise on p. 14, beginning at the 4th line, it is possible to understand the following in a much more radical way than intended: “On the other hand, how the evangelical church fleshes out its doctrine of Scripture will always have a provisional quality to it.” This could imply that all of what evangelicalism has said about the doctrine of Scripture should be swept away, although this is certainly not the intention. Note also that the emphasis in the original quote is on “fleshes out”, i.e., the further working out of how we speak of our Scripture. We remain resolute that such an attitude of provisionality is healthy, necessary, and unavoidable given the fallen nature of humanity, the fallible nature of any theological articulation (WCF 31.3), and the continued progress in knowledge.

Before moving to the specifics of the HTFC Response, it must be mentioned that, in a tangential way, some members of the HTFC have acknowledged the missional purpose of the book, but disagree with us on how that purpose ought to be accomplished. What is really needed, they say, precisely because it is a missional book, is a reiteration of Scripture’s divine origin (in traditional terms) and how that fact has implications for how the specific issues in the book are handled. Although we seriously question whether this more “top down” approach is better suited to accomplish the book’s stated purpose, we certainly recognize that this is a fair question with potential value. It would be an important avenue to explore, i.e., how precisely does the divine origin of Scripture affects how we handle, say, the Mesopotamian background to Genesis or the Second Temple background to the NT, and why such an approach would be more apologetically compelling. Such important matters, however, would need to be addressed by engaging the specifics of the biblical texts in question, not simply on the level of theological prolegomena (e.g., an appeal to Chalcedonian Christology, as is done in the HTFC Response; see Section Four below). The thoughts of the seasoned evangelical NT scholar Richard Longenecker are worth citing here in full.

[15] It has become all too common today to hear assertions of a theological nature as to what God must have done or claims of a historical nature as to what must have been the case during the apostolic period of the Church—and to find that such statements are based principally on deductions from what has previously been accepted and/or supported by current analogies alone. The temptation is always with us to mistake hypothesis for evidence or to judge theological and historical formulations by their coherence and widespread acceptance, rather than first of all by their correspondence and exegetical data. History is replete with examples of this sorry condition and its sorry results, and hindsight permits us to recognize it in the past for what it was: a perversion of the truth. But we are ‘sons and daughters of our parents,’ composed of the same stuff and subject to the same pressures and temptations. And nowhere do we need to guard against our own inclinations and various pressures more carefully than in our understanding of the New Testament writers’ use of Scripture. Neither piety nor speculation—both of which are excellent in their own ways when properly controlled—can substitute for careful historical and exegetical investigation. Nor can traditional views of either the right or left be allowed to stand unscrutinized in the light of recent discoveries. The Jewish roots of Christianity make it a priori likely that the exegetical procedures of the New Testament would resemble, at least to some extent, those of Judaism of the time.

16 Likewise on p. 14, beginning at the 4th line, it is possible to understand the following in a much more radical way than intended: “On the other hand, how the evangelical church fleshes out its doctrine of Scripture will always have a provisional quality to it.” This could imply that all of what evangelicalism has said about the doctrine of Scripture should be swept away, although this is certainly not the intention. Note also that the emphasis in the original quote is on “fleshes out”, i.e., the further working out of how we speak of our Scripture. We remain resolute that such an attitude of provisionality is healthy, necessary, and unavoidable given the fallen nature of humanity, the fallible nature of any theological articulation (WCF 31.3), and the continued progress in knowledge.

Although Longenecker’s focus here is on the specific topic of the NT’s use of the OT (chapter 5 in *I&I*), the general attitude he expresses reflects well the commitment we have as biblical scholars at WTS—however imperfect our efforts may be—to allow Scripture to drive how we talk about it. This is an endeavor that we approach with a sense of expectation, enthusiasm, and, we trust, humility.

The HFC believes that the form in which Scripture exists, as *God*-breathed into *human* contexts, must *together* be in view wherever specifics are addressed and whenever a doctrine of Scripture is articulated. The fear of the HTFC seems to be that of muting the divine origin of Scripture, and therefore its authority, which the HFC in no way intends to do. To the contrary, we view *I&I* as founded on the very opposite contention, that Scripture looks the way it does because *God wanted it to look this way*. The fear of the HFC is that we cease wrestling with Scripture as a historical phenomenon, a product of God’s wisdom and mercy, and so fail to address adequately the very real challenges before us. The needed discussion between the two groups can only be engaged in a climate of trust. If such a climate could be reclaimed we expect it would reveal that there has been some caricaturing going on on both sides, and the issues between us are more a matter of emphasis than anything else. At any rate, we do not see our divergent emphases as matters of orthodoxy or fitness for teaching at WTS.

**Implications of Misreading in the HTFC Response to I&I**

Having laid out the purposes of *I&I*, we wish now to address several examples in the HTFC Response where a faulty reading strategy has resulted in unjustified conclusions. We cannot be exhaustive here, in part because of space, but also because a number of misreadings touch upon issues addressed elsewhere in this document. Therefore, we will here address a sampling of passages in the HTFC Response more or less in the order in which they appear, focusing our comments on the opening pages of the HTFC Response.\(^{18}\)

The substance of the critique begins on page 2, where the HTFC summarizes its two main areas of concern with *I&I*: faulty views of inspiration and incarnation. This summation, in addition to being a rhetorical condemnation of *I&I* as a whole, obviously anticipates the main points to be addressed. But we see already here where the critique will misfire. With respect to inspiration, the stated focus of the HTFC critique will be “on the divine authorship of Scripture.” In other words, it will focus where *I&I* did not. In and of itself this is not unfair, and under other circumstances would even be welcome as part of an ongoing discussion. But the issue is introduced here clearly as a corrective, and this is where we strongly object. To see some acknowledgement on the part of the HTFC for *why* *I&I* proceeds as it does, *even where the HTFC disagrees with that strategy*, would have helped

\(^{18}\) The closing paragraph on p. 1 indicates that there are areas where *I&I* that are “not...without value” and “helpful...to uninformed readers,” and that the Glossary is useful “particularly for others than the OT scholar.” But there is no attempt here or anywhere else in the response to draw into their critique the relevance of their own (albeit incomplete) estimation of the book’s strengths. Also it is only partially true that Enns has “uninformed readers” in view. The book is aimed at least as much to those who have already been exposed to these issues in more threatening and destructive contexts. The issues discussed in *I&I* are already problems for many of the readers, yet this factor, clearly stated as it is in the book, does not seem to come into play in the HTFC Response.
us tremendously in showing that a good faith effort at interacting with the book’s stated purpose was being made.

What is perhaps a more significant indication of misreading early on in the critique appears just below on p. 2. After citing I&I p. 13 ([2] above), the HTFC expresses concern over the fact that any discussion of the doctrine of Scripture “enters into the specific domain and concerns of systematic theology.” On one level, this is certainly true, as it would be for systematic theologians doing historically engaged biblical exegesis to be entering the “domain” of biblical studies. But such language comes across as a bit territorial. Part of the purpose of I&I is to say that biblical studies and systematic theology must be in conversation, and that, yes, exegesis does have implications for our doctrine of Scripture. If the intention of the HTFC Response is to say that biblical studies should steer clear of theological discussions, or should simply start all biblical study by assuming that systematic theology has already answered all the important questions, it would be very much at odds with how we understand the WTS tradition and the balancing role systematic theology and biblical studies play for each other.

What is also entailed in this stated concern of the HTFC is an assumption that a particular systematic theological critique of I&I is now legitimated. Again, we wish to stress that the systematic theological (not to mention historical theological) dimension to this discussion is one we all greatly value. The rich tradition at WTS, where ST, BT and biblical studies interact, is one with which we are well acquainted and to which we are committed. But it is simply unjust to apply a rigid (and, we believe, truncated [see Sections Two, Three and Four below]) systematic theological template onto the real and complex biblical issues engaged in I&I. Apparently the critique is based on the fact that the author wishes to be involved in a doctrinal discussion. But biblical studies does not stumble into a closed systematic theological “domain” when it seeks to articulate how biblical studies affects doctrine any more than systematic theology can be accused of stumbling into the “domain” of biblical studies when it seeks, in good WTS fashion, to root its systematic theology in exegesis. True, the nature of exegesis is perhaps conceived of or at least executed somewhat differently by the two disciplines. For biblical studies there is a decided emphasis on the historical/contextual dimension (not exclusively so, but an important dimension nevertheless), whereas systematic theological exegesis is more “inner-canonically” oriented (without, hopefully, being oblivious to the vital importance of historical context). But it is precisely in working through this very distinction that further progress can be made: how do

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19 Richard A. Muller, among others, has given expression to this interplay and balance in his The Study of Theology, pp. 537-666 in Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, edited by Moises Silva (Zondervan, 1991). Cf. for example the following found on p. 612:

The result of the theological task is a theologically relative conclusion that not only expresses the faith of the believing community in the present but also returns, via the tradition, to the text and provides a set of theological boundary-concepts for the continuing work of theology.... The mistaken self-exaltation of which doctrinal or dogmatic theology is all too easily capable can, moreover, be described and avoided in terms of this hermeneutical model. If a theologian exalts any particular doctrinal construction and insists that it become the key to interpreting the entirety of Scripture and to organizing the entirety of theological, the scriptural Word becomes stifled by a human a priori, like what is perhaps a brilliant but nonetheless false contrivance of a particular theological ego. It is an error for a systematic theologian to assume that any particular systemization of a biblical idea or group of biblical ideas can become the basis for the interpretation of texts in which those ideas or doctrines do not appear.
historical/contextual and inner-canonical concerns relate in the ongoing task of theological articulation? We know of no evangelical institution better suited to address this issue intentionally and programatically than WTS, with its rich theological and exegetical tradition, and we sorely lament HTFC’s appeal to that very tradition to cut that process short. It is in this very task that we can be of most service to evangelical readers of Scripture, for it is this very disjunction that is a cause for so much consternation.

Another difficulty with the citation of I&I [2] on p. 2 of the HTFC Response is their claim that they are representing I&I’s “own stated purpose” to engage doctrine. This is true but only partially so, since the overriding purpose of the book is to engage doctrine for a popular audience, not in and of itself as the HTFC Response implies. This is not a quibbling matter, as the remainder of their critique assumes the relevance, applicability, and unquestioned normativity of particular systematic theological categories.

On p. 3 we encounter several areas of concern for the HFC. First, on the very top of the page, the HTFC Response avers that there is some important distinction to be made with respect to evangelical instincts about Scripture’s divine origin and authority (which I&I states to uphold and support, as cited earlier), and exegetical conclusions. Their point of contention is that instincts cannot be the basis for doctrine, only exegesis can. (This same point has been made on other occasions in our oral deliberations.) Of course, we concur wholeheartedly and remain enthusiastically committed to one of the wonderful distinctives of the WTS tradition, “exegesis is the lifeblood of theology.” We are somewhat surprised, however, that the HTFC could read this passage in I&I (pp. 13-14, [3]) in such an aggressive manner. All Enns means, clearly, is that, those things that evangelical lay readers hold close to their hearts concerning the nature of Scripture are in no way being challenged. “Instinct” has nothing to do with the “nature of doctrine” as the HTFC claims is being argued in I&I, but with a psychological disposition on the part of the Christian. We are at a loss for how this could have been cause for so much concern, particularly in view of the fact that B. B. Warfield uses the word in precisely the same sense:

But, we may be reminded, the church has not held with such tenacity to all the doctrines taught in the Bible. How are we to account, then, for the singular consistency of its confession of the Bible’s doctrine of inspiration? The account to be given is again simple, and capable of being expressed in a single sentence. It is due to an instinctive feeling in the church, that the trustworthiness of the Scriptures lies at the foundation of trust in the Christian system of doctrine, and is therefore fundamental to the Christian hope and life. It is due to the church’s instinct that the validity of her teaching of doctrine as the truth of God,—to the Christian’s instinct that the validity of his hope in the several promises of the gospel,—rests on the trustworthiness of the Bible as a record of God’s dealings and purposes with men. 

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20 B. B. Warfield, “The Church Doctrine of Inspiration,” in The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (ed. S. G. Craig; Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 120-21. Warfield continues this line of thought further below on p. 121, where he points out that the church’s trust in Scripture is not dependent on apologetics: “…the instinct of the church that the validity of her teaching, and the instinct of the Christian that the validity of his hope, are bound up with the trustworthiness of the Bible, is a perfectly sound one.” He proceeds to flesh out why this is the case in the following pages.
This is what is meant by “instinct” in I&I and nothing more.\textsuperscript{21}

Second, just below in the same paragraph, I&I’s focus on “the formulation of an improved doctrine of Scripture” is “a deep concern to the HTFC.” If I&I’s program were one of strong rejection of the past, then this concern could be valid. For example, if the case were being made in I&I that “past formulations of a doctrine of Scripture are faulty and a whole new approach to Scripture, one that begins with its humanity, is needed to correct the past,” then the concern would be legitimate. But no fair reading of the book can make that case that “improved” means anything like this. Perhaps the HTFC is of the opinion that the doctrine of Scripture is permanently exempt from reevaluation and cannot be improved upon, but for I&I and the signers of this document, formulations of a doctrine of Scripture, as is true of any other doctrine, can and must be improved. But \textit{in no way is a rejection of the primacy of the divine element—a central pillar of the HTFC critique—in view}. Every word of Scripture is “breathed out” from God. The question is how an engagement of the details of Scripture’s divine/humanness can and should contribute to improved formulations (not reinventions). Moreover, the importance of keeping the lay focus of the book before us is again made plain: those for whom the human element of Scripture presents a problem, i.e., those who have a “non-incarnational” notion of Scripture, are in view here. And yes, these readers—as well as anyone else who devalues the humanity of Scripture—\textit{need} their doctrine of Scripture improved.

Third, just below the reference to I&I p. 15, the HTFC Response addresses a legitimate ambiguity in the book. What exactly does I&I mean by “earlier formulations” that I&I envisions “moving beyond.” The HTFC Response argues that clarification on this matter at the outset would have helped avoid confusion. We agree that this ambiguity could be problematic, but we also think that this very ambiguity should have \textit{tempered} the HTFC Response. Rather, it seems that the worst possible interpretation was assumed and so provided an opening through which to launch a critique of the “crucial and central” problems of I&I (middle of p. 3). But given the book’s focus, not to mention the clear statements to the contrary, does the HTFC really think that what is in view here is an overhaul of Christian doctrine? Might it not be much more reasonable and charitable to read an admittedly ambiguous passage (when taken in isolation) against the backdrop of what has already been established, that what is being addressed here is popular notions of Scripture that, when confronted with the wide array of historical issues, often causes evangelicals to falter?

Fourth, just below in the concluding paragraph to section I (immediately preceding I.1) is another statement that perhaps is rhetorically effective, but troublesome to us. The HTFC’s reading of I&I now \textit{implies} “various denials of the historic, Reformed doctrine of Scripture.” Even with the imbalanced reading strategy employed in the HTFC critique, we are left only with what they think are implications for Reformed theology. It does not seem to matter whether the reading is fair or whether the author recognizes himself in the critique; it does not seem to matter that numerous, less extreme, things could be implied. It seems, rather that the conclusion has been drawn that the author \textit{denies} the historical, Reformed

\textsuperscript{21} With respect to Warfield, a related concern on the part of the HFC is the selective engagement with our tradition on the part of the HTFC Response. This matter will be taken up again in Sections Two and Four.
doctrine of Scripture, and the remaining pages will proceed to attempt to make the case stick.\textsuperscript{22}

The accusations made here are very serious, but could easily have been obviated were the HTFC of the mind to do so. Why a more charitable read was not forthcoming is only a matter of speculation, but the following segment from the HTFC précis to the board (the “open letter” to Prof. Enns read at the December 2006 faculty/board meeting) makes matters disturbingly clear to us.

In this regard we should also comment on the endorsements and positive reviews \textit{I&I} has received, which, as far as we have seen, are for the most part brief and summary. It seems fair to us to say that, in a number of instances at least, you have been given the benefit of doubt on the issue of the divinity/divine origin of Scripture or certain assumptions have been made about its role in your thinking about Scripture – \textbf{a benefit we have not been able to grant and assumptions we are unable to make}, we deeply regret to say, in light of what we have pointed out above.

It is very discouraging to us to see the positive responses to \textit{I&I} being dismissed so easily, on the supposed basis that they are “brief and summary.” This is somewhat dismissive of those whose opinions differ from the HTFC, implying that the brevity of reviews make them somehow less insightful or helpful, or less aware of the theological issues that occupy the HTFC.\textsuperscript{23} We wonder, rather, how the HTFC might have come to different conclusions concerning \textit{I&I} had they, too, given the author the benefit of the doubt. Yet, the HTFC’s written \textit{Response to I&I}, with its preliminary indictments, follows quickly upon the heels of only one faculty discussion, and without any serious effort to seek clarification.

One final issue on p. 3 is the opening sentence in section I.1 Divine Authorship.

\begin{quote}
First, it seems to the HTFC that \textit{I&I} effectively denies, in that it does not presuppose in its argumentation, that Scripture is foundationally and essentially divine.
\end{quote}

Apart from the nagging logical fallacy (a failure to \textit{explicitly} presuppose= a denial), the HTFC’s dismissal of the book’s frequent statements to the contrary leave us wondering how we will ever be able to arrive at some resolution to the faculty tensions. Scripture’s divine origin is most certainly presupposed \textbf{throughout I&I} and by the HFC; it is stated unequivocally in the first chapter and at various junctures in the book that the Bible’s ultimate author is God. Now, the HTFC may find the manner in which this is expressed vague (see their footnote), and this can always be discussed, but in our view it is \textbf{adequately and appropriately} expressed for the missional purpose of the book. We acknowledge that that too can be discussed, but then we would have a theological dialogue of a very different sort, not one that strikes a note of judicial proceedings.

\textsuperscript{22} We should also add that, although we recognize that there are distinctive elements of a Reformed doctrine of Scripture (one of which is, ironically, an embrace of its human dimension), to speak \textit{of} the Reformed doctrine of Scripture betrays the reductionistic tendency that hampers much of the HTFC Response. No room is left for development of that doctrine, a posture that is squarely at odds with the tradition itself (see section 2 below).

\textsuperscript{23} We should remark that two positive written evaluations come from former WTS faculty members, not to mention numerous positive responses from other former and current faculty. Apparently these voices are given no credence in the minds of at least some members of the HTFC, which suggests again a limited appreciation of our rich tradition.
Summary:

Although the discussion in this section has been limited to the opening pages of the HTFC Response, we have hopefully illustrated a systemic problem that pervades that document. The HTFC Response displays a reading of *I&I* that is dismissive of the book’s stated purpose and audience, and then proceeds to judge the book on the basis of a different way of reading, thereby making the case that Prof. Enns is either outside of acceptable confessional bounds or theologically incompetent. We affirm, however, that *I&I* not only rests comfortably within our confessional tradition, but is a timely (if also imperfect) contribution to biblical studies for a lay audience in the grand tradition of Reformed biblical scholarship, especially as it has developed at Westminster Theological Seminary.
Section Two:
WCF I.4, Old Amsterdam, Old Princeton, & WTS

The HTFC Response expresses some of its concerns over I&I by expounding WCF I.4, and by citing reflections on Scripture by several luminaries from our common tradition. However, we perceive an imbalance in the HTFC Response’s citations from the luminaries of Old Amsterdam, Old Princeton, and WTS. Furthermore, we sense a reductionism in the HTFC Response’s handling of WCF I.4. (We recognize that what appears to us to be ‘imbalance’ and ‘reductionism’ is no doubt perceived by our colleagues to be reflexes of a genuine and profound concern over I&I. Nevertheless, we believe that truncation of our common heritage cannot help our quest to recover unity on our faculty.)

It is, however, the aim of response to promote authentic dialogue, with the hope of furthering the re-emergence of a “middle ground” on our faculty. As we revisit the history of bibliology, we hope that the developments and overall trends within orthodox bibliology can be candidly acknowledged by all. We hope that the following sketch, however incomplete, can contribute to an agreed framework for thinking about the issues raised in I&I.

By way of giving our survey an appropriate focus, we may use the following statement on p. 4 of the HTFC Response, which seems to capture one of their core concerns:

It is worth noting that in WCF I, there is no mention of the human authors of Scripture [emphasis original]. This is not an oversight in the Confession; it is not that the Reformers and their progeny did not recognize the human element of Scripture. It is not that they were not privy to extra-biblical sources and other cultural, contextual and human elements.

This quote invites comment in two areas, which can serve as headings for starting to revisit the history of orthodox bibliology: 1) the silence of WCF I.4 regarding human authorship of Scripture; ii) the scope of 17th century awareness of the humanness of Scripture.

The silence of WCF I.4 regarding human authorship of Scripture.

There are several reasons why we cannot give this silence the weight that the HTFC Response desires. For one, we need to recognize the constraints of the historical context in which the WCF was written (a general principle affirmed by the HTFC Response (ibid., 22).) In keeping with the demands of the situation in 17th century Britain, the WCF has a strong anti-Papist polemic woven into its fabric. For example, in the section immediately preceding I.4, the Confession negates the authority of the Apocrypha. We may surmise that, in the debate with the Papists, the humanness of Scripture was useless to the Puritans, since the humanness of a text obviously cannot provide that text with ultimate authority, and the Westminster Divines were rightly concerned to minimize the authority of Roman Catholic (i.e., human) tradition and maximize the authority of Scripture. Indeed, WCF I.4 begins with the phrase, “The authority of the Holy Scripture …” We submit that this phrase qualifies the

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24 We use this term to include both formal statements on the doctrine of Scripture, and the praxis of interpreting the Bible.
Confession’s silence regarding human authorship of the Bible, and that WCF I.4 in no wise prevents later orthodox divines from developing a full-orbed doctrine of Scripture that does justice to the reality of human authorship.

Indeed, when we turn to the Reformed luminaries of a later era, we find them willing to criticize the older divines for their failure to develop a doctrine of Scripture that takes account of its humanness. We may cite Kuyper and Bavinck in this regard.

Abraham Kuyper, whilst appreciating the older divines’ defense of divine authorship, and while acknowledging their awareness of Scripture’s human traits, nevertheless asserts:

   But yet it can scarcely be denied that they [the older divines] had established themselves too firmly in the idea of a logical theory of inspiration, to allow the animated organism of the Scripture to fully assert itself.  

In a similar vein, Herman Bavinck notes the overall failure of the Reformation to develop an organic view of inspiration (i.e., one that does justice to the humanness of the Bible):

   The Reformed confessions almost all have an article on Scripture and clearly express its divine authority; and all the Reformed theologians without exception take the same position. Occasionally one can discern a feeble attempt at developing a more organic view of Scripture.  

The development of a more organic view awaited the rise of modernity, as Bavinck notes:

   In general, it can be said without fear of contradiction that insight into the historical and psychological mediation of revelation … only came to full clarity in modern times and that the mechanical view of inspiration, to the extent that it existed in the past, has increasingly made way for the organic. (Ibid., 431.)

Furthermore, in their development of the doctrine of organic inspiration, both Bavinck and Kuyper make bold use of the incarnational analogy. In the following extensive quotes, we would draw the careful reader’s attention to Old Amsterdam’s awareness that inspiration despised no cultural form, but wove itself fully into the fabric of human life, indeed, into that which is “humanly weak and despised and ignoble”:

   The theory of organic inspiration alone does justice to Scripture. In the doctrine of Scripture, it is the working out and application of the central fact of revelation: the incarnation of the Word. The Word (LOGOS) has become flesh (SARX), and the word has become Scripture; these two facts do not only run parallel but are most intimately connected. Christ became flesh, a servant, without form or comeliness, the most despised of human beings; he descended to the nethermost parts of the earth and became obedient even to the death of the cross. So also the word, the revelation of God, entered the world of creatureliness, the life and history of humanity, in all the human forms of dream and vision, of investigation and reflection, right down to that which is humanly weak and despised and ignoble. The word became Scripture and as Scripture subjected itself to the fate of all Scripture. All this took place that the excellency of the power, also of the power of Scripture, may be God’s and not

ours. Just as every human thought and action is the fruit of the action of God in whom we live and move and have our being, and is at the same time the fruit of the activity of human beings, so also Scripture is totally the product of the Spirit of God, who speaks through the prophets and apostles, and at the same time totally the product of the activity of the authors. “Everything is divine and everything is human” (THEIA PANTA KAI ANTHROOPINA PANTA). 

As the Logos has not appeared in the form of glory, but in the form of a servant, joining Himself to the reality of our nature, as this had come to be through the results of sin, so also, for the revelation of His Logos, God the Lord accepts our consciousness, our human life as it is. The drama He enacts is a tragedy, quickening a higher tendency in the midst of our human misery. The forms, or types, are marred by want and sin. The “shadows” remain humanly imperfect, far below their ideal content. The “spoken words,” however much aglow with the Holy Ghost, remain bound to the limitation of our language, disturbed as it is by anomalies. [Emphases original]

In sum, we question the weight that the HTFC Response places on the fact that WCF I.4 is silent regarding human authorship. Old Amsterdam felt obliged to speak into that silence, since Kuyper and Bavinck lived in an age characterized by quantum leaps in our understanding of the radically human character of the Bible.

In the next sub-section, we focus on some of these paradigm-shifting discoveries.

The limited scope of 17th century awareness of the humanness of Scripture.

We have already quoted the HTFC Response to the effect that the silence of WCF I.4 regarding human authorship was not a function of Puritan ignorance. Now, we certainly have no desire to depict the 17th century as some kind of dark age. Kuyper rightly pointed out that 17th century divines were well-versed in the facts that the human penmen of the Bible exhibit notable “differences in style, patterns of thinking, circumstances, character formation, etc.”

However, we would suggest that the last 350 years of research have placed us in a position where our awareness of the humanness of Scripture is, by God’s providence, quantitatively and qualitatively different from the Puritan consciousness. We will briefly discuss three epoch-making developments in biblical scholarship: 1) ancient near eastern archaeology; 2) historical linguistics; 3) New Testament textual criticism.

Ancient near eastern archaeology. Discoveries in the 19th and 20th centuries (a small sampling of which are outlined in I&I) have allowed us to compare the Bible with its

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27 Ibid., 434-435.
28 Kuyper, Encyclopedia, 479.
29 “I&I: A Response,” 5.
31 We leave out for the sake of brevity the gradual discovery and study of late Second Temple Jewish sources during the late-18th, 19th and especially 20th centuries—sources that are collectively known as the OT Pseudepigrapha. The relevance of this material, along with that of the Apocrypha, for the description of the Judaism of the first century A.D. was confirmed by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947.
surrounding cultures in a way that was simply impossible for the Puritans. To many scholars, these new data indicate the radical extent to which the Bible is contextualized to its environment. In other words, the new data supports and extends the Old Amsterdam insight (quoted above) to the effect that God really “got His hands dirty” when He inspired the Bible.

**Historical linguistics.** For much of the post-Reformational era, the distinctive character of New Testament Greek greatly puzzled scholars. The language of the NT differs considerably from the Classical idiom of writers like Plato. More strikingly, NT Greek differs strongly from that found in Hellenistic writers (like Plutarch) from the same era as the NT. Naturally, the singular character of NT Greek invited many hypotheses.

Before we mention these, we would like to quote a relevant principle espoused by the HTFC Response. Although the quote below pertains to the problem of the NT use of the OT, it aptly expresses a general conviction apparently held by the HTFC with regard to explaining the phenomena of Scripture.

> [We should] reckon with the fact of divine authorship as the ultimate explanatory context for the way the human authors in the NT interpret the OT, with other features (e.g., historical and psychological factors) being important, yet secondary. [Emphases original].

This assertion (no argumentation is offered) of prioritizing of the divinity of Scripture over its humanity pervades the entire HTFC Response document. In the light of this emphasis of the HTFC Response, we resume our discussion of the scholarly conundrum of the singular character of NT Greek.

As post-Reformational scholars wrestled with this problem, there was no shortage of hypotheses driven by an emphasis on the divinity of Scripture. For example, there were the “Purists,” who strove to find parallels between the NT idioms and the best Classical usage:

> To many it appeared as something perfectly obvious that Holy Scripture must be clothed in language at least as classical as that of Demosthenes or Plato, and assertions to the contrary were felt to be an outrage upon the Holy Ghost.

Then there were those who argued that NT Greek was “the language of the Holy Ghost’, found in the sacred writings and never profaned by common use.” However, hypotheses such as these were rendered obsolete by the discoveries made in the late 19th century of non-literary Greek papyri. As William D. Mounce explains:

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32 *I&I*, chapter 2.
34 “I&I: A Response,” 16.
35 It might also be asked just exactly how any authorship, divine or otherwise, can be an “explanatory context.”
In sum, the papyri were unavailable to the Reformers, Puritans (and their successors.) In the absence of the papyri, pious scholars, working from the perspective of the Bible as a divine book, came up with two untenable descriptions of NT Greek (the “Purist” attempt to parallel NT Greek with the lofty style of the Classical language; the “Holy Ghost Greek” hypothesis that the NT was written in a unique sacred language.) Ironically, the papyri showed that a more accurate description of NT Greek tends in the opposite direction, namely, that of accenting the vulgarity of the language!

In the case of the phenomenon under discussion, the problem was resolved not by invoking the divine character of Scripture, but by historical research that unearthed more clearly its human character.

By no means does any of this devalue the divine character of Scripture. To the contrary, by studying the “incarnatedness” of the Bible, we reflect on the question, Why did God do it this way? In reflecting thus on the vulgarity of NT Greek, we would concur with Mounce that, “God used the common language to communicate the gospel. The gospel does not belong to the erudite alone; it belongs to all people.”

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New Testament textual criticism. For the Puritans, the textual basis for the Greek NT was the Textus Receptus (which underpins the King James Version.) Given the state of 17th century knowledge of the textual transmission of the Greek NT, the Puritans could not have known how very far removed their Textus Receptus was from the autographa (original drafts) of the NT.

The systematic collation of variant readings was only in its infancy in the 17th century. Furthermore, important witnesses to the text of the NT were unavailable to the Puritans. These witnesses include Codex Aleph -- discovered in the mid-19th century, and the NT Papyri – discovered in the 20th century.

As generations of text critics have pored over these new data, the result has been, in Metzger’s words, “the overthrow of the Textus Receptus.” An epochal moment in this “overthrow” came in 1881, with the publication of the Revised Version of the Bible – a revision involving the complete rejection of the Textus Receptus as late and unreliable.

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39 Basics, 2.
41 Ibid., 38-42.
42 Ibid., 124.
43 Ibid., 135-36.
The rejection of the Textus Receptus (that had been venerated for centuries) was an earthquake whose tremors are still felt today. (Think of the reaction of folk connected to Dallas Theological Seminary, who valiantly attempt to defend the text-type underpinning the King James Version, on the grounds that this text-type is found in the “majority” of Greek manuscripts.)

The reaction to this earthquake by many 19th century theological conservatives is aptly described by Metzger:

It was perhaps not surprising that Westcott and Hort’s total rejection of the claims of the Textus Receptus to be the original text of the New Testament should have been viewed with alarm by many churchmen. During the closing decades of the nineteenth century the traditional text found a doughty defender in the person of John W. Burgon … As an ardent high-churchman he could not imagine that, if the words of Scripture had been dictated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God would not have providentially prevented them from being seriously corrupted during the course of their transmission. Consequently it was inconceivable to Burgon that the Textus Receptus, which had been used by the Church for centuries, could be in need of the drastic revision which Westcott and Hort had administered to it. [Emphasis added.]

This paraphrase of Burgon’s rejection of modern textual criticism is especially interesting, in that it seems to echo WCF I.8, which says, “… The New Testament in Greek … being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages …”

It seems as if Burgon, in rejecting modern textual criticism, was expressing the convictions of WCF I.8. All the more interesting, then, to find none other than B.B. Warfield supporting the overthrow of the Textus Receptus.

One of the more disturbing conclusions of modern textual criticism is that Mark’s Gospel originally ended at 16:8, i.e. that the so-called “longer ending” – which includes the report of Jesus’ resurrection – was not originally part of this Gospel. Warfield concurred with modern textual criticism in its rejection of the longer ending:

On December 2, 1882, Warfield had published in the popular Sunday School Times an article treating the long ending to Mark’s Gospel. Here he declares that this resurrection account is “no part of the word of God.” “We are not then,” he added, “to ascribe to these verses the authority due to God’s word.” [B.B. Warfield, “The Genuineness of Mark 16:9-20,” Sunday School Times 24 (December 2, 1882): 755-756.]

In sum: In our survey so far, we have observed the following trends:

- In areas such as NT textual criticism, orthodox bibliology has undergone significant paradigm shifts relative to the Puritans.

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45 Text, 135-36.
• Such paradigm shifts have, in part, been prompted by epoch-making discoveries unavailable to the Puritans.
• The overall trend of post-Puritan orthodox bibliology has been to give greater emphasis to the humanness of the word of God.

In the next section of our survey, we focus on the question, How should our increased awareness of the human “phenomena” of Scripture affect our understanding of inspiration?

**The role of the “phenomena” in orthodox bibliology.**

This important question is clearly an area of major concern to the HTFC Response. Their concern is powerfully expressed in the following paragraph, which provides a perfect segue into our topic:

Over a century ago Warfield, in various writings and with exceptional incisiveness, permanently identified the basic issue we must confront in formulating a doctrine of Scripture, especially since the Enlightenment. Two mutually exclusive approaches are in conflict. The one approach, faithful to the Bible, begins with its explicit self-witness and develops the doctrine of Scripture from that self-witness. In the light of that doctrine, a doctrine that is intact and impervious to change other than by reconsideration of that self-witness, it then deals with the so-called phenomena of Scripture, including whatever problems are encountered. The other approach adopts the reverse procedure. It begins with the phenomena/problems and develops a doctrine of Scripture in which its self-witness is discounted and usually marginalized in various ways. [Emphasis original].

Although we might question the suggestion that Warfield, or any other non-canonical theologian, has “permanently identified” any matter of doctrinal consideration, we are happy to affirm that the HTFC Response is raising a valid point for a particular debate – albeit, in our view, in a somewhat reductionist sense. We will begin by discussing what is right about the above paragraph, and then show how our tradition actually offers a much more nuanced, less dichotomized perspective.

When orthodoxy is debating Enlightenment rationalism, which uses the phenomena to deny or minimize inspiration, we can take no other stance than the one articulated in the above paragraph. This debate with rationalism supplies a crucial context for understanding Warfield’s position. Indeed, he begins his discussion of the phenomena by stating the context of his concerns, namely those who would argue that “an effort may be made to justify our holding a lower doctrine of inspiration than that held by the writers of the New Testament, by appealing to the so-called phenomena of Scripture …[emphasis added.]”

Warfield is thus not arguing against an appeal to the phenomena of Scripture in order to understand its statements, but against an appeal to the phenomena to disprove its statements.

However, when the orthodox are dialoguing with friends, who share the commitment to plenary verbal inspiration and to inerrancy as its concomitant, there does seem to be a willingness to let the phenomena speak to our doctrine of Scripture. Indeed, Warfield

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47 “I&I: A Response,” 5-6.
himself, in the midst of his discussion of “phenomena versus self-attestation of Scripture,” nevertheless adds this important qualification, which is worth quoting at length:

Nor again is it to be thought that we refuse to use the actual characteristics of Scripture as an aid in, and a check upon, our exegesis of Scripture, as we seek to discover its doctrine of inspiration. We do not simply admit, on the contrary, we affirm that in every sphere the observed fact may throw a broad and most helpful light upon the written text. It is so in the narrative of creation in the first chapter of Genesis; which is only beginning to be adequately understood as science is making her first steps in reading the records of God’s creative hand in the structure of the world itself. It is preeminently so in the written prophecies, the dark sayings of which are not seldom first illuminated by the light cast back on them by their fulfillment. As Scripture interprets Scripture, and fulfillment interprets prediction, so may fact interpret assertion. And this is as true as regards the Scriptural assertion of the fact of inspiration as elsewhere. No careful student of the Bible doctrine of inspiration will neglect anxiously to try his conclusions as to the teachings of Scripture by the observed characteristics and “structure” of Scripture, and in trying he may and no doubt will find occasion to modify his conclusions as first apprehended. [Emphases added.]

Bavinck puts the matter succinctly: “The facts and phenomena of Scripture, the results of scientific investigation, may serve to explain and illumine the doctrine of Scripture concerning itself but can never undo the fact of inspiration to which it witnesses [emphases added.]”

In the light of these general principles stated by Warfield and by Bavinck, we may ask, How, precisely, do the phenomena illumine the doctrine of inspiration? We will sketch an answer by highlighting such use of the phenomena in the bibliology of Old Princeton and WTS.

In brief, the answer seems to be, We can and must use the phenomena of Scripture as a check against invalid inferences from the doctrine of inspiration. (We have already seen instances of such checks, e.g.: inspiration does not entail good Greek style; inspiration does not entail that the inspired documents will be copied without substantial scribal corruption.) The luminaries of Old Princeton and WTS have led the way in such a proper use of the phenomena, as we will further illustrate. Since the HTFC Response underpin their critique of J&J with an appeal to Warfield, it is appropriate to begin our sketch with some of his pertinent statements:

No one claims that inspiration secured the use of good Greek in Attic severity of taste, free from the exaggerations and looseness of current speech, but only that it secured the accurate expression of truth, even (if you will) through the medium of the worst Greek a fisherman from Galilee could write and the most startling figures of speech a peasant could invent.

The next quotation is especially significant, in that it provoked strong negative reaction in some conservative evangelical circles:

50 Ibid., 206-207.
51 *Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 425.
It is not claimed that the Scriptures, any more than their authors, are omniscient. The information they convey is in the forms of human thought, and limited on all sides. They were not designed to teach philosophy, science, or human history as such. They were not designed to furnish an infallible system of speculative theology. They are written in human languages, whose words, inflections, constructions and idioms bear everywhere indelible traces of human error. The record itself furnishes evidence that the writers were in large measure dependant for their knowledge upon sources and methods in themselves fallible, and that their personal knowledge and judgments were in many matters hesitating and defective, or even wrong.

Conservative reaction to such candor was, perhaps, predictable, and is assessed by Roger R. Nicole:

In the evangelical world Hodge’s and Warfield’s article was construed by some as presenting a lowered view of inspiration … Surely the fault did not lie with Hodge and Warfield, although the extent to which they gave room to the exercise of human agency in the production of Scripture … could raise difficulties with conventional orthodoxy, especially as held by less penetrating minds.

Staying with Old Princeton, but moving to Charles Hodge, there is a very telling remark in his commentary on 1 Cor 1:16 (in which the apostle Paul states, “Beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else” [NIV].) Hodge’s succinct comment on this verse perfectly captures the nuanced position that the HFC is advocating:

The nature of inspiration is to be learnt from the declaration of the Scriptures and from the facts therein recorded [emphases added.] From these sources we learn that it was an influence which rendered its recipients infallible, but it did not render them omniscient.

Hodge makes a similar kind of statement in his Systematic Theology, and this statement perfectly captures what we have asserted about the phenomena acting as checks against invalid inferences from the doctrine of inspiration:

Our views of inspiration must be determined by the phenomena of the Bible as well as from its didactic statements [emphases added.] If in fact the sacred writers retain each his own style and mode of thought, then we must renounce any theory which assumes that inspiration obliterates or suppresses all individual peculiarities.

On the next page of his treatise, Hodge makes an oft-quoted, highly controversial statement (in the context of discussing alleged factual discrepancies in the Bible):

The errors in matters of fact which skeptics search out bear no proportion to the whole. No sane man would deny that the Parthenon was built of marble, even if here and there a speck of sandstone should be detected in its structure. Not less unreasonable is it to deny the inspiration of such a book as the Bible, because one sacred writer says that on a given

53 Ibid., 27-28.
54 “Introduction,” in ibid., xiii-xiv.
55 1 & II Corinthians (Geneva Series of Commentaries; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), 16.
occasional twenty-four thousand, and another says that twenty-three thousand, men were
slain.7

Conservative apologists have cautioned against over-reading the Parthenon analogy,
pointing out its *ad hominem* character.58 Regardless of what Charles Hodge actually meant
in this passage, it receives a most interesting exposition by A.A. Hodge, in a letter written to
Warfield:

But the question remains was this book [the Bible] with its (1) human (2) oriental & (3)
Hebrew characteristics intended to stand the test of microscopic criticism as to its accuracy
in matters of indifferent detail? It appears my father [Charles Hodge] was speaking of the
possibility of infinitesimal inaccuracies of no importance relating to the end designed, in
what degree of minute accuracy do the facts prove that God designed to effect? That is for
you critics and exegetes to determine. [Letter from A.A. Hodge to B.B. Warfield, November
14, 1880 (in Warfield’s papers, Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary).]59

In the final sentence, A.A. Hodge allows “critics and exegetes,” using the *phenomena* of
Scripture, to determine the degree of historical accuracy entailed by inspiration.

This Old Princeton principle, of allowing the phenomena to specify the true entailments of
inspiration, has been carried over and extended at WTS. For example, Raymond B. Dillard
stated that, “The nature of Scripture is not established alone from the proof texts so often
cited in reference to that doctrine, but also from the phenomena we observe there.”60 Using
this principle, Dillard underwent a major break with traditional conservative apologetics,
when he argued that harmonizing Scripture’s discrepant historical narratives (e.g.
Chronicles versus Samuel-Kings) is often neither possible nor desirable.61 Dillard was
driven towards this paradigm-shift by the phenomena, despite the deep-seated evangelical
tendency to think that inspiration requires us to harmonize discrepancies in Scripture.

*In sum:* Our Old Princeton / WTS tradition of bibliology allows the phenomena of Scripture
to ward off invalid inferences from the doctrine of inspiration (without overthrowing that
fundamental doctrine).

This nuanced approach is typical of the progressiveness of orthodox bibliology – a note we
have often sounded, and one which is the focus of our next section.

**The progressiveness of the tradition.**

We hope that the above sketches of orthodox bibliology have served to highlight the strong
thread of progressiveness in the tradition that runs faithfully from Old Amsterdam and Old

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57 Ibid., 170 (alluding to the discrepancy between Num 25:9 and 1 Cor 10:8.)
58 Warfield, *Authority*, 220-221; Roger R. Nicole, “Charles Hodge’s View of Inerrancy,” in Hodges and Warfield,
*Inspiration*, 93-95.
60 “Harmonization: A Help and a Hindrance,” in Harvie M. Conn (ed.), *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A
61 Ibid., 157-64.
Princeton through WTS. In this section, we consolidate our claim that our institution’s *orthodox* heritage has a *progressive* (as well as a preservationist) strand. (Indeed, it may be that the genius of WTS consists in the interweaving of the two equally vital strands.)

We begin with a voice from Old Amsterdam. Alongside his strong preservationist tendencies, Abraham Kuyper also expressed convictions such as these:

> It does not follow that his [the theologian’s] studies are to have no other tendency than to confirm the confession of his Church, as if this were clothed with infallible authority. This was the fault committed by Scholasticism.  

> Theology is called ever and anon to test the historic, confessional life of the Church by its source, and to this end examine it after the norm of the Holy Scripture. By itself confessional life tends to petrify and fall asleep … (ibid., 593.)

> The history of Scholasticism shows, that when the expression of free thought is choked, and criticism of the confession becomes a matter of life and death, theology fails of her tasks in many respects. (Ibid., 597.)

We have already noted strongly progressive tendencies at Old Princeton – e.g. Warfield’s embrace of modern text criticism. As an aside, we would ask if an intriguing footnote by the HTFC Response amounts to a recognition of the progressiveness of Old Princeton? The footnote in question reads, “I.e., where and when Old Princeton is consistent with WCF I.”

Moving on to WTS, we note the views of one of the early faculty members, R.B. Kuiper. In his chapter titled “Progressiveness,” Kuiper makes statements such as these:

> In a very real sense the true church has always been progressive as well as conservative, and it is no less important that the church be progressive than that it be conservative. Its progressiveness is an important aspect of its glory.  

> There is a Latin sentence, long used by churchmen, which expresses aptly the church’s duty to be progressive: “Ecclesia reformata semper est reformanda.” That simply means that a reformed church must ever keep on reforming. It is not too strong an assertion that when a church ceases to reform it forfeits the right to be called reformed. (Ibid., 85.)

A similar openness to continued progress in theological reflection is seen in William Edgar’s recent work, *Truth in All its Glory*:

> Thus, Reformed theology hopes to go into more depth as it reflects on the basics. *It should not be static but always seek to improve, to reform.* Just as for people, growing in grace is not a luxury but a certainty, so in theology *we should always look to improve.* A famous motto, whose origins no one is sure about, has it that the church should be *semper reformanda quia reformata* (always reforming because reformed). In a word, it seeks to improve God’s people by itself being a *truly improving theology,* one that constantly refuses

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62 Encyclopedia, 592.

63 HTFC Response, 1, n. 2. Is the HTFC here implicitly criticizing Old Princeton for being at points inconsistent with WCF?

conformity to an evil world and constantly looks to improve in its formulations and its practice (Rom 12:1-2). This means that while it stands on the solid foundations of the past, this theology always wants to look for ways to be more faithful. In this endeavor Reformed theology should be in constant relations to other expressions of faith. It has a great deal to learn from other traditions. But it is also aware of its claim. 5

At Westminster, this progressiveness has been evident in all departments, not least Biblical Studies. To highlight this, we note the Bible Department’s willingness to embrace reедакtion criticism – a discipline frowned upon by many conservatives, who ask, Why would an inspired writer deliberately modify a sacred source?

Nevertheless, the Bible Dept. has championed the frowned-upon discipline. Dillard investigated the ways in which Chronicles intentionally modified Samuel-Kings in the interests of articulating a particular theological view of history. 6

Dillard’s work had an important precursor in the NT department, namely Ned B. Stonehouse’s study of the Synoptic Gospels. 7 The innovative character of Stonehouse’s work is noted by William L. Lane: “At the time when Stonehouse published his volume it marked a bold departure from both radical and conservative approaches to the Gospels.” 8 Stonehouse not only accepted that Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark as a literary source. He also undertook to glean the distinctive theologies of Matthew and Luke from the ways in which they had modified their Markan source. 9

Furthermore, Stonehouse drew attention to defects in the conservative approach to the Gospels:

Conservatives are prone to a traditionalism which is uncritical of the past and is not sufficiently alert to the distinction between what is written and what may have been erroneously inferred from the biblical text. In particular it has seemed to me that Christians who are assured as to the unity of the witness of the Gospels should take greater pains to do justice to the diversity of expression of that witness. (Ibid., 6)

Such study of historical contexts and literary purposes has in the past even been used to nuance our doctrine of Scripture. The use of Ancient Near Eastern data in understanding the character of scripture has venerable precedent at Westminster, in the work of Meredith G. Kline. 10 Kline used the ancient suzerain-vassal treaty as a model for scripture:

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65 Truth in All Its Glory (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2004) 22-23; emphasis added. Then after two paragraphs about the dangers of, on the one hand, a "stubborn conservatism that refuses to accept challenges and insights from different sources" and, on the other hand, "constantly looking for something new and original, like a branch trying to grow without a trunk," Edgar writes, "Living orthodoxy is the goal of Reformed theology." (p. 23)

66 2 Chronicles (WBC 15; Waco: Word, 1987).


69 Origins, 49, 111.

70 Witness of Matthew, 123; Witness of Luke, 95.

‘Testament,’ or ‘covenant,’ denotes more than a prominent element in the contents of the Bible. The documents which combine to form the Bible are in their very nature – a legal sort of nature, it turns out – covenantal. 

We are brought to the conclusion that the specific canonical function of the gospels is to be defined from the perspective of God’s use of them as legal documents in the administration of his covenant.

In the above quotes, when Kline refers to the bible as “covenantal,” the content of that term is derived from parallels with ANE treaties.

It is interesting to note that the implications of Kline’s methodology were perceived (and critiqued) by Greg L. Bahnsen, who wrote:

Whatever conclusions M.G. Kline may come to which are to have doctrinal authority must ultimately be related to the assertions of Scripture itself, not inferred from hypothesis-suggestive analogies built upon extrabiblical information about ancient treaties.

Our point here is not necessarily to affirm Kline’s view of Scripture, and certainly not to echo Bahnsen’s critique of Kline. We simply offer these quotes to reinforce our point that WTS has a tradition of using extra-biblical data to help us think through the meaning of the biblical text, including its own comments about itself.

We may appropriately end this section by noting that WTS’ commitment to progress is enshrined in our Faculty Manual (section II.2, “Academic Freedom and Obligation”, emphasis added):

It is recognized that among the duties of teachers in Westminster Theological Seminary is the pursuit of truth. The Seminary is founded upon the conviction that divine revelation is the source of truth. God has revealed Himself in nature and in history and, supremely and indispensably, in Jesus Christ and in the written Word, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. An understanding of these Scriptures is, then, most necessary to the pursuit of truth.

Christian freedom exists within the confession of Christian faith. Voting members of the Seminary Faculty have voluntarily accepted the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as the confession of their faith, or as a summary and just exhibition of that system of doctrine and religious belief, which is contained in Holy Scripture, and therein revealed by God for salvation. With regard to freedom these very standards affirm that “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, of matters of faith, or worship.” The authority of the Word of God brings deliverance from the constraints of unwholesome traditionalism and the tyranny of any academic establishment.

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72 Ibid., 75 (emphasis added.)
73 Ibid., 198.
**Progress is constantly being made**, as it has been made in the past, in the *discovery*, the exposition, and the expression of the great body of divine truth set forth in the Scriptures. *To that progress it is hoped that the members of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary will regularly contribute.* To that end the teacher should be (within reasonable and stated restraints) *free to propose and discuss* conclusions which are only *tentative as well as those which are settled*, *that* by debate and analysis a *better understanding and clearer statement* of the truth may be attained.

The academic freedom of the individual teacher must be exercised with the recognition that there may be, in the public mind, a *tacit representation of the Seminary* in whatever he or she says or writes, whether as a teacher, as a scholar, or as an individual citizen. He or she should therefore at all times be accurate, and exercise appropriate restraint.

We cannot help but note the tone of enthusiasm in our faculty manual for a robust commitment to searching out Scripture with the expectation that *progress* will be made. 75

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75 Prof. Enns has written a private, four-page reflection on this section of the faculty manual, particularly as it relates to the faculty vow. Interested readers can receive a copy by contacting Prof. Enns.
Section Three:  
Biblical Authority and the “Perfection” of the Bible

The Bible itself and the Bible alone is the ultimate authority on all matters of faith and life. This is precisely the notion to which Faculty and Board have all subscribed in WCF I.10:

The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

Not only is this the affirmation of centuries of orthodox Christians; it has occupied a unique and creative role at Westminster Seminary in particular. In other words, this doctrinal commitment has a rich and unique history of understanding at Westminster Seminary, a confessional institution that has enjoyed a tradition of courageous and innovative outworking of the implications of our confessional vow as stated above.

We raise this issue at the outset of this section due to our understanding of one of the underlying premises of the HTFC Response: that there is only one way to talk about the nature of the Bible, namely that “we determine our doctrine of Scripture in terms of its self-witness alone,” and, “This means for the WCF (and Reformed theology faithful to it) that the doctrine of Scripture is to be formulated and framed only according to itself as God’s word (i.e., its self-witness).” As we believe we have shown in this paper, and will further engage below, our tradition is much more nuanced and rich than these statements lead one to believe. I&I, we believe, joins a rich history of thought at Westminster Seminary, and the Reformed world more broadly, that engages the data of the Scripture as God’s word, even where those data may help us reflect on the nature of the very Scriptures in which God has revealed himself. This, we believe, is fully in keeping with our vow that Scripture alone will be our supreme judge “in all controversies of religion.” Not denying in any way Scripture’s self-witness as to its divine origin, indeed, based upon that very conviction and as well as our confessional commitment, we are privileged to look at the phenomena of Scripture as an expression of its self-witness.

As has already been noted in this paper, the statement on intellectual freedom in the Faculty Manual makes it abundantly clear that further theological developments and explorations are to be expected when the Scriptures – including, we believe, the data therein – are carefully engaged. Further, in a statement ratified by the Board and Faculty of the Seminary in May, 1980, we find the following paragraph:

Yet it is not unexpected that there should be times when questions arise. As we discover and seek to formulate in a Reformed perspective the rich complexity of Scriptural teaching, it is inevitable

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76HTFC Response, p. 5 (emphasis original). However, one of the problems with this statement, repeated at least 5 times between pages 4-6, is that Enns nowhere claims to desire to “establish” or “formulate” a doctrine of Scripture using the data of Scripture, which, perhaps the HTFC believes, would lead to some sort of position of “limited inerrancy” or “limited inspiration.” Enns merely wishes to have Evangelicals “engage the doctrinal implications” of work touched on in I&I. As has been clear in some of his clarifications, perhaps “re-engage” would have been more felicitous, since Evangelicals have attempted to address some of these issues in the past.

77Faculty Manual, II.2, cited above on p. 31.
that the question should sometimes arise: “Does this further formulation of Biblical doctrine represent enrichment to our theological heritage or does it mark a departure from it?”

Indeed, if this question never arose one might suspect that the critics were right. *If our intensive study of the Scripture never causes us to look again at our doctrinal formulations, we may well be accused of traditional creedalism rather than confessing Biblical theology in creedal form.*

The study represented in *I&I*, we believe, has *not* led to a departure from our theological heritage, but rather, in an apologetic fashion, has engaged difficult questions and perhaps begun to explore doctrinal formulations that may have under-stated the human dimension of Scripture. *Scripture* is the supreme judge, *not* our doctrinal formulations.

The HFC believes that *I&I*, assuming as it does the divine authorship and thus authority of the Bible, has embarked on an intensive study of the Scripture, dealing with the Scriptures on their own terms and set within the contextual and hermeneutical backgrounds in which they were given by God. If many believers who have these same assumptions have encountered the complex problems of ancient Near Eastern parallels, theological diversity, and the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament, and had those assumptions deeply challenged by the *data* of Scripture, it is *fully in keeping* with both the express statements in the WCF, and the tradition of Westminster Seminary, to *go not* merely to previous doctrinal formulations to answer these challenges, but to engage the very data of Scripture that have given rise to these “problems.” In the case of *I&I*, this engagement takes place through the use of the incarnational analogy. True, what *I&I* attempts to do is to popularize an analogy that has long been batted around in Reformed scholarly circles. We see the book unashamedly bringing this analogy to a popular level, and in so doing finding a way to engage some of the “hard” data of Scripture. Ironically, and this is our main point here, in keeping with WCF 1/10, creative engagement with the *Scripture* as a whole, not exclusively with traditional doctrinal formulations (though these formulations must always be in mind) is *the Confessional way forward* when confronting the complex problems addressed in *I&I*.

We believe, then, that *I&I* has delineated and engaged some of the most troubling critical problems of our day in Old Testament study, and done so in light of its express statements and assumption regarding the divine origin of Scripture. We admit that using the incarnational analogy is a *creative* way to explore these questions, which does address the issue in a different way than traditional presentations of 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:21. So it is true that *I&I* did not allow previous doctrinal formulations to determine the *only way* one can give expression to or even explore the data of Scripture. Perhaps some are uncomfortable with that creative exploration, but we believe it is fully in line with both the WCF and the practice of theological exploration that has existed at Westminster Seminary for many decades.

We believe, moreover, that this aspect of our debate may betray a more profound disagreement between members of HFC and the HTFC on the nature of confessionalism.

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78 “Westminster Statement on Justification” May 27, 1980, p. 3 (emphasis added)
For example, the HTFC Response on page 4 makes a significant point about WCF I, saying “there is no mention of the human authors of Scripture” (emphasis original). Such an assertion is in our view highly dubious, and, as noted in the previous section, is also irrelevant. But even granting that this statement is correct for sake of argument, we may raise the question whether this alleged absence in WCF I forever restricts reflection on the human authors of Scripture.

This is no idle question. In an earlier debate, the HTFC produced a document in which they make these concurrent statements:

We acknowledge that the Standards are not an exhaustive statement of biblical teaching, and that on those matters upon which the Standards make no statement there is clear room for further study of biblical teaching, providing that this does not conflict with any area of the Standards’ teaching either explicitly or by good and necessary consequence.

The Standards do not relate to our theological study merely as a starting point but, as with all church creeds, they also define and delimit the boundaries of legitimate theological reflection on the matters they address.

Given the sustained argument in HTFC Response against bringing the human dimension of authorship to bear on considerations regarding Scripture as divinely given, we are led to believe that any consideration of the human author when it comes to the doctrine of Scripture would be considered out of bounds by HTFC. If so, this demonstrates a radical departure from the tradition of Westminster Seminary and Old Princeton.

Consider, for example, John Murray, who in an essay on inspiration – certainly a concern of the doctrine of Scripture – can reflect on the human authors and write:

…it is just as obvious that the Bible also contains much that was not derived from supernatural communications. There is much material of varied character of which the writers were eyewitnesses or which they could have derived in the use of their natural faculties from extant sources of information. It must at least be conceded that there is much within the pages of Holy Writ that did not require for its knowledge on the part of the writers any supernatural revelation.

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79 WCF I assumes a cultural, literary and historical background, does it not? For example, by simply listing the books in I/2, or acknowledging the biblical books being written in Greek and Hebrew in I/8, or, more directly in I/1, to echo the language of Hebrews 1:1 by saying that, “therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church,” WCF I presents the cultural and historical (Greek and Hebrew as ancient languages; the language of “Paul’s epistles to…” or “The Epistle of James” or “of Peter,” etc.) and literary and redemptive-historical (“sundry times and divers manners”) backgrounds of the biblical books. We find ourselves in agreement with Gaffin’s exposition of Heb 1:1-2a, which language is reflected in WCF I/1, in writing that “…this statement captures three interrelated factors: a. revelation as a historical process, b. the diversity involved in that process (including, we might observe, diverse modes and various literary genres – as well as, too, whatever legitimate methodologies have emerged in the modern era for dealing with them), and c. Christ as the omega-point, the eschatological endpoint of the process. (Gaffin, “Vitality of Reformed Dogmatics,” 25; emphasis added).

80 “The Historical and Theological Field Committee Response to Confessionalism and the teaching of the Westminster Standards on Justification,” Fall, 2005 (emphasis added).

81 John Murray, Collected Writings, IV, 38 (emphasis added).
Or compare Charles Hodge, who writes:

The sacred writers impressed their peculiarities on their several productions as plainly as though they were the subjects of no extraordinary influence. This is one of the phenomena of the Bible patent to the most cursory reader. It lies in the very nature of inspiration that God spake in the language of men; that He uses men as organs, each according to his particular gifts and endowments. When He ordains praise out of the mouths of babes, they must speak as babes, or the whole power and beauty of the tribute will be lost... [The] inspired penmen wrote out of the fullness of their own thoughts and feelings, and employed the language and modes of expression which to them where the most natural and appropriate.  

Would the HTFC now accuse Murray and Hodge of being outside the bounds of, or perhaps “inconsistent” with, WCF I in making such statements, or would they feel the need to “correct” Murray and Hodge for making these statements?

But the HFC wonders if there is even more going on here. The entire HTFC Response appears to be predicated upon a strict subscription that we believe the two paragraphs cited on the previous page evince. The above paragraphs functionally declare that the Standards, on every area they address are beyond the correction of the Scriptures, because the Scriptures must always be read in conformity with the Standards. This understanding, however, is set against the WCF itself, when it says in XXXI.4:

All synods or councils, since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both (emphasis added).

This has also fundamentally reversed the rich tradition of Westminster Seminary in our understanding of the relationship between biblical and systematic theology – between redemptive historical exegesis, and the ordering of its results in logical categories. For example, consider the statement by John Murray:

Systematics becomes lifeless and fails in its mandate just to the extent to which it has become detached from exegesis. And the guarantee against a stereotyped dogmatics is that systematic theology be constantly enriched, deepened, and expanded by the treasures increasingly drawn from the Word of God. Exegesis keeps systematics not only in direct contact with the Word but it ever imparts to systematics [sic] the power which is derived from that Word. The Word is living and powerful.  

Further, that the Standards, not exegesis of God’s word, function to “define and delimit the boundaries of legitimate theological reflection.” If, as is the tradition of Westminster Seminary, theological reflection is not to be divorced from exegesis and engagement with God’s Word, then the order has functionally been reversed: the Standards dictate to the Scriptures. The “norming” and the “normed” norm have been reversed if the two paragraphs from the HTFC’s Confessionalism document are embraced and employed in exegesis.

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82 C. Hodge, Systematic Theology, I.157 (emphasis added)
This type of strict subscription has never been demanded of faculty members at Westminster Seminary, and indeed demonstrates a departure from the tradition of the seminary, laid out in other sections of this paper, which holds to dogmatic reflections as constantly being refined by Scripture. We only bring up these points because it may be the case that these assumptions about confessionalism, particularly vis-à-vis the human authors of Scripture, drive much of the HTFC Response’s discomfort with the program in I&I.

This all leads to the question whether our confessional setting now requires us to submit to what an earlier Faculty and Board called “traditional creedalism”. Or, on the contrary, will we continue to ask the same question that Richard Gaffin, writing in 1981, did when he asked,

…whether in our midst Scripture will still have the last word, whether the whole counsel of God will be something more than what we imagine we already have under our control and have already mastered with our theological structures and doctrinal formulations. Will we, too, as the church must in every time and place, continue to return there to be reconfirmed and, when necessary, corrected in our faith, and, above all to discover there the inexhaustible and “unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8)? [unpublished letter to the faculty/Board]

Elsewhere, John Murray writes of

…the need to bring theological formulation to the test of Scripture as the only infallible norm. As it is true that ecclesia reformata reformanda est so also it is true that theologia reformata reformanda est. When any generation is content to rely upon its theological heritage and refuses to explore for itself the riches of divine revelation, then declension is already under way and heterodoxy will be the lot of the succeeding generation. The powers of darkness are never idle and in combating error each generation must fight its own battle in exposing and correcting the same. It is light that dispels darkness and in this sphere light consists in the enrichment which each generation contributes to the stores of theological knowledge. ⁸⁴

In its attempt to address some of the most challenging issues raised in the study of the Old Testament, we believe I&I has been faithful to the intentions in the exhortations by Gaffin, Murray, and Hodge, and the above statements from the Faculty and Board. Scripture alone must be our final court of appeal, and not theological structures or doctrinal formulations we already believe we have mastered. I&I embarked in a prolonged handling of some of the most difficult issues flagged up by critics of the Scripture. It is quite true that I&I did not retreat to traditional modes of expressions or formulations. But we do not believe I&I is thereby out of accord with those traditional expressions or formulations. Rather, I&I self-consciously attempts to engage creatively with these issues and speak to an audience to whom loudly shouting traditional answers would not have held sway nor been pastorally effective. I&I is written for people who already know these answers, who hold to these conclusions, but who now find themselves troubled by the data. When unbelievers use the phenomena to challenge the traditional formulations, we should not ignore the phenomena, but must, rather, go back and look at the phenomena, perhaps from a different perspective. Through its engagement with just these data, I&I, we believe, demonstrates what we confess: that Scripture alone, in its entirety (including the phenomena) is our supreme judge in all controversies of religion.

⁸⁴ Murray, Collected Writings, IV, 8.
We wonder, then, whether the HTFC Response might subtly question the tradition of creative engagement with all of Scripture as being this supreme judge, both in Reformed thought and more pointedly at Westminster Seminary. For example, as already noted (p. 29 above), when confronted with the thorny and controversial issue of historicity in Kings and Chronicles, Ray Dillard took a courageous step in his publication of several articles on the Chronicler’s theological art, as well as his *magnum opus*, the well-known commentary on II Chronicles. Dillard was not content simply to work with Kings and Chronicles, and the historical discrepancies between them. He was well aware of the *doctrinal implications* of his work. We again quote from Dillard:

> We believe that the Scriptures are all that God wants them to be, without any compromise of his own glory and veracity. But the nature of Scripture is not established alone from the proof texts so often cited in reference to that doctrine, but also from the phenomena we observe there. The doctrine of Scripture, like all other doctrines, must be derived from Scripture itself and not subjected to some other more ultimate standard derived from modern philosophy.  

We hope this paragraph, and the several quotes above, make clear that in the tradition of Westminster Seminary, while gladly working with a ‘sympathetic-critical’ “stance…toward the doctrines and confessions of the church,” the faculty has always determined to have the Scriptures, in their entirety, inform doctrinal reflection and be our supreme judge in all controversy. This consistent engagement with the Scripture is what has been called by one of our esteemed teachers the *vitality* of Reformed dogmatics.

Finally, and briefly, we wish to address one particular paragraph which has caused much confusion and discussion in the HFC’s deliberations over the past several months. The paragraph follows a quotation from p. 109 of *I&I*, which is taken from the closing section in the chapter on the complex question of theological diversity in the Old Testament. Most immediately in context, *I&I* on p. 109 has raised the complex questions of historiography in Kings and Chronicles, the genre questions in Proverbs and Psalms, and other elements which seem to challenge simplistic notions of the “perfection” of the Scriptures. Perhaps Enns’s mention of “apologetics” in the quoted section prompted the paragraph in the HTFC Response found on page 8, quoted here in full:

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88 “If the vitality of dogmatics is the vitality of the word – and, what is equally important, of the Spirit working in the church with the word – then dogmatics can have no more vital concern than the inscripturated word and how it handles the word.” Gaffin, “Reformed Dogmatics,” 20. It is our contention that a robust engagement with the phenomena of Scripture is in keeping with this exhortation.  
89 The notion of the “perfection” of Scripture as used in the history of reflection on the nature Scripture does not seem to have any agreed-upon definition, as meanings range from virtual synonyms for *sufficiency* (perfect to accomplish what God intended; or, in A. A. Hodge’s understanding, containing a *perfect* system of doctrine) to *inerrancy* (completely free from all error). Based on the HTFC’s use of the idea of “perfection” in light of issues such as harmonization, we take it they are using it as synonymous with “inerrancy.”
In Van Til’s approach, and behind him the entirety of Reformation thought, it is just the perfection of Scripture that, in part, attests it to be the word of God and constitutes it as the principium cognoscendi. Without this perfection, there can be no knowledge of anything, and certainly not of God. The natural question might come -- just how do we prove to nonbelievers that Christianity is true if not by the fact of Scripture's self-attesting perfection? (emphasis added)

Particularly the final sentence, namely “proving” Christianity’s truth, in light of the reference to Van Til in the first sentence, is baffling. What exactly is it that HTFC sees as the proper method in the above quotation, particularly as that touches on the discipline of biblical studies undertaken from a Van Tilian perspective? The Response appears to link Van Til’s appeal to the Scripture, as the principium cognoscendi, to Scripture’s “perfection,” to an apologetic method of proving to nonbelievers that Christianity is true. Herein we believe lies the confusion, and the potential implications for biblical studies.

For Van Til, Scripture, being the very Word of God, does indeed establish the fact that God has spoken, and this reality of Divine revelation undergirds all human knowledge. But said basis for human knowledge is not a rational demonstration of the “perfection” of a Scripture by some humanly recognized standard of “harmoniousness,” especially since for Enlightenment rationalists Scripture looks anything but harmonious and perfect, given, for example, the question of historiographical diversity. I&I, as a matter of fact, in addressing the questions it raises, is perfectly consistent with Van Til in presupposing the divinity of all of the Scripture, and from there engaging the phenomena of Scripture that challenge simplistic notions of Scripture’s “perfection.” The book engages in a defense of the inspiration of the Scripture, in all its detail and its minutiae, to the target audience of I&I – namely, those troubled by the phenomena of Scripture.

In other words, if some people have rejected Christianity precisely because of the phenomena of Scripture that seem to challenge its “perfection,” then perhaps, unless Reformed biblical studies is to revert only to engage in harmonization to “prove” the “perfection” of Scripture, the wisest and most profitable way forward is to look at the phenomena and say, unashamedly, “this, not some other way we Enlightenment people might have liked, is exactly the way God revealed himself to us.” For example, I&I addresses the “problem” of varied histories of the same events in line with Dillard and Stonehouse: these are the ways that God desires we have these histories narrated for us, and the proper response is not necessarily to harmonize them to what “really happened” behind the scenes. We admit, at times harmonization is possible and can be a help (though harmonizations are by nature hypothetical). But at other times, appreciating the theological value in each of the histories is more helpful.  

90 In the same way, we believe Ray Dillard adopted a Van Tilian perspective in his work using redaction criticism in the Chronicles.

91 The bibliography here, from Westminster faculty alone, is well-known. In addition to Stonehouse and Dillard, see for example, Al Groves’s unpublished article, “Saul Bashing: An Appropriate Agenda for the Book of Judges?” Paper delivered to the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 2000. In this paper Groves, in part, deals with the historical discrepancies between Joshua and Judges, and rather than attempting a harmonization, suggests that the author of Judges is framing several characters in Judges in the light of Saul (a literary concern), to make a point about the importance of kingship from the tribe of Judah, not Benjamin (a theological concern). See also Groves’s unpublished presentation to the Westminster Board of Trustees in May, 2004, in which he engaged in this same sort of non-harmonizing reading between Joshua and Judges to bring out the teaching of the book of Judges.
Finally, *how* is anyone fully persuaded that God is speaking in the Scriptures, and that his revelation constitutes the *principium cognoscendi*? According to WCF I.5,

...*our full persuasion* and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the *inward work of the Holy Spirit*, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts (emphasis added).

The WCF, it seems to us, rightly maintains that we cannot *argue* someone to a conviction of God speaking through the Scriptures, however much we might attempt to demonstrate the “perfection” of Scripture. The full persuasion and assurance of Scripture’s truth and divine authority is a belief, dare we say an “instinct,” enjoyed by those in whom the Holy Spirit has worked. From an apologetic perspective, attempting to argue with someone that every one of the problematic phenomena of Scripture are only *apparently* “problems,” if granting a rationalistic mindset that must know what “really happened,” will only trap the biblical scholar or the evangelist in an endless shouting match. Is it not wiser and more pastorally sound not to attempt a *proof* of Scripture’s divinity with a thousand explanations, but to interpret and explain the Scriptures as God’s *incarnated* word, the *full Scriptures* we actually have, in completely human form, trusting in the Spirit-worked persuasion and assurance of Scripture’s “infallible truth and divine authority” (WCF I.5)?
Section Four: The Incarnational Analogy and the Doctrine of Scripture

The HTFC Response correctly judges that the Incarnational analogy is a major organizing concept in I&I\(^{92}\) and for that reason devotes considerable space to discrediting Enns’s use of it and fondness for it. The HTFC Response formulates the essence of its concern in two different ways. In the major bulleted points at the beginning, the HTFC Response professes concern over a “reductionistic Incarnational model” (p. 1). A page later, in another programmatic statement of its concern, the HTFC Response avers: “It seems to us that the Incarnational model advanced in I&I is confused at best, and serves to contribute to [compromising the doctrine of Scripture as presented in WCF I]” (p.2).

Given that one would normally mitigate confusion by instruction, discussion, and gentle persuasion and these are in short supply in a document of this genre, we will take the liberty to reformulate the basic charge in regards to Enns’s use of the incarnational model thus: that it is intentionally reductionistic and sets him at odds with the Westminster Standards. This is what the HTFC Response sets out to prove, as indeed it must.

Unfortunately this general charge is not developed in any one place in the HTFC Response; even the long section II entitled "Incarnation: Analogical Heresies, Apostolic Hermeneutics, and Post-conservative Evangelicalism" is fundamentally incomplete on the issue.\(^{94}\) We can only assume, therefore, that the authors of the HTFC Response intended the readers to immediately grasp the relevance of disparate arguments to the charge and thus be persuaded by the force and logic of case. We can only hope, then, that we have correctly perceived the supporting arguments and their logical relationships; and, in the interest of clarity, offer the following summary account:

1) Professor Enns effectively denies the Westminster Confession’s doctrine of Scripture by not maintaining the Confession’s exclusive concern with the primary and essential divinity of Scripture.

   The Confession’s exclusive focus is correct because doctrine is properly derived only from explicit teaching of Scripture, which in this case would be only the self-attesting statements of Scripture presumably interpreted without the help of outside data.\(^5\)

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\(^{92}\)As the HTFC Response observes, "the Incarnational analogy, according to I&I, is the contextual starting point in terms of which the doctrinal formulations, proposals, reassessment, etc. in I&I proceed. I&I explicitly identifies this analogy as its starting point" (HTFC Response, 10). Likewise: "The Incarnational analogy is accordingly of central significance for the formulations, proposals, etc. that are given in I&I. It is therefore critical that the Incarnational analogy as utilized in I&I avoid fundamental ambiguities or errors" (HTFC Response, 11).

\(^{94}\)It further explains that this confused Incarnational model manifests itself particularly in the “notion of apostolic hermeneutics presented in I&I,” and in the “apparent affinity with post-conservative evangelicalism of I&I.” The substance of these two charges are examined in other sections of this response.

\(^{95}\)As an obvious example, the title, "Incarnation: Analogical Heresies, Apostolic Hermeneutics, and Post-conservative Evangelicalism,” promises an exploration of the incarnational analogy with respect to post-conservative evangelicalism but the final topic is actually given its own major heading.

\(^{96}\)As the HTFC Response puts it (p. 5): “Enns denies in his doctrine of scripture that scripture must be the “sole norm” for a doctrine of scripture. That such seems to be denied in I&I is attested to, for example, in the statement in I&I that we need to determine what the Bible as a whole is ‘on the evidence that comes from within the Bible itself, as well as from the world surrounding the Bible.’ (15; emphasis added).”
Therefore, in the Confession’s exclusive focus on the divinity of Scripture, a Reformed doctrine of Scripture is technically complete and requires no reference to the humanity of scripture. Indeed, a Reformed doctrine of scripture admits no impact from the phenomena of Scripture.

2) Prof. Enns incorrectly uses the Incarnational analogy to shift focus onto the humanity of Scripture, and thereby away from its Divinity.

Prof. Enns fails to notice or heed Warfield’s clear warning about the severe limitations of the analogy and would have been better served by adopting Warfield’s alternate model of concursus.

According to orthodox Christology, the humanity of Jesus Christ was only secondary and contingent (though real) while his divinity was primary and essential. The Incarnational analogy, properly used, should therefore always result in an explicit emphasis of the primary and essential divinity of Scripture not on the secondary and contingent humanity of Scripture.

Prof. Enns’s not only reverses the emphasis, thereby “effectively denying” the “essential,” foundational, and primary divinity of Scripture, but also evinces, on at least one occasion, a dangerously one-sided Christology.

3) Prof. Enns’s misguided use of the analogy accounts for his defective use of Second Temple evidence with respect to the New Testament use of the Old and is consistent with his openness to Post-conservative Evangelicalism (not to mention Barthianism). Note that the concerns of 3) will be dealt with in Sections 5 and 6 below.

4) The net result is that with respect to this central theme of his book, I&I, Prof. Enns is either guilty of unforgivable incompetence or, worse, willful and reckless negligence.

In summary, the HTFC Response appears first to suggest that Professor Enns has broken with the Confession and then argues that he has recklessly done so. If this enumerated summary adequately captures the logic of this phase of the HTFC Response—-and we are certainly willing to be instructed otherwise,-- we will turn to an examination of the arguments. It will be our contention that each argument fails and that therefore the case fails. Argument 2., in particular, upon which the HTFC Response’s case hinges, will be shown to rest on a tendentious misreading

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96 “It is worth noting that in WCF I, there is no mention of the human authors of Scripture. This is not an oversight in the Confession; it is not that the Reformers and their progeny did not recognize the human element of Scripture. It is not that they were not privy to extra-biblical sources and other cultural, contextual and human elements. Rather, it is in keeping with the testimony of Scripture itself about itself that the WCF affirms that Scripture is foundational and essentially divine (though contingently, secondarily and truly human)” (see HTFC Response, p. 4; emphasis original). Therefore, the HTFC Response argues on the same page, “There seems to be a fundamental incoherence between what I&I offers and what is affirmed in WCF I/4.”

97 As the HTFC Response concludes its discussion of Warfield on page 11: “Any analogical use of the Incarnation, therefore, is tenuous and at best loosely illustrative. It is likely for this reason, at least, that Warfield preferred to talk of “concurrsus” with respect to the Divine-human activity of inscripturation... It should be noted that concursus is another model for thinking of the writing of Scripture, and in that sense is not easily included in an Incarnational analogy.

98 “But statements of this kind [invoking the Incarnational Analogy] do not even begin to stipulate precisely how Christ is both God and human and further how the divine and human relate. Therefore, even the statement that Christ is ‘both God and human’ is insufficiently precise to help us apply such an analogy to Scripture. What is troubling in the discussion of I&I, is that the relation of the divine and human in the Incarnation, and thus analogically in Scripture, is confusing at best. What is not affirmed in I&I is that the locus of the unity of the divine and human in Christ is the essential divinity of the person of the Logos” (HTFC Response, 10, emphasis original). This is made plain at the conclusion of the introductory section. This is not an oversight in the HTFC Response.

99 This is made plain at the conclusion of the introductory section to the long central division of the critique (provocatively entitled “Incarnation: Analogical Heresies, Apostolic Hermeneutics, and Post-conservative Evangelicalism”): “However, this necessary and central distinction—a distinction between that which is primary or essential and that which is secondary or contingent, a distinction entailed by Chalcedonian Christology and present in the Reformed tradition’s use of the Incarnational analogy -- is not only absent in I&I, but is, in effect, denied at critical junctures” (HTFC Response, 12-13).
of I&I compounded by equivocation occasioned, ironically, by a disregard of Warfield’s warning against pressing the Incarnational analogy too far.

Evaluation of the Separate Arguments

Argument One: Our confessional Standards demand, in every treatment of the topic, an explicit emphasis on the primary and “essential” divinity of the Bible precisely because they are solely concerned with the explicit teaching of Scripture. Indeed, given the Standards’ exclusive concern with the divinity of the Bible, a doctrine of Scripture is technically complete with this emphasis and requires no reference to the humanity of scripture. Moreover, it admits no impact from the phenomena of Scripture.

Certain aspects of this argument have been largely handled already (Section Two and Three). We will content ourselves here with a couple of reorienting reminders.

Doctrine and the Explicit Teaching of Scripture

One of the most basic findings of modern linguistics, a discipline to which evangelicals have made major contributions, is that meaning is not merely the product of words but rather the product of the interplay of words with each other (syntax and discourse construction) and with a pervasively important, multidimensional context (pragmatics—which includes everything from an author’s intention to the audience’s situation).¹⁰⁰ The lion’s share of the total semantic payload is a function of pragmatics with explicit language serving as the focusing mechanism or thematizer of each discreet act of communication. The words indicate the specifics of what is being said, but their meaning rests within a complex web of contextual meaning.¹⁰¹

This applies to our reading and understanding of the Bible. Indeed, the God of the Bible, as the creator of language, anticipated the modern findings of linguistics by giving due attention to both syntactical issues and pragmatics: the Bible was written, by the plan and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in three real human languages by human beings immersed in at least three different cultures and separated by centuries. The Bible, unlike other putative scriptures in our world, invites us to understand its words in a multidimensional, unfolding context, even while it provides enough context to insure that its central message is accessible by the humblest believer. This is why seminaries like Westminster have historically both affirmed the perspicuity of

¹⁰⁰ For a more complete discussion of the importance of pragmatics in meaning, see Richard A Young, Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994) 7, 221, 264; Peter Cotterell and Max M. Turner, Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation (InterVarsity Press, 1989) 90-97, prefer to speak of a shared “presupposition pool” and reserve the use of the term “pragmatics” for that branch of linguistic semantics that studies the powerful effects of presupposition pools on the communication process. For a concise and well written treatment of the limits of words as the sole arbiters meaning in Scripture, see Moises Silva, Biblical Words and Their Meaning.

¹⁰¹ Imagine someone from another time and culture reading the following lines from a scrap of American newspaper with only an incomplete paperback dictionary (words/grammar) as a resource: “The crowds roared the Indians chant. The lonely Indian faced the pitcher and plate. The Braves piled out of their dugout. . . . he popped out.” Since all the key terms have other, more standard meanings, the poor reader, standing outside the circle of pragmatics, might well conclude that the passage described a Native-American sacred meal, rather than a baseball game!
Scripture and required rigorous courses in Hebrew and Greek, Old and New Testament introduction, hermeneutics, and grammatical-historical exegesis.\textsuperscript{102}

It is for this reason that the phenomena of Scripture must impact our doctrine of Scripture, not by determining it or overruling Scripture's self-attestation (indeed we are convinced that no one would arrive at an orthodox doctrine of Scripture solely on the basis of a study of its phenomena; we need Special Revelation about Scripture for an accurate doctrine of Scripture and we need the inward work of the Holy Spirit to fully embrace it!), but by helping us \textit{correctly to understand and apply} the self-attesting statements of Scripture. To use an analogy, John's explicit asseveration that "the Word was God" has often been misunderstood\textsuperscript{103} by those who fail(ed) to factor in other narratival and non-propositional data from John's Gospel (that Jesus got tired and hungry, that he died, etc.), to say nothing of the data provided by the other Gospels. A proper "Johannine Christology" must start with John's explicit formulations about Christ but also be shaped by all the other relevant data. This is just to say that a proper construal of the Christology of John results from a full and careful exegesis, which attends both to the words of Scripture and to the pragmatics of Scripture.

The same must be said, \textit{mutatis mutandis}, about our doctrine of Scripture: we start with what Scripture explicitly says about itself (words, syntax)—this frames the question—but an accurate understanding and proper application of that self-attestation required for accurate formulation of a full doctrine requires attention to context (pragmatics), within which the phenomena of Scripture play a major role. The phenomena of scripture are not the starting point of our doctrine of Scripture, nor do they determine that doctrine, but they do impact it, and necessarily so; they are part of the data out of which sound exegetical conclusions must be drawn (note the comment of Hodge cited on the following page).

This is true for a doctrine of Scripture in a special or heightened way. In a very relevant sense, the doctrine of scripture, as opposed to all other loci of Christian doctrine, is in a unique position, because with respect to it and it alone we have access to both a canonically defined teaching and to canonically defined phenomena. On all other matters of doctrine (Christology, ecclesiology, etc) our canonical data are in one way or another strictly Biblical teaching (whether this teaching be derived directly from straightforwardly didactic canonical texts or Biblical texts of other genres by careful exegesis). To be sure, even in the case of Christology or, say, hamartiology, one can fill out the canonically derived materials by appeal to one’s personal apprehension of phenomena all around us (Christ answers prayer, human history bears out the doctrine of depravity), but these appeals, while perfectly proper, are drawing from extra-canonical data. We have no canonical access to the phenomena of the earthly Jesus. But with respect to the doctrine of Scripture, the "subject" of the doctrine is also the direct object of study.

The God of scripture could have minimized the impact of these phenomena on a final doctrine (and indeed on our understanding of the Biblical teaching from which the doctrine is derived) by

\textsuperscript{102} Under the influence of Vos, Westminster has also recognized that the branch of "Exegetical Theology" fails to do its job if it stops with these topics. It must press on to understand this exegetical data within the ultimate context or horizon of the redeeming and self revealing God by engaging in "Biblical Theology." But Vos was quite clear that Biblical Theology belongs within a larger Exegetical Theology and cannot be co-opted by Systematic Theology.\textsuperscript{103} John’s Gospel was the favorite gospel among docetic and Gnostic groups within the early Christian movement in part because it was the most amenable to a misreading that allowed for a denial of the essential humanity of Jesus.
using a different model or method of inspiration, e.g., by speaking only through one or two amanuenses in precisely the same style, by sheer dictation, etc., such as is claimed for the Qur’an; but, to echo Kuyper, “this has not been the way of the Lord” (Dictaten 2:1.75; more on this below [p. 56]). Kuyper goes on to explain,

As in the work of redemption he does not continue to confront us transcendentally as God, but imminently in Jesus Christ has united the divine and human natures in such a way that the divine life has appeared in a man, so also the Lord God has given us H. Scripture not transcendentally but imminently, because he has so intimately united the divine factor with the human factor that the divine word has come to us, always from a human pen, mostly from a human mind, and not seldom from a human heart.

In view of this divine decision, the doctrine of Scripture’s unique relationship to both scriptural teaching and scriptural phenomena is, for the Christian, an unavoidable one; one, moreover, in which we need to learn to take delight, in that by both of these modes the divine author has been pleased to show his wisdom and grace. Professor Enns, then, does not deny "in his doctrine of scripture that scripture must be ‘sole norm’ for a doctrine of Scripture" (HTFC Response, 5); rather he is wrestling with an often neglected aspect of that "sole norm": which is that, by the design of its Author, the Scriptures are, at virtually every point, also the words of historically- and culturally-bound men who spoke and wrote freely.

It is for this reason that a full doctrine of Scripture ought to take account of the phenomena of Scripture—the proper understanding, weighing, and application of the very proof texts demands it—and to glory in the mystery of inspiration, that “men spoke from God, moved by the Holy Spirit.” As has been shown, this is hardly a theological novum in our confessional tradition:

C. Hodge: The nature of inspiration is to be learnt from the Scriptures; from their didactic statements, and from their phenomena.\(^{104}\)

A. Kuyper: The ray of the divine the light, so one imagined, penetrated to our lost race, unbroken and without becoming colored. For that reason every product of revelation had to exhibit for every eye the mark of divine perfection, with reference not only to its content but also to its form. It was not noticed that this entire representation was in conflict with the canon for all revelation, which is given in the incarnation as the center of all revelation. Naturally, if all revelation, including its manifestation, had come to us in divine perfection, the Christ too ought to have appeared in a state of glory. Now that, on the contrary, he manifested himself in the form of a servant, and appeared in a state of humiliation, it was hereby settled that the ray of the divine light truly broke into the atmosphere of our sinful-creaturely life, and for that reason what is imperfect and inadequate in our broken existence had to cling to the manifestation of revelation.\(^{105}\)


\(^{105}\) Abraham Kuyper, Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid (3rd edition; 3 vols; Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1908-09). 3:78-79 as cited and translated by Gaffin, "Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?", 260. In this perceptive statement, Kuyper is describing and correcting the “mechanical inspiration” view of some 17th century scholastics. In so doing, Kuyper clearly demonstrates the lengths to which he was willing to go in using the incarnational analogy. Notice should be taken of Gaffin's footnote 30 where he discusses the meaning of the Dutch words behind "imperfect" and
**H. Bavinck:** Although in the last several decades a great deal of attention and effort has been devoted to the doctrine of Scripture, no one will claim that a satisfactory solution has been found. While on the one hand the self-testimony of Scripture remains unimpaired, on the other the contemporary investigation Scripture brings to light phenomena and facts that are hard to reconcile with that self-testimony. One does not do justice to that dilemma by saying that neither the prophets and apostles nor even Christ but only the Jewish tradition has taught the dogma of the inspiration and absolute authority of Scripture. Nor does one resolve the dilemma in all its sharpness by closing one's eyes to the serious objections that careful Bible research derives from the facts it discovers and can advance against the self-testimony of Scripture.  

**R. Dillard:** We believe that the scriptures are all that God wants them to be, without any compromise of his own glory and veracity. But the nature of Scripture is not established alone from the proof texts so often cited in reference to that doctrine, but also from the phenomena we observe there. The doctrine of Scripture, like all other doctrines, must be derived from Scripture itself and not subjected to some other more ultimate standard derived from modern philosophy.

These men (and others like them) no more subscribed to a doctrine of Scripture that only spoke to its divinity than they subscribed to a doctrine of Christ that only spoke to his divinity. Their concern was to be faithful to the data offered by scripture and to do so responsibly in face of new challenges.

**The Confession and its “Silence”**

What are we to do with the one-sided emphasis of the Confession that the HTFC Response has pressed forward in its case? In Section Two we already noted some of the difficulties of the Response’s argument from WCF’s alleged silence on the issue of Scripture’s humanity. Here we wish further to note a logical problem with the argument. The HTFC Response says,

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106 Hermann Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, volume 1: Prolegomena* (general editor John Bolton, translator John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996): 419-20. This is the conclusion of an historical survey in which Bavinck takes to task not only the critical approaches of liberal scholarship but also the one-sided emphasis on the divinity of Scripture. Bavinck is about to suggest that a "satisfactory solution" is to be found in the direction of his theory of "organic inspiration."

It is worth noting that in WCF I, there is no mention of the human authors of Scripture. This is not an oversight in the Confession; it is not that the Reformers and their progeny did not recognize the human element of Scripture. It is not that they were not privy to extra-biblical sources and other cultural, contextual and human elements. Rather, it is in keeping with the testimony of Scripture itself about itself that the WCF affirms that Scripture is foundationally and essentially divine (though contingently, secondarily and truly human). (HTFC Response, 4; emphasis original)

There are a couple of interesting items here. First, the HTFC Response stresses that "there is no mention of the human authors of Scripture" in WCF I, yet in the next breath affirms--also with emphasis--"the WCF affirms that Scripture is foundationally and essentially divine (though contingently, secondarily and truly human)." Where does the material in parenthesis come from if "there is no mention of the human authors of Scripture" in WCF I? Are the authors of the HTFC Response trying to expand the teaching of the Confession here? This is would be quibbling about words except that Professor Enns is being accused of breaking with the Confession because he has gone beyond it by writing a book that focuses on the humanity of Scripture. In the space of a few lines, the authors of the HTFC Response have evinced two different stances towards the Confession: when advancing the charge of heterodoxy against Professor Enns, they have read the Confession restrictively (i.e., what is not explicitly permitted is prohibited). But when the focus shifts to the reasons for or legitimacy of the Divines’ singular focus, they themselves have supplied the putatively missing dimension and read the Confession open-endedly.

Moreover, the claim about the knowledge of the Reformers and their progeny is questionable both as to its significance and relevance. No one questions that our theological ancestors recognized in some way “the human element of Scripture” or that the authors of Scripture were privy to some extra-biblical sources, etc. But, as shown in Section Two, it is simply a matter of record that the overwhelming bulk of the linguistic, historical, and documentary discoveries that would later lead men like Kuyper, Bavinck and Warfield to gently criticize their Reformed ancestors were not on the horizon or not fully assessed in the mid-17th century. The fact that the explanations of "organic inspiration" and "concursus" only arose in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is impressive testimony that the HTFC Response’s claim is simply overstated and largely irrelevant. The question is what would the Reformers and their immediate progeny do with all the data that confronted Kuyper, Bavinck, and Warfield, not to mention all the data that have surfaced since Bavinck and Warfield?

We suspect that, with respect to this first cluster of charges, there is at bottom a profound disagreement over how the Confession ought to be read and applied. Are we bound not only by the inclusions of the Divines but also by their omissions? Do we heartily receive and adopt not only their rich theological and biblical insight, but also their necessary and understandable ignorance? Would the Divines themselves have wanted it this way? To answer “yes” to such questions would represent a kind of narrowing of Confessionalism that Kuyper, Bavinck, Vos, Ridderbos, Dillard and Conn would hardly recognize and would spell the effective end of sola Scriptura. To answer “no,” however, means that we have to think in terms of trajectories carefully framed by the truth of the Standards yet open both to new insights, articulations, and
emphases and to criticism of ourselves and our past in the light of new challenges.\textsuperscript{108} The Confession’s one-sided emphasis was justifiable in the $17^{th}$ century when even the language and style of New Testament Greek could seriously be entertained as a special Holy Ghost language (see Section Two). We must heartily affirm what it has positively affirmed, but a wooden and foreclosing appeal to its \textit{silence} today is not justifiable, because it is neither honest with what scripture presents us with nor responsible in bringing that to full and safe expression. It is not a matter here of correcting the Confession—only the church can do that--, but of using it well and of supplementing it in our teaching and writing in the service of the gospel. This is what Prof. Enns has sought to do.

In the light of these considerations, it is evident that the HTFC Response has not made its case with respect to the first cluster of charges. When the HTFC Response charges “that \textit{I&I} effectively denies, in that it does not presuppose in its argumentation, that Scripture is foundationally and essentially divine” and when it further implies that \textit{I&I} stands in conflict with the Confession, we have to disagree on two counts:

1) To paraphrase a well known warning against the argument from silence, “What is not said is not thereby denied.” But the HTFC Response’s argument at this point does not even rise to the level of an argument from silence, since \textit{I&I} is not at all silent about its assumption that the Bible is the word of God. No, the HTFC Response seeks to make its case by employing a rather odd “argument from lack of correct emphasis.” But the lack of \textit{explicit stress} does not add up to a denial or a failure to presuppose. \textit{I&I} was crafted for a specific rhetorical purpose—to help those who believe in the divinity of Scripture to maintain that belief in the face of certain challenges-- and that purpose rightfully determines the explicit emphases of the book. It is a truism in semantics, in the philosophy of language, and in Van Tilian apologetics that the force of one’s deepest convictions is rarely discovered by measuring the words devoted to them, but rather by noting the point or hinge around which all other statements and arguments turn.\textsuperscript{109} A balanced reading of \textit{I&I} will reveal that the all-important hinge for the book is precisely the point that the Bible is God’s word.\textsuperscript{110}

2) The HTFC’s standard of “correct emphasis” is derived not from the Confession itself but from a restrictive use of the Confession, a use that is itself questionable within the Westminster Seminary tradition. We believe we can embrace the positive teaching of the Confession on Scripture while taking seriously the impact of canonical pragmatics on our understanding of canonical semantics.

\textsuperscript{108} Appropriate here would again be Dr. Gaffin’s language of a “sympathetic-critical” stance towards our Reformed tradition and confessions, in particular here towards their true but incomplete articulations of the Scripture’s self-testimony.

\textsuperscript{109} Ludwig Wittgenstein, for example, explores the expression and function of such "hinge assumptions" in his aphoristic \textit{On Certainty}. To take one example: "We just can’t investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, \textit{On Certainty}, Sec. 343).

\textsuperscript{110} Note the form of the argument at all the key points, e.g., pp. 13-14; 17-18; 21; 56; 66; 80; 106-111; 153; 160-61; 168. The entire logic of the argument of \textit{I&I} is that even if we grant many of the liberal arguments about the human characteristics of scripture, the divinity of scripture is in no way compromised, because this is precisely in keeping with what the Christian God does. \textit{I&I} simply falls apart if this central conviction is removed. This structural feature of the book is readily apparent even to unsympathetic readers. (Heard here???)
**Argument 2:** Prof. Enns incorrectly uses the Incarnational analogy to shift focus onto the humanity of Scripture by failing to heed Warfield's warning about the severe limitations of the analogy, ignoring the safer model of concursus, reversing the incarnational analogy’s natural emphasis on the essential, foundational, and primary divinity not only of Christ but also of Scripture and espousing a dangerously one-sided Christology.

As already noted, the HTFC Response’s general complaint is that

> the statement that Christ is ‘both God and human’ is insufficiently precise to help us apply such an analogy to Scripture. What is troubling in the discussion of I&I, is that the relation of the divine and human in the Incarnation, and thus analogically in Scripture, is confusing at best. What is not affirmed in I&I is that the locus of the unity of the divine and human in Christ is the essential divinity of the person of the Logos. (HTFC Response, 10, emphasis original)

The HTFC Response thus presses the point that unless one carefully and explicitly delineates one’s assumptions about the relationship of the eternal Son of God to the human nature of Jesus, one has no right to use the Incarnational analogy with reference to Scripture.

But the authors of the HTFC Response seem to be stretching the notion of analogy beyond all recognition. Analogies are simply heuristic devices to make something unfamiliar or problematic more familiar or acceptable by drawing a relevant comparison between what is unfamiliar or problematic and what is familiar and acceptable. Analogies help us see things from a perspective that we have already used in reference to another thing.

Analogies can on occasion be complex, but most are very simple, relying on one point of comparison. Complex analogies tend to lose their heuristic force. Regardless of complexity, however, it is in the nature of analogies to fail at some point. Analogies that do not eventually fail are not analogies but rather straightforward, first order descriptions. The trick in using and understanding an analogy, therefore, is in grasping the relevant point of comparison and in observing its limits.

**Warfield’s Warning**

Initially, the HTFC Response seems to be well aware of these facts about analogies and of their impact on the discussion about Scripture. It admits, "[t]his analogical way of reflecting on Scripture’s attributes has precedence in the Reformed tradition. This tradition has, in the past, argued in a way that offers penetrating applications of the Incarnational analogy to the doctrine of inspiration" (HTFC Response, 11). It then goes on to quote from Warfield as to the limits of this particular analogy:

> It has been customary among a certain school of writers to speak of the Scriptures, because thus “inspired,” as a Divine-human book, and to appeal to the analogy of Our Lord’s Divine-human personality to explain their peculiar qualities as such…[sic] But the analogy with Our Lord’s Divine-human personality may easily be pressed beyond reason. There is no hypostatic union between the Divine and human in Scripture; we cannot parallel the “inscripturation” of the Holy Spirit and the incarnation of the Son of God. The Scriptures are merely the product of Divine and human forces working together to produce a product in the production of which the human forces
work under the initiation and prevalent direction of the Divine…. Between such diverse things there can exist only a \textit{remote analogy}; \ldots 111

The reader is thus put on notice that \textit{I&I} has in fact pressed (as the added emphasis punctuates), "the analogy with Our Lord's Divine-human personality... beyond reason" presumably by failing to reckon with the fact that (as Warfield puts it), "[t]here is no hypostatic union between the Divine and human in Scripture." But the reader will wait in vain for any kind of demonstration of this charge. Instead the HTFC Response chooses to proceed in a different direction as it glosses the Warfield quotation in the following way:

Any analogical use of the Incarnation, therefore, is tenuous and at best loosely illustrative. It is likely for this reason, at least, that Warfield preferred to talk of "\textit{concursus}" with respect to the Divine-human activity of inscripturation…. It should be noted that \textit{concursus} is \textit{another model} for thinking of the writing of Scripture, and in that sense is not too easily included in an Incarnational analogy. (HTFC Response, 11, emphasis original)

Rather than argue that Professor Enns has trampled over the limits of the Incarnational analogy by invoking the hypostatic union—a transgression that the HTFC Response itself commits, as we will shortly demonstrate—the HTFC Response \textit{seems} intent on distancing Warfield from the Incarnational analogy altogether. 112 Supposedly, true disciples of Warfield will see that "any analogical use of the Incarnation \ldots is tenuous and at best loosely illustrative"; it should never be used as the organizing theme of a book, even of a short paperback directed at the layperson. Warfield himself, it is suggested, would have used \textit{concursus}, "another model... not easily included in the Incarnational analogy."

The problem is that Warfield will have none of this. This becomes clear when one restores the portions of the quotation which the HTFC Response omitted:

\begin{table}[h]
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\hline
\textbf{Warfield Quotation in Full} & \textbf{Warfield Quotation in the HTFC Response} \\
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\begin{table}[h]
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\hline
\textit{\textbf{B. B. Warfield, \textit{The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible}, 162, as cited (including added emphasis) in the HTFC Response, 10-11.}} & \\
\hline
\textit{111 We stress the word "seems" here, because we are mystified by the prominence given to the Warfield quotation in the context of this discussion. The relevance of the quotation and the succeeding reference to \textit{concursus} to \textit{I&I} seems to be only that Warfield would have disapproved of using the Incarnational analogy as a controlling apologetic tool. We invite the authors of the HTFC Response to instruct us otherwise.}} & \\
\hline
\textit{112 The concession of the introductory paragraph, that the Incarnational analogy admits within the Reformed tradition “penetrating applications... to the doctrine of inspiration,” now gives way, under the presumed criticism of Warfield, to the conclusion that "any analogical use of the incarnation, therefore, is tenuous and at best loosely illustrative." The bewildered reader is left to ask, "Are there any examples of ‘penetrating application’? “} & \\
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It has been customary among a certain school of writers to speak of the Scriptures, because thus “inspired,” as a Divine-human book, and to appeal to the analogy of Our Lord’s Divine-human personality to explain their peculiar qualities as such. The expression calls attention to an important fact, and the analogy holds good a certain distance. There are human and Divine sides to Scripture, and, as we cursorily examine it, we may perceive in it, alternately, traits which suggest now the one, now the other factor in its origin. But the analogy with Our Lord’s Divine-human personality may easily be pressed beyond reason. There is no hypostatic union between the Divine and the human in Scripture; we cannot parallel the “inscripturation” of the Holy Spirit and the incarnation of the Son of God. The Scriptures are merely the product of Divine and human forces working together to produce a product in the production of which the human forces work under the initiation and prevalent direction of the Divine: the person of Our Lord unites in itself Divine and human natures, each of which retains its distinctness while operating only in relation to the other. Between such diverse things there can exist only a remote analogy; and, in point of fact, the analogy in the present instance amounts to no more than that in both cases Divine and human factors are involved, though very differently. In the one they unite to constitute a Divine-human person, in the other they cooperate to perform a Divine-human work. Even so distant an analogy may enable us, however, to recognize that as, in the case of Our Lord’s person, the human nature remains truly human while yet it can never fall into sin or error because it can never act out of relation with the Divine nature into conjunction with which it has been brought; so in the case of the production of Scripture by the conjoint action of human and Divine factors, the human factors have acted as human factors and have left their mark on the product as such, and yet cannot have fallen into that error which we say it is human to fall into, because they have not acted apart from the Divine factors, by themselves, but only under their unerring guidance.

Now one can see that Warfield’s attitude toward the analogy was much more positive: “The expression calls attention to an important fact, and the analogy holds good a certain distance. There are human and Divine sides to Scripture;” and this fact has considerable import for how we interpret and evaluate Scripture, since, grasping the point of the analogy correctly, the Christian scholar will readily confess that “in the case of the production of Scripture by the conjoint action of human and Divine factors, the human factors have acted as human factors and have left their mark on the product as such, and yet cannot have fallen into that error which we say it is human to fall into, because they have not acted apart from the Divine factors . . . .”
Concursus in Warfield

As the last paragraph demonstrates, Warfield could move effortlessly from the Incarnational analogy to the notion of concursus, i.e., "the conjoint action of human and Divine factors." Far from being a different and largely incommensurate model from the Incarnational analogy, an alternate model for the same thing that Warfield developed out of dissatisfaction with the Incarnational analogy, as the HTFC Response suggests, concursus was put forward to do a different work. In fact, if the HTFC Response at this point were correct, a rather sizable wedge would be driven between Warfield and his Dutch contemporaries, Bavinck and Kuyper, who make lavish use of the analogy.

In point of fact, however, Warfield accepted the validity of the analogy, as long as its proper limit was respected, and proposed concursus to answer a different set of questions, a set of questions beyond the limits of the analogy properly employed. In his 1894 essay, “The Divine and Human in the Bible,” where he developed the application of concursus to the problem of Scripture, Warfield was clear about the questions he was attempting to answer: “How are the two factors, the divine and the human, to be conceived as related to each other in the act of inspiration? And, how are the two consequent elements in the product, the divine and human, to be conceived to be related to each other in the Scriptures?” These questions were prompted, according to Warfield, by the reality that

[r]ecent discussion of the authenticity, authorship, integrity, structure of the several Biblical books, has called men's attention, as possibly it has never before been called, to the human element in the Bible. Even those who were accustomed to look upon their Bible as simply divine, never once thinking of the human agents through whom the divine Spirit spoke, have had their eyes opened to the fact that the Scriptures are human writings, written by men, and bearing the traces of their human origin on their very face. In many minds the questions [quoted above] have become quite pressing . . . .

Whereas the Incarnational analogy, as allowed by Warfield and employed by Professor Enns, is a heuristic to help evangelicals understand why the human elements of scripture are appropriate

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114 “It is likely for this reason [the tenuousness of the analogy], at least, that Warfield preferred to talk of ‘concursus’...” (HTFC Response, 11).


116 Ibid., 2:543-44. Warfield then insists on the practical importance of these questions:

It would be a mistake to suppose such questions as these of little practical importance. It is true enough that Christian men are more concerned with the effects of inspiration than with its nature or mode. But men will not rest in their belief in effects which are not congruous with their conception of the nature and mode of inspiration. Inadequate or positively false conceptions of the nature and mode of inspiration are being continually suggested, and wherever they are in any degree accepted, they bring forth their natural fruit in a modified view of the effects of inspiration. Men are continually striving to be rid of the effects which are ascribed to inspiration in the Scriptures and the formularies of the Church, on the plea that inspiration is not to be so conceived as to require these effects. The question of how inspiration is to be conceived having been thus raised, it becomes of very serious importance to go at least so far into it as to exhibit the untenableness of those theories which, when accepted, wholly overthrow the Biblical conception of the effects of inspiration.
and fitting for the revelation of the Biblical God (i.e., “This is what the incarnating God does! What else would you expect?”), concursus was proposed by Warfield as a framework for understanding how the human and the Divine are related in the act and the result of inspiration. To try to use the incarnational analogy to answer the how question would not only compound a great mystery by an even greater one, but would also misperceive the relevant point of comparison and transgress the limits of the analogy. Such a use of the analogy would require pressing the details of the Incarnation where they simply have no place.

The Incarnational analogy and concursus, then, are hardly competing models for the same thing; they are rather complementary approaches to a general problem. Concursus can provide guidance to the Reformed pastor and scholar, but it can hardly reassure the worried lay Christian. The Incarnational analogy, on the other hand, explains little but it reassures much! And Professor Enns's book is all about reassurance in the face of real challenges. With this, we think, Professor Warfield would have heartily concurred.

But if this complementary relationship holds and if concursus can give us some sense about where the Incarnational analogy breaks down, it is important that we at least adumbrate where we are left, or at least allow Warfield to tell us. Far from saying that the Bible is essentially and primarily divine but only contingently and secondarily human, Warfield rather says:

Of every word of Scripture is it to be affirmed, in turn, that it is God's word and that it is man's word. All the qualities of divinity and of humanity are to be sought and may be found in every portion and element of the Scripture. While, on the other hand, no quality inconsistent with either divinity or humanity can be found in any portion or element of Scripture.

On this conception, therefore, for first time full justice is done to both elements of Scripture. Neither is denied because the other is recognized. And neither is limited to certain portions of Scripture that place may be made for the other, nor is either allowed to encroach upon the other. As full justice is done to the human element as is done by those who deny that there is any divine element in the Bible; for of every word in the Bible, it is asserted that it has been conceived in a human mind and written by a human hand. As full justice is done to the divine element as is done by those who deny that there is any human element in the Bible; for of every word in the Bible it is asserted that it is inspired by God, and has been written under the direct and immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. And full justice being done to both elements in the Bible, full justice is done also to human needs. "The Bible," says Dr. Westcott, "is authoritative, for it is the Word of God; it is intelligible, for it is the word of man." Because it is the word of man in every part and element, it comes home to our hearts. Because it is the word of God in every part and element, it is our constant law and guide.117

It is evident, therefore, that when the Incarnational analogy breaks down and when we pick up concursus to continue our work in the study and application of Scripture, we cannot, says Warfield, preemptively subsume the humanity of Scripture under its divinity as earlier generations of Reformed might have been tempted to do; rather we need to teach the church to

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117 Ibid., 2:547-48. We wonder whether the HTFC would consider Warfield here out of accord with its restrictive reading of the Confession. Perhaps it is passages like these that the HTFC had in mind when it penned the odd qualification noted above, namely that the classic Reformed doctrine of Scripture (with which Prof. Enns is allegedly out of accord) is instanced by “the Old Princeton tradition” only “where and when Old Princeton is consistent with WCF I” (Response, 1 n. 2).
appreciate how each factor, especially the human factor, perfectly attests to the sovereign wisdom of our God.

**Misusing the Incarnational Analogy**

In the light of these considerations, we are befuddled and somewhat dismayed by the HTFC’s repeated appeals to the details of Incarnational Christology and unsubstantiated insinuations that Professor Enns—and anyone who might agree with him on the doctrine of Scripture—has broken with orthodox Christology. These insinuations are sprinkled liberally throughout the HTFC Response; this is a particularly programmatic one from page 11: “The Incarnational analogy is accordingly of central significance for the formulations, proposals, etc. that are given in I&I. It is therefore critical that the Incarnational analogy as utilized in I&I avoid fundamental ambiguities or errors.” Apparently Professor Enns is guilty either of unforgivable ambiguity or error. So one might ask, “Where and how does Enns use the Incarnational analogy in an ambiguous or error-prone fashion?”

As part of its answer, the HTFC Response attempts to develop the charge that Professor Enns either denies or radically misunderstands Chalcedonian Christology and consequently ends up espousing a kenotic view of Scripture. In the section entitled, “Analogical Heresies” the HTFC Response promises to enter an Exhibit A and an Exhibit B as evidence. Exhibit B, to the best of our knowledge, is never offered, so we are left with Exhibit A. This incriminating evidence is the following passage from I&I, which we quote in the form given in the HTFC Response:

> The starting point for our discussion is the following: *as Christ is both God and human, so is the Bible*. In other words, we are to think about the Bible in the same way that Christians think about Jesus. Jesus is not half-God and half-human. He is not sometimes one and other times the other. *He is not essentially one* [emphasis added] and only apparently the other.

The added emphasis is not commented on at this point, but it is an ominous marker that something crucial is being denied. The reason for the added emphasis is only revealed three pages later where we are told that Enns is denying the eternal divinity of the incarnate Christ, whether out of confusion or calculated antipathy, and thereby falling into a “kenotic view of Scripture”:

> The problem emerges in the statement that Christ is not “essentially one [i.e., divine] and only apparently the other” (17; emphasis added). This is at best confusing, given the methodology of I&I discussed above, regardless of additional statements and qualifications that follow in the coordinating conjunctive clause. As the Son of God, Christ *is essentially* divine, given his preexistence as the divine Logos, and he assumes a *contingent*, yet true, human nature in the Incarnation. It is not helpful, even if qualified, to assert that the Son of God, as Christ incarnate, is not essentially divine, since that is precisely what he is. A denial that the Son of God is essentially divine is a fundamental tenet of kenotic Christology (since Christ could empty himself...)

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118 “Let us examine two statements that seem to us to indicate a kenotic view of Scripture” (HTFC Response, 14).
119 I&I, 17 as cited in the HTFC Response, 11. Note that the first emphasis is Professor Enns’s, but the second is emphasis added by the HTFC. This same passage will be cited again on page 14 with a similar added emphasis on the word "essentially."
of his deity), and such a mistake made at the level of the Incarnation betrays a lack of agreement with Chalcedonian Christology and falls outside the parameters of catholic orthodoxy.\footnote{The HTFC Response, 14. Relevant here is also the footnote attached to the quoted paragraph: “And such a fundamental oversight does not cohere well at all with the other apparent affirmations of Chalcedon in the book. Perhaps I&I is not familiar with the details of what it seeks to affirm in principle, yet denies in formulation and implication.”}

This is a very strange reading of what Professor Enns has written. The obvious (let alone charitable) way of reading I&I reveals that Enns is certainly not denying that Jesus is “essentially” divine. The “and” is a simple additive conjunction bringing both phrases, as joined, under the negative particle; the insertion of the "only" immediately after should make this plain to all but the most hostile reader. The logic of Professor Enns's statement can be clarified thus: "It is not the case that he is essentially divine and only apparently human." Put positively, Professor Enns is affirming, quite in line with his preceding sentences, “Jesus was essentially both God and man.”

Apparently, the signers of the HTFC Response would consider even this positive restatement inadequate, however. They go on to chide:

> If one were to use Christological heresies to point out deficiencies in a doctrine of Scripture, the formulation could be properly restated in a couple of ways. First, “The incarnate Son of God is not merely essentially divine, and only apparently truly human.” Or to put the second clause positively, “The Son of God is not only essentially divine but is also contingently and truly human.” Chalcedon has helped us understand without ambiguity that the Son of God is the preexistent second Person of the ontological Trinity and contingently, yet truly, human, given the reality of the hypostatic union.

This paragraph continues the HTFC Response’s astonishing (and seemingly jaundiced) misreading. Prof. Enns is obviously using the adverb “essentially” as the antipode of “only apparently.” The HTFC insists, however, that he is using it as the antipode of “contingently” and thereby invoking all the technical categories of the Chalcedonian debates (and, because of the proximity of the “not,” denying the doctrine defined there). The HTFC Response goes on to offer instruction about what Prof. Enns should have written (had he been properly sensitive to the dangers of heresy): he might first have tried, ‘The incarnate Son of God is not merely essentially divine, and only apparently truly human.’” We can only thank heaven that Prof. Enns did not trouble his troubled readers with this kind of writing. The second suggestion is more elegant (i.e., “The Son of God is not only essentially divine but is also contingently and truly human.”) but also largely beside the point, since the referent has now shifted from “the incarnate Son”—which answers to Enns’s “Jesus”—to “the Son of God.”\footnote{This is not the place to debate the intricacies of analytical-philosophical approaches to the theology of the incarnation; the issue is a red-herring with respect to I&I, as we have shown. We do think, however, that the HTFC Response is guilty of overreaching and obfuscating in pressing the binary language of “essential”/“contingent” onto the hypostatic union, which the biblical witness calls even now in its exalted state “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). This binary has its philosophical home in the thought of Aristotle according to which every discrete thing has essential and contingent properties. Essential properties are simply properties something has by definition. Essential properties are properties an entity must have in every possible world in which it exists; without them, said entity would simply not be. It is nothing special then to claim that God cannot change in his essence. An apple cannot change in its essence and still be in apple. The difference is that the essential properties of God are eternal and God necessarily exists in every possible world. In light of this, analytical philosophers of religion and philosophically}
else in the book, instructing the reader about Chalcedonian Christology, but rather he is assuming it and seeking to draw the relevant comparison with a problematically human Scripture. Enns has assumed an evangelical Christian readership that has embraced the eternal Son who was born of a woman, learned obedience from what he suffered, and died on the cross for sins; he wants them now to include in that embrace another startling fact: that the incarnating God really did contextualize his message. In other words, he is simply drawing the Incarnational analogy the way it is normally drawn.

To be sure, hypothetically the writers of the HTFC Response are free to write their own book and attempt in it to draw the analogy more comprehensively in service of an essentially divine and only contingently human Scripture. But without making the charge of a truncated or one-sided Christology stick, they have no right to censure Professor Enns for drawing the analogy as it normally is done—in order to help readers who are having trouble embracing not the Divinely ordained divinity of scripture but the Divinely ordained humanity of Scripture.

We stressed the word “hypothetically” above, because we have serious doubts about the actual feasibility of such a project, at least within the Old Princeton, Amsterdam, Westminster tradition. Warfield put his finger on the reason why: the Incarnational analogy simply cannot hold in that direction, there is no hypostatic union with respect to Scripture. Indeed one can take it further: the Bible has no pre-existent state. There is not a perfect copy in heaven written by the finger of God from which dictation was made in space and time. No, from the get-go the Bible is, by the Bible has no pre-existent state. There is not a perfect copy in heaven written by the finger of God really did contextualize his message. In other words, he is simply drawing the Incarnational analogy the way it is normally drawn.

inclined theologians are typically very careful to say, "The Son of God (i.e., the second person of the Trinity) is essentially divine but only contingently human." Problematic and consequently avoided is the claim, "Jesus Christ is essentially divine but only contingently human." For the truth of the matter is that the hypostatic union is itself contingent relative to the eternal Son of God. So when the hypostatic union (or Christ Jesus, or Jesus of Nazareth, or the Lord Jesus Christ, etc.) is the referent of predication, the property of "humanity" is absolutely essential, a part of the very definition, without which it ceases to be. And this of course is completely in line with the overwhelming emphasis of the biblical witness, and is, therefore, orthodox. Professor Enns nowhere explicitly says, "Jesus Christ was/is essentially divine and essentially human," but had he done so, he would have been within his rights as an orthodox Christian thinker. What Professor Enns actually does say falls completely within the scope of orthodoxy. The authors of the HTFC Response will, no doubt, appeal to the perduring identity of the Logos as “the locus of personality” in the hypostatic union, but that does not make the humanity of Jesus a contingent property of the incarnate Christ. It is vital here to admit the profound ontological mystery of the Incarnation. Even the terms hypostasis and ousia are difficult to nail down and do not map easily on to our English words, "person" and "nature." And the Chalcedonian definition itself did not prove to be fully adequate to safeguard Christ’s full humanity, as subsequent controversies demonstrated. We should further point out that the Chalcedonian Definition itself does not use the language of “essentially divine” or “contingently human,” nor does it speak of “Divine Person with a human nature,” but rather simply and carefully delineates the full humanity as well as the full deity of the one Person Jesus Christ.

In the passage from Warfield quoted above (see the complete quotation on p. 51) there are repeated references to "our Lord's Divine-human personality." In portions excised from the quotation, Warfield explains that in the Incarnation the divine and human factors, "unite to constitute a Divine-human person.... in the case of Our Lord's person, the human nature remains truly human while yet it can never fall into sin or error because it can never act out of relation with the Divine nature...." Even if Warfield might elsewhere give an account of the Incarnation that limits the "locus of personality" to the essential divine aspect of the incarnate Christ, this is quite beside the point; in this discussion of the incarnational analogy and Scripture, Warfield is content to speak of a "Divine-human person(ality)," without apparent fear of being branded as non-Chalcedonian. If the level of analytical precision that the HTFC Response reaches for is questionable, its demand that Enns (and Warfield) demonstrate that precision in a discussion on Scripture is doubly so.
Appeals here to the “eternal word of God” or to similar language do not speak to the point. God no doubt has an eternal will which has been expressed and shared eternally “intra-Trinitarianly,” and communicated to angelic beings subsequently and in part, before the foundation of the world. We should also affirm that the God who foreordains all things had a detailed conception of the Bible down to the last jot and title (as he did of every amoeba or every molecule) from eternity past. But these realities do not add up to a pre-existent, divine Scripture. On the contrary, the Scriptures we hold in our hands, read in our churches, and hide in our hearts were given in bits and pieces, in diverse times and places, by the Divinely appointed concurrent activity of God and men in history.

God no doubt could have spoken in a different way—“the secret things belong to the Lord!” And in that sense, when considering a hypothetical communication from God, we can speak of an essential divinity and contingent humanity, contingent on a free decision of God. But once again we have the problem of reference: the Bible, the Scriptures we have all been talking about, is not a hypothetical work but the actual word that was given by God, and its humanity is part of its very definition, it is essential. Take that away, and there might still be words from God, but they would not be the Bible.

This is not to question the primary and absolutely foundational role of the divine in the Bible—God’s will, God’s action, God’s speech. It is simply to acknowledge what he has done and said and to seek to understand the wisdom of it. What is put on trial in I&I is not the divine nature of the Bible but the assumptions that many evangelicals carry around in their heads about what that divine nature must look like or entail. And it is those assumptions that provide a beachhead for the skeptical arguments of unbelieving scholarship that are served up in the religious studies pro-grams of our colleges and universities. Whatever its faults might be, I&I is an attempt to deny that beachhead in that world. I&I uses the Incarnational analogy not to isolate his target audience from troubling facts but to inoculate them from skeptical uses made of them. It reminds its reader that if they are not scandalized by the crucified Messiah, they should not be scandalized by the Bible; and if they glory in the bruised and broken Servant of the Lord, they should glory in a fully human word of the Lord.

The irony is that it is the HTFC Response, not I&I, that has “effectively denied” the conception of Scripture and its inspiration that has developed in the Old Princeton, Old Amsterdam and Westminster tradition. We do not here impugn the motives of its authors or assign to them dark heretical designs—as they have done to Professor Enns—we simply point out a peculiar imbalance that has resulted in a baffling blindness, a blindness to what is really there and to the real struggles of many evangelicals. Perhaps this can be best illustrated by the sequence of the argument on pages 10-12 of the HTFC Response. After referencing and discussing Warfield, as noted above, the HTFC Response continues:

... with regard to the limitation of the analogy between incarnation and inspiration, we can never lose sight of the central point of the Incarnation, i.e., the radical centrality and essential divinity of the Logos, who (contingently, but really) assumes a human nature. But, as Warfield says, no hypostatic union of divine and human occurs in the act of inspiration.

In light of a biblical, Chalcedonian and Reformed Christology, the divine is essential and the
locus of personality, and the human is contingent, dependent on the divine (yet real). At least along these lines, Christology can, if carefully and accurately applied, prove useful in demonstrating more concretely both the limitations and utility of the Incarnational analogy. Though there is no hypostatic unity with respect to the divine and human in Scripture, it is, nevertheless, (as Reformed theology has historically affirmed) the case that in Scripture the divine is essential, the human is contingent (yet real). Abraham Kuyper’s application of an Incarnational analogy is helpful in pointing out this crucial distinction.

The argument here is perplexing. If Warfield is right and "there is no hypostatic unity with respect to the divine and human in Scripture," then it certainly does not follow that "in Scripture the divine is essential, the human is contingent." The force of Warfield's observation simply has not been grasped.

But even more troubling is the use of Abraham Kuyper made in the sequel; the passage goes on:

When discussing the authority of Scripture, Kuyper reminds us that “(t)he speaker in the H. Scripture is not a creature but God himself.” Kuyper notes that the Word of God can, and in fact at times does, come to creatures “without instruments (sine instrumento). This could happen, not only because of his omnipotence but also in view of the luchoth.”

The problem here is that Kuyper was on his way to making the very opposite point. The full paragraph in Dictaten 2:1.75 runs as follows (under the heading "The speaker in holy Scripture is God himself"):

This authority derives from the fact that the speaker in the holy Scripture is not a creature but God himself. The speech in Scripture to his church could come to pass by God immediately, i.e., without instruments (sine instrumento). This could happen not only because of his omnipotence but also in view of the luchoth. But this has not been the way of the Lord [emphasis added]: As in the work of redemption he does not continue to confront us transcendentally as God, but imminently in Jesus Christ has united the divine and human natures in such a way that the divine life has appeared in a man, so also the Lord God has given us H. Scripture not transcendentally but imminently, because he has so intimately united the divine factor with the human factor that the divine word has come to us, always from a human pen, mostly from a human mind, and not seldom from a human heart. In the union of both these factors now lies the mystery of H. Scripture. Parallel with the mystery of the incarnation runs the mystery of inscripturation. In both cases the word of God comes to us, in the manger as Emmanuel in the world where we live, in H. Scripture as Emmanuel in the world of our thoughts and ideas. Both revelations of the Word belong together, just as our living and the consciousness of that living belong together. Thus both mysteries must either be rejected together or confessed together and, if confessed, then on the same ground.

In its zeal to press the language of "essence/contingency" on the doctrine of Scripture (and thereby catch Professor Enns in grievous error), the authors of the HTFC Response

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122HTFC Response, 12, quoting Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy - I,” Westminster Theological Journal 44 (1982): 266 (emphasis added). No one on the Westminster faculty would dispute this important truth: the authority of the Bible is directly dependent upon its divine Author.
123-"OAI," 266. As Gaffin (n.66) notes, luchoth refers to “to the tables on which the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments, without human mediation of any sort.”
have missed the subjunctive force of the second and third sentences in the quotation: i.e., in view of his sovereignty and what he apparently did with the tablets of stone, God could have communicated to the church directly, "without instruments." But this is not what he did. Kuyper has understood the relevant point of comparison, he has embraced the Incarnational analogy, he has seen its peculiar power. But he is not thereby in conflict with Warfield's concursus.

In the final analysis, as we noted at the beginning of this section, the Incarnational analogy does fail, as indeed it must. While I&I has not pushed the analogy in any improper way, the HTFC Response has failed to respect its limits.

Where the analogy does fail, in that it does not allow one to posit a preexistent, essentially divine Bible, which at some point contingently takes on the form of a human book, we are left in a place where we can better appreciate the compelling nature of I&I's central problematic—a problematic that concursus can help explain (though not necessarily drive home to our imaginations).

Concursus warns us against playing the humanity of scripture off against its divinity and vice versa. To the extent that one stresses the foundational role of God as primary Author, to that same extent the question of His determination to use real human authors (and not mere amanuenses) becomes more insistent. The fact is that the Bible that we have presents us with the amazing fact that God chose to use human beings well beyond the minimum threshold required for communication. The tell-tale signs of such an activity in Scripture are, therefore, not principal problems to be explained away or denied but rather wonderful marks of its origin and perfection. Kuyper did not drive home the power of the disanalogous aspects. The depth of divine condescension in the Incarnation is incredibly greater than his condescension in inscripturation, and was strictly necessary, given God's decision to redeem a people. By comparison, the divine condescension in inscripturation, though less costly, is surprisingly much deeper and pervasive than was necessary! It is the wisdom of this surprising condescension in which I&I and HFC wish to exult.

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124 We for our part would heartily agree with Kuyper when he urges: “In Christ and in Holy Scripture we have to do with related mysteries. In the case of Christ there is a union of divine and human factors. The same is true of Scripture; here, too, there is a primary author and a secondary author. To maintain properly the relationship between these two factors is the great work of dogmatics . . . .” (“OAI,” 267 (emphases added). Let’s get on with that work!

125 Though Warfield would probably acknowledge what appears to be the case: that even in the case of the of the Ten Commandments on the {luc}ohoth, concursus is operative. See the quotation of Warfield on p. 51, and also the comment of Murray in footnote 81).

126 As cited above, Bavinck considers the humanity of Scripture, indeed which is “weak, despised, and ignoble,” to be the very thing by which God’s power, not man’s, is displayed. As God’s glory and power are shown through the resurrection of his {hum}iliated (crucified) son, so, too, do we see Scripture’s divinity through the its humanity. It is our contention that a truly high and Reformed view of Scripture would wish to accent this point rather than mute it, as the HTFC Response does.

127 This was the burden of the “HFC Statement on Scripture” appended to the precis distributed in December 2006.
Conclusion:

The phenomena that our tradition has labeled “the humanity of scripture” is, therefore, a signature mark of the character of its divinity. This divinity, if we may paraphrase Pascal, is not the abstract divinity defined by the philosophers; it is the divinity of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Yahweh, the covenant God! As such, these "troublesome" phenomena of Scripture are one of the important revelatory burdens of the Bible, providing us a unique view into the nature of our God, of his relationship with his people and the concerns of his heart. As a set, then, these phenomena are of immense moment for our understanding of the Bible, the Christian walk and calling. We dare not minimize this dimension of scripture in the slightest. It is an integral part of a biblical “doctrine of Scripture.” I&I drives this point home to an audience that needs to hear it.
Section Five:
Biblical Theology, the Unity of Scripture, and the Alleged “Barthianism” of I&I

In section I.2 (“The Unity of Scripture”) (pp. 7-9), the HTFC Response takes exception to the fact that I&I “affirms that the unity of Scripture rests on its ‘Christotelic’ focus.” While admitting that I&I affirms “a unity of Scripture,” the authors of the HTFC Response contend that it violates WCF I.5 by locating that unity “in the person of Christ” and not “in the text of Scripture itself” (7).

One of the more disappointing aspects of this section is the HTFC Response’s negative reaction to I&I’s use of the word “Christotelic.” In our opinion, they have taken a word that comports well with the basic thrust of a Vosian redemptive-historical approach to Scripture and have filled it up with Barthian connotations that it simply does not have.

It is important to understand that in I&I the word “Christotelic” is mainly used in the context of a hermeneutical approach to Scripture: we interpret the Bible right when we read it as a grand narrative that finds its one true climax in the story of Jesus Christ (i.e., the gospel). To put this another way, the Bible narrates a story that finds its goal (telos) in the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus and, derivatively, in the story of the Church, the people united by faith to Christ. A Christotelic approach does not entail a Barthian doctrine of Scripture. It is something far less complex, namely, a way of interpreting the message of Scripture – one that pays appropriate attention to its redemptive-historical (or, narratival) quality and in particular to the role played by the climax of the story (eschatology) in helping us understand that message.

It is difficult to see how the general outlines of this “Christotelic” perspective differ in any significant way from the classic redemptive-historical approach to Scripture proposed by Richard Gaffin:

If, for instance, we compare the message of Scripture as a whole to a massive epic drama – a most appropriate model, considering its covenant-historical main theme – then dogmatics may be seen as one large-scale ‘plot analysis’ of this metanarrative – reflection on the various actors, their

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128 Note how I&I uses “Christotelic” in the context of biblical interpretation: “To read the Old Testament ‘christotelically’ is to read it already knowing that Christ is somehow the end to which the Old Testament story is heading” (154), “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” (154), “The apostles’ hermeneutical goal, the centrality of the death and resurrection of Christ, must also be ours because we share the same ‘eschatological moment,’ that is, we too live in the post-resurrection universe. This is why we must follow them precisely with respect to their christotelic hermeneutic, that is, their Christ-centered attitude toward the Old Testament (158), “A Christian understanding of the Old Testament should begin with what God revealed to the apostles and what they model for us: the centrality of the death and resurrection of Christ for Old Testament interpretation. We, too, are living at the end of the story; we— as were the apostles—are engaged in the second, christotelic reading by virtue of our eschatological moment, the last days, the inauguration of the eschaton. As we read and interpret, we bring the death and resurrection of Christ to bear on the Old Testament” (159), and “Christotelic—A term that describes apostolic hermeneutics … A christotelic approach recognizes that the Old Testament cannot lead to Christ without a preunderstanding of where the Old Testament is going” (177).

129 This explains how I&I can speak of both a Christotelic and an ecclesiotelic approach to reading Scripture (154).
actions and interaction under appropriate headings (e.g., God, man, sin, salvation, the church, etc.).  

and

A historically-redemptive awareness should go a long way toward counteracting any approach that diminishes the eschatologically-driven dynamic of biblical revelation ...  

We take this to mean that it is appropriate to speak of the unity of Scripture – the manner in which its parts consent – not only in terms of a unified, coherent, and even “a perfect system of doctrine” – that “is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture” (WCF I.6), but also in redemptive-historical and narrativial categories. Biblical theologians working in the tradition of Geerhardus Vos pay close attention to the way the Bible expresses its unity or coherence as an unfolding story that reaches it glorious climax in the gospel, that is, in the story of Jesus Christ. This is what the word “Christotelic” seeks to communicate: Scripture is an epic drama that finds its eschaton or climax in Christ.

Against this background it is troubling to us that the HTFC Response has interpreted I&I’s use of “Christotelic” as evidence of a Barthian doctrine of Scripture, when it is meant to describe nothing more than a fairly typical redemptive-historical perspective on the unity of Scripture.

At this juncture we should note what is perhaps the most egregious example of tendentious reading of I&I. The HTFC Response, in its zeal to find a hidden Barthian agenda in Enns’ christotelic focus, actually misquotes I&I in order to substantiate the charge. The last paragraph on page 8 of the Response reads:

In keeping with its denial of WCF I/5, I&I affirms that the unity of Scripture rests in its “Christotelic” focus. That is, to put the matter plainly, the unity of the Bible is found in Christ, rather than in the text of Scripture itself.  

According to I&I, “(T)he unity of the Bible is sought


131 Ibid. (emphasis added).

132 A. A. Hodge, A Commentary on the Confession of Faith (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1885), 60.

133 Here we see an either/or fallacy at work, suggesting that somehow if the unity of the Bible is found in Christ, it does not lie in the text itself. But even more pressing is the question, just what is meant by a unity lying “in the text itself”? What does it mean for any text, let alone one written by various hands over at least a millennium, in three different languages, to people in vastly different cultural environments, to say that it has its unity “in the text itself”? Is it simply a generalized claim that the text does not contradict itself? If so, then one must suggest how to resolve the fact that at times the biblical text does appear to contradict itself. It is precisely to deal with that appearance that I&I was written; to deal with it not by harmonizing (though that sometimes has its place), nor by piecemeal solutions that sometimes aren’t very convincing, but by looking at the Bible’s overall purpose and character as God’s accommodating self-communication (to use Calvin’s language). [As already noted above, Enns’ original point in context was to say that unity is not a function of the text, but of the interpretation given to the text—i.e., biblical unity is a theological/hermeneutical product, not something that resides in the text. In the case of the Bible, the proper interpretive motive is not legal (as Judaism supposed) nor philosophical (as Philo supposed), but, as Jesus taught, messianic.]
in the living Christ. It comes together in Christ” (110). This has the effect of denying the unity and coherence of the text of Scripture, referring such unity instead to the “living Christ.” 

Now it is true that Barth makes use of the term “living Christ” as a way of describing his own take on biblical authority, and as a way of de-historicizing the gospel. Barth declares:

*Christians do not believe in the empty tomb, but in the living Christ.* This does not mean, however, that we can believe in the living Christ without believing in the empty tomb. Is it just a "legend"? What matter? It still refers to the phenomenon ensuing the resurrection, to the presupposition of the appearance of Jesus. It is the sign which obviates all possible misunderstanding. It cannot, therefore, but demand our assent, even as a legend. Rejection of the legend of the empty tomb has always been accompanied by rejection of the saga of the living Jesus, and necessarily so. Far better, then, to admit that the empty tomb belongs to the Easter event as its sign.

Further, this language of “living Christ” is also present in secondary literature relevant to Barth. For example, the following from Richard Burnett in his discussion of Barth’s important essay “Der christliche Glaube und die Geschichte”:

It is only by means of those individuals who have been affected themselves by the affecting appearance of Christ that we today can experience the risen, living Christ.

Or, from another significant work in secondary literature, for Barth, …the world of the text is not an ensemble of imaginative variations on a possible reality; it projects, rather, the one and only actual reality of the living Christ who makes possible our obedience to the biblical witness.

Now one might ask at this point why the apostolic tendency to see in the risen Christ (and therefore “living” Christ) the fulfillment and purpose of the entire OT is such an evil thing, or should only be the provenance of the Barthians. Presumably we do not worship a dead Christ. But it must be acknowledged that, with the persistent use of “living Christ” as a Barthian code word for disjoining “word of God” from Scripture, the term could generate uncertainty.

In point of fact, however, Enns never uses the term “living Christ” anywhere in I&I. The actual text of the paragraph in question in I&I reads (the entire paragraph is quoted for context):

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134The HTFC Response has a footnote at this point that reads: “Is this what PS means when it states that it is ‘confident that only in the light of Christ and the gospel that the majestic coherence of the Old and New Testaments will be fully displayed’? [PS=“Proposed Statement on Scripture by the Biblical Studies Departments”]. Thus the HTFC apparently thinks that not just I&I but the entire Hermeneutics Field Committee is suspect. [This “Proposed Statement” by the Biblical Departments is the document appended to the precis distributed in December 2006].

135Church Dogmatics III.2, 453.


138Van Til notes this Barthian substitution in his *Christianity and Barthianism* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1962) 74: This diffuse peripheral Biblicism derives, he [Barth] says, from the static categories with which orthodoxy works. Orthodoxy thinks that in the Bible it possesses the revelation of God. It does not realize that the Scripture does not itself want to be identified with revelation. The Bible points to the living Christ in whom the act of saving all men is accomplished.
Can Christians speak of a unity to the Bible? Yes, but it is not a superficial unity based on the surface content of the words of passages taken in isolation. The unity of the Bible is more subtle but at the same time deeper. It is a unity that should ultimately be sought in Christ himself, the living word. This itself is not a superficial unity, as if we can “find Jesus” in every passage of the Old Testament (a point we will address from a different angle in the next chapter). It is, rather, a broad and foundational theological commitment based on the analogy between Christ and Scripture. (p. 110)

Note that what Enns actually says, is that the unity of the Bible is in “Christ himself, the living word,” not “the living Christ.” By changing “Christ himself, the living word” to “the living Christ” the HTFC Response has saddled a Barthian phrase onto I&I. This might have the effect of making I&I to appear Barthian, but it does so on the basis of what is tantamount to false testimony. This might be understandable were it an isolated incident (although even there we might question the level of care exercised), but this misquotation repeatedly serves as the basis for the charge that I&I is Barthian. On p. 9, the HTFC goes on:

The unity of Scripture in I&I is conditioned in such a way that it is not found in the text of Scripture itself (as a result of the primacy of divine authorship and thus of divine inspiration) but located rather in the "living" Christ.

again p. 9:

I&I's "living Christ" unity displaces the confessional, textual unity of Scripture.

To this sentence is appended a footnote which opens with: Lurking in the background of this discussion is the question: “Can I&I distinguish its view of Scripture from Barth's?”

In other words the Barthian code-phrase “living Christ” is put into Enns’s mouth, and made the basis for a case that I&I is Barthian. It should be evident that a case made on the basis of something that is simply not true is not viable.

In addition to the example cited above, in which the HTFC Response places Barth’s words into the mouth of I&I, there are other examples of the HTFC engaging in uncharitable readings in which mere verbal similarities between I&I and Barth are read as conceptual correspondences.

For example, in footnote 12 (p. 7), the HTFC writes, “The notion of unity present in I&I is also present in Barth. In his affirmation that Scripture is the Word of God, Barth is also opposed to any notion of a unity to the text of Scripture. Rather, for Barth, unity resides in God’s revelation, which, for Barth, is only and always in Christ.” Here, the HTFC Response echoes the classic accusation that Barth’s theological system is Christomonistic. This means that “Barth … focuses so completely on the ontological and epistemological centrality of Jesus Christ for the entire cosmos that the particularity, significance, and, ultimately, even the reality of humans and other creaturely beings are lost as everything is subsumed under the totalism of Barth’s Christology.” It takes hard work to find in I&I this way of conceiving of the unity of Scripture,

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139 One would think that this comment, too, would alert the judicious reader to the fact that Enns is quite far from advocating a “christomonistic” approach to the Bible, as though an OT text can only have value as a pointer to Christ.

and it is bewildering to us why HTFC does so. I&I’s understanding of a Christotelic unity comes nowhere near Barth’s Christomonism. A Christotelic approach to Scripture says nothing about epistemology or ontology; it is primarily concerned with the question of how we are to interpret Scripture and it simply affirms what Westminster Seminary has always affirmed, namely, that the story of Jesus fulfills the history of redemption; it is the ultimate hermeneutical frame.

The HTFC Response also takes I&I to task for locating the unity of Scripture “in the person of Christ” and not “in the text of Scripture itself.” To be sure, I&I does connect the unity of Scripture to Christ: “The unity of the Bible … is a unity that should ultimately be sought in Christ himself, the living word” (110). Without reference to the larger context, this language could be open to interpretation. Apparently the HTFC again has chosen to ignore the context and mis-read I&I, again in a Barthian direction.

Further, note that nowhere does I&I say that the unity of Scripture is found merely in the “person of Christ.” (HTFC Response, p. 9). What I&I does say is that “the story reaches its climax in the person and work of Christ” (97, emphasis added) and “It is in the person and work of Christ that Christians seek to read the Old Testament, to search out how it is in Christ that the Old Testament has integrity, how it is worthy of trust, how the parts cohere” (170, emphasis added). The use of the full phrase – “person and work of Christ” – is important. This is not some abstract concept, nor is it concerned with issues of ontology or the like. Simply, “the person and the work of Christ” is quite clearly (and conventionally) a way of referring to the gospel: who Jesus is and what he accomplished (i.e., his work) in history through his life, death, resurrection and exaltation to God’s right hand.

At this point it will be helpful to understand that when I&I speaks of the connection between “the person and work of Christ” and the unity of Scripture it does so in a redemptive-historical and narrative context. The primary point that I&I is making here is that the story of Christ marks the climax of redemptive history (“the story reaches its climax in the person and work of Christ”). How might this be relevant to the question of the unity of Scripture? Staying in narrative mode – that is, conceiving of Scripture in terms of its connection to the “epic drama” of redemption – it might be helpful to consider the crucial role that endings play in assisting readers to comprehend the narrative coherence of a story. Only in the climax of a story is the process of plot development brought to its destination and the story seen in its totality. Above all, it is the ending of a narrative that creates “plot” – the unity or coherence of a narrative. As Elizabeth Bowen puts it, “Plot is the knowing of destination.” Likewise, the Bible’s coherence – the “consent of its parts” – derives not just from its Author, but from the Author’s intended “narrative destination” which is the story of Jesus. Therefore, the coherence of a narrative is,
above all, “eschatological” in nature; it is derived from knowing its ending, its “eschaton.” To have coherence, stories must “make sense” as they unfold; there needs to be some kind of plot line. But until a story ends, coherence is provisional and to some degree indeterminate. A story’s ending, however, grants a final and definitive coherence to the narrative.

This helps us understand what I&I means when it talks about “a unity that should ultimately be sought in Christ himself.” The story of Jesus Christ acting in history – his “person and work” – is the one true ending to the story of redemption. That ending gives a final and definitive coherence and unity to the whole story of redemption. It is against this background that I&I’s comments on Christ and the unity of Scripture are to be understood.

Again, we are disturbed by the way the authors of the HTFC Response have chosen to read I&I. Read fairly and in the context of interpreting Scripture as a grand narrative or epic drama, I&I’s linking of the unity of Scripture to Christ cannot be read as “a neo-orthodox construal of revelation.” In point of fact, rather, I&I does not locate the unity of Scripture merely in the “person of Christ” but in the overall redemptive-historical purpose of Scripture’s Author.

Summary

First, by misquoting I&I to refer to a unity in the “living Christ,” and by changing “person and work of Christ” to “person of Christ,” the HTFC Response has done more than find a Barthian tendency in I&I; it has rewritten I&I in order to impose upon it a Barthian doctrine of Scripture, which it simply does not have. Second, the HTFC Response’s charge that I&I locates the unity of Scripture in the “person of Christ” and not “in the text of Scripture itself” sets up a dichotomy which cannot be found in the book. I&I affirms that the Bible is the word of God, but goes on to explain to its lay readers, who may be unfamiliar with the redemptive-historical approach to Scripture, that the Bible also tells a story – or more accurately, recounts a history – which has a coherence-creating climax in the person and work of Christ. There is nothing, however, in this redemptive-historical, narratival and Christotelic way of speaking of the unity of Scripture that implies that God’s revelation is only in the “person of Christ” but not in Scripture itself.

And in point of fact, all that we know about the person and work of Jesus and the insight that he is the goal and climax of redemptive history is found in the text of Scripture (e.g., Eph 1:10, Rom 10:4). Far from being an imposition of a Barthian concept on Scripture, the final, narratival coherence of Scripture in the person and work of Christ is the testimony of the text of Scripture itself.

Excursus: The Diversity within the Unity

Finally, we should perhaps broach one more issue which apparently has been troubling to the authors of the HTFC Response. Page 7 of the Response refers to the fact that Enns, on p. 104 of I&I, in describing the process of reading Genesis 6, comments that, according to the story line, God as a character in the story reacts by deciding to wipe out everything. Enns then comments:

145 Implied in many places, but most clearly stated at p. 108: “And the way in which we can begin to address this issue is to confess at the outset, along with the historic Christian church, that the Bible is the word of God” (emphasis original)
Of course, it is possible to say that God already anticipated step 3 [reaction] in step 1 [creation], that is, he knew what was going to happen, and so step 2 does not take him by surprise. That may be so, but that is only a guess that goes far beyond what we read.

Admittedly, this is perhaps one of the more ambiguous and easily misunderstood parts of *I&I*. If taken alone, this might appear to be a denial of God’s foreknowledge and providential ordering of all things, or a denial that Scripture teaches God’s foreknowledge, or a denial that Scripture is ultimately coherent, and it might therefore have been better phrased differently. But in the larger context, it is better to read these sentences as talking about the story within Genesis and how it functions as a story. And in the story, God appears as a character, who, like other characters, reacts. The “only a guess” isn’t a denial that there is a true and immutable God revealed in the whole of the Bible, nor does it imply that the believer now, from the benefit of the whole of revelation, cannot know that actually God knew what was going to happen; it is rather a reference to the story line within Genesis itself, which is a humanly contextualized story (which is also what makes it interesting to human beings), and within which God is grieved and changes his mind. It is precisely this presentation of God as an actor in a human story that exemplifies God’s accommodation, his “incarnation” of his word, as it were. And while importing what other passages say about God is useful for putting together a systematic theology that asks about the God “behind the scenes” so to speak, appreciating the story of Genesis (and what God is teaching us therein) requires that we stick with the God of the scenes, just as he is portrayed in them (see *I&I*, p. 106).

More important, Enns is actually on his way to arguing for the divinity of all the Scripture, and to treat every passage with integrity according to its own purposes. The conclusion of the section in question conveys this point (p. 107):

There are diverse portrayals of God in the Old Testament. He is, on the one hand, powerful, one who knows things before they happen and who causes things to happen, one who is in complete control. On the other hand, he finds things out, he can feel grieved about things that happen, he changes his mind. If we allow either of these dimensions to override the other, we set aside part of God’s word in an effort to defend him, which is somewhat of a self-contradiction. But as we think about God, as we learn of him more and more, as we enter deeper into relationship with him through Christ, we will see that there is much in the full-orbed biblical portrait of God that we need to know. And of course, this is no surprise, for this is what he intended. As Paul says, “All Scripture is … profitable” (2 Tim 3:16 RSV) – even parts that don’t fit easily into our molds.

It is precisely in order to maintain the God-breathed, instructive quality of Scripture in all its diversity that Enns proposes not a homogenous superficial unity but an ultimate hermeneutical unity in Christ the incarnate Word (p. 110):

…(B)ecause we know that in Christ Scripture coheres, he is the proper starting point from which to view and respect these tensions. The tensions of the Old Testament should be seen within the context of the Christian Bible as a whole, where Christ---his life, death, resurrection, and ascension---is given the focus he deserves. To put it another way, if, as Christians say, Christ is the focus of Scripture, we should allow that focus to come into play in how we understand Scripture.

It is because the Genesis story is part and parcel of the whole story, the story of the Bible, the story of God’s redemption in Christ, that the Genesis account too can ultimately be understood
as part of the God’s directive movement of human history toward its fulfilment in Christ. Not just God’s “repentance” that he had made man, but his “subsequent” decision to rescue Noah and his family, serves to direct the reader of Genesis to the reality of God’s anger at sin, the reality of God’s judgment, the reality of God’s great mercy in saving his people, all of which point to the redemption which God ultimately provided in Christ, as 1 Peter 3 makes explicit. This, not some Barthian agenda, is precisely what Enns is trying to capture in his use of the term “christotelic.”
Section Six:
Guilt by Association

A refrain throughout the HTFC Response is that the language and conceptual framework of *I&I* is that of Barthianism, or at least a neo-Barthian variety of “Post-Conservative Evangelicalism” [PCE] (p. 19). Some of this argument is based on the fact that the author of *I&I* has endorsed a book by his friend John Franke, who expresses a positive appreciation for Barth.146 Quite apart from the fact that a written endorsement hardly means that everything said by the endorsee can be attributed to the endorser, it appears that much of the ire of the HTFC is directed at PCE in general for an alleged “hostility toward Christian confessions” and an “uncritical appropriation of the theology of Karl Barth” (p.23).

The logic of this argument appears to be as follows:

a) Enns endorsed a book by someone who considers himself a PCE
b) This PCE person has written appreciatively of K. Barth

Therefore, Enns is a Barthian

and

a) Enns is friends with a PCE
b) Some PCE’s downplay the importance of Christian Confessions

Therefore, Enns is “hostile” toward Christian Confessions

These are simply *non sequiturs*.147

Further along the lines of recrimination by association, the HTFC Response suggests that *I&I*’s “attempt to move beyond the Liberal/Conservative impasse” puts *I&I* “into sharp conflict with WCF I/4.” While it might be argued that the means by which PCE (or some elements of that movement) tries to “move beyond the Liberal/Conservative impasse” is incompatible with WCF, in that it allegedly tries to get past the impasse by downplaying the importance of crucial doctrines, *I&I* does not take that path, but rather is focused on getting past the Divine OR Human either/or fallacy, a fallacy that both conservatives and liberals have sometimes bought into. Where conservatives, who see the Bible as Divine, sometimes therefore downplay its humanity, and the liberals see the Bible as Human and therefore not at all divine except in some vague redefined sense, *I&I* suggests that the analogy of incarnation enables us better to see the Bible as both completely divine and completely human, a position very much in accord with the Reformed tradition (as noted in detail in Sections Two and Four above).

In summary, neither the fact that Enns has endorsed a book by someone who has identified himself as a “post-conservative evangelical,” nor his willingness to regard such people as collaborators in the task of reaching the world with the gospel, nor his seeing Christ as the ultimate purpose of the Old Testament, nor his *alleged* use of terminology which is also used by Barthians (see Section Five), is viable evidence that Enns himself is somehow Barthian or neo-orthodox.

146 Of course, this is not the first time that an endorser has been unfairly castigated as implicitly endorsing not just the quality of the book but of the totality of its theology.

147 Other parts of this argument that *I&I* is Barthian were based on a misquotation of *I&I*. This matter was already discussed in Section Five.
It is still our conviction that respectful conversational engagement could result in a collegial mode of problem-solving that could serve as a model to our students, staff, and even denominations in generally troubled times. Now we seem to be in the throes of a process that is so adversarial that it must be kept under wraps because of its explosive nature. The “crisis” we are in, therefore, is not so much a function of theological differences (as real and pressing as they are), but of how those differences are being addressed.

Therefore, the undersigned have no desire to contribute further to this dysfunction by perpetuating such a process of lengthy written statements in defining our theological interactions. We are happy to engage with our colleagues on any topic, but think we should do so in a manner more befitting our Christian confession: with mutual love, respect, and a commitment to learn from each other and to understand each other in the best possible light.¹⁴⁹ Without such a commitment, we truly fear for the school’s reputation and viability. We all acknowledge a deep personal debt of gratitude spiritually and professionally to this institution and to our colleagues and forbears. Above all, therefore, we the undersigned remain committed to the hard work of restoring its precious heritage.

Peter Enns
Douglas Green
Elliot Greene
Michael Kelly
Dan McCartney
Adrian Smith
Steve Taylor

NOTE:
Appendix One: HFC Statement on scripture.
Appendix Two: Enns’ Inaugural Lecture (rev. for publ.)
Appendix Three: Enns’ ETS lecture (Calvin Journal form)

¹⁴⁹ One need think only of the support received by such faculty as Harvie Conn, Ray Dillard, and Richard Gaffin as they, amid strong criticism, were engaged in the necessary work of plumbing Scriptures depths and bringing those insights to new generations.
Edgar-Kelly Motion

After deliberation over the last two years regarding the book *Inspiration and Incarnation*, as well as important debate related to documents produced by our field committees in the course of these deliberations, the WTS faculty has come to propose the following statements.

1) Every Westminster faculty member subscribes whole-heartedly and *ex animo* to the Westminster Standards. This includes chapter 1 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, with its strong position on biblical authority. It states in 1.1 that the scriptures are *necessary* as the written expression of God’s will for the ages. It states in 1.4 that the *authority* of holy scripture depends wholly on God its author. It states in 1.5 that our full *persuasion* of the authority of scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit. It states in 1.7 that while not everything in scripture is equally plain yet what we need to know is *clear*, to the learned and the unlearned alike. It states in 1.9 that the infallible norm for *interpreting* scripture is the scripture itself. With all these statements the faculty is in full agreement.

2) The faculty supports the orientation of the work historically done at WTS, characterized as orthodox, yet also willing to wrestle with difficult questions through creative means. One could think of Cornelius Van Til’s transcendental apologetics, Ned Stonehouse’s work on the Gospels, Dick Gaffin’s work on the centrality of the resurrection and union with Christ in Pauline theology, Harvie Conn’s development of missiological theology, several departments’ articulating better understandings of historiography and wrestling with hermeneutical issues, etc.

3) Germane to discussions over the past two years, several faculty members, standing in line with orthodox Reformed biblical scholarship, continue a long tradition of using the *incarnational analogy* as a fruitful framework to help orient their teaching regarding the nature of Scripture. The faculty affirms the usefulness and appropriateness of using this analogy to help express the nature of Scripture. We do not claim this analogy to be perfect, nor exhaustive. Nor would we use the analogy in such a way as to challenge the authority of Scripture by denying its divine authorship and revelatory character.

4) There are from time to time disagreements among the faculty, of varying degrees of severity and public expression. Recently, among other things, we have been divided over the content of the book *Inspiration and Incarnation* by Peter Enns. In this book, Professor Enns confronts head-on some of the most notorious “problems” raised by critical biblical scholarship that might be seen to compromise the divinity of Scripture. He sets out to articulate an orthodox understanding of the Bible, with all its complex phenomena, by employing the incarnational analogy. The faculty’s disagreement stems from several expressions in the book that some members of the faculty believe fail to carry out this intention. The result of our debate leads us to affirm that the views expressed in the book, as explained and clarified through discussions and written documents over the past two years, are fully compatible with affirmations 1), 2) and 3) above. As a result of our dialogue, the faculty further concludes that *Inspiration and Incarnation* is consistent with the following affirmations, with which the faculty wholeheartedly agrees: (a) that the origin of Scriptural authority lies in the fact that Scripture ultimately comes from God as author, and (b) that our understanding of this divine authority arises from the teaching of Scripture regarding itself (its *self-witness*).
5) Aware that Professor Enns has already articulated a number of annotations, clarifying some of the more controversial statements in his book, we also hope he might consider publishing these and similar clarifications in more accessible venues to broader readership. This will significantly help the readership, both within and outside of WTS, better to understand his beliefs and methodology, as well as those shared by other faculty members at WTS.

6) While neither professor Enns nor any other colleague is being accused of heterodoxy in this matter, we intend to continue our debates, in order both to stimulate one another and to caution one another over potentially unwise teachings. We intend these debates to focus on the various documents produced by the field committees over the past three years.

7) We thank our constituency for its patience while we work through this issue. We know it has caused some anxiety and for that we apologize. It is important for us to be able to take the right amount of time if we are to maintain the dual emphasis of reformed orthodoxy and fresh explorations in to the meaning and application of Scripture.
God, if they are to affirm what I&dquo;ve claimed is the meaning of particular Scripture texts in the light of current linguistic and lexical studies. Yet, the view of God's action depicted in Scripture that is perhaps the most compelling in its clarity and coherence is the one that finds its expression in the doctrine of the hypostatic union. This doctrine, as the New Testament teaches, is the foundation upon which all other truths, including the one that God is at work in Scripture, must be built.

Regarding the hypothesis that the hypostatic union is a property of the Logos, it is important to note that while this view is consistent with the New Testament teaching, it does not exhaust the meaning of the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union is a property of the Logos, but it is also a property of the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Logos is the Word of God, the Word of the Father, and the Word of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the hypostatic union is not limited to the Logos, but also includes the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Regarding the hypothesis that the hypostatic union is a property of the Word of God, it is important to note that while this view is consistent with the New Testament teaching, it does not exhaust the meaning of the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union is a property of the Word of God, but it is also a property of the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is the Word of the Father, the Word of the Son, and the Word of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the hypostatic union is not limited to the Word of God, but also includes the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Regarding the hypothesis that the hypostatic union is a property of the Father, it is important to note that while this view is consistent with the New Testament teaching, it does not exhaust the meaning of the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union is a property of the Father, but it is also a property of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is the Father of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the hypostatic union is not limited to the Father, but also includes the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Regarding the hypothesis that the hypostatic union is a property of the Holy Spirit, it is important to note that while this view is consistent with the New Testament teaching, it does not exhaust the meaning of the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union is a property of the Holy Spirit, but it is also a property of the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Therefore, the hypostatic union is not limited to the Holy Spirit, but also includes the Father and the Son.

Regarding the hypotheses that the hypostatic union is a property of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it is important to note that while this view is consistent with the New Testament teaching, it does not exhaust the meaning of the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union is a property of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but it is also a property of each of them. Therefore, the hypostatic union is not limited to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but also includes each of them.

Regarding the hypothesis that the hypostatic union is a property of each of the persons of the Trinity, it is important to note that while this view is consistent with the New Testament teaching, it does not exhaust the meaning of the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union is a property of each of the persons of the Trinity, but it is also a property of the whole Trinity. Therefore, the hypostatic union is not limited to the persons of the Trinity, but also includes the whole Trinity.

Regarding the hypothesis that the hypostatic union is a property of the whole Trinity, it is important to note that while this view is consistent with the New Testament teaching, it does not exhaust the meaning of the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union is a property of the whole Trinity, but it is also a property of each of the persons of the Trinity. Therefore, the hypostatic union is not limited to the whole Trinity, but also includes each of the persons of the Trinity.

Regarding the hypothesis that the hypostatic union is a property of the whole Trinity, it is important to note that while this view is consistent with the New Testament teaching, it does not exhaust the meaning of the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union is a property of the whole Trinity, but it is also a property of each of the persons of the Trinity. Therefore, the hypostatic union is not limited to the whole Trinity, but also includes each of the persons of the Trinity.
“The Infallible Rule of Interpretation of Scripture”:
The Hermeneutical Crisis and the Westminster Standards
Peter A. Lillback
February 26, 2008

A “controversial Bible”\(^1\), the “Battle for the Bible”\(^2\), the “Problem of the Old Testament”\(^3\) and the “messiness of the Old Testament”\(^4\) are a few of the shibboleths revealing the strained relationship between recent biblical studies and the historic evangelical theology of Holy Scripture. Indeed, for some, “reading the Bible has already become a serious theological problem—perhaps even a crisis”\(^5\). Berkouwer explains:

A crisis has arisen in the hearts and minds of many people concerning this knowledge and certainty. There is a very close connection between this crisis and the development of the so-called historical criticism of Scripture, which drew attention to the nature of these scriptures as human writings.\(^6\)

It was inevitable that this radical question—and many others implied in it—should have a profound effect upon the life of the church, which until then had unquestioningly accepted the trustworthiness of Holy Scripture.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics: Holy Scripture* (Eerdmans, 1975), p. 9. “… Holy Scripture has become in Claus Westermann’s words, a “controversial Bible….” Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. writes in “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” *WTJ* (1982-83), p. 250, “Jack Rogers’ and Donald McKim’s *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, Eternity magazine’s Book of the Year for 1980, has become something of a focal point for discussion of the doctrine of Scripture, especially among evangelicals in this country. A basic conclusion of the authors is that the prevailing view of Scripture in contemporary evangelicalism, a conception rooted in the views of the old Princeton theologians, especially B. B. Warfield (1851-1921), and marked by a predominating concern with inerrancy, is a regrettable deviation from the classic church doctrine, especially the position of the Reformers, and so an unfortunate and unnecessary barrier to unity and progress among evangelicals.”

\(^2\) Cf. Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Zondervan, 1976). The “battle for the Bible” has especially focused on inerrancy. Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 173, Reformed Scholasticism gave “false importance to a doctrine of inerrancy” (186), and this newly-invented scholastic approach “represented a spirit, a mood, a mind-set quite different from that of Calvin, the Augustinian-humanist Reformer.” (185) This doctrine of inerrancy, which they define as a “mechanistic, mathematical model by which the Bible was judged” (235), was not only itself errant, but as developed within Princeton theology, bears the responsibility for “continuing strife on the American religious scene.” (247). In response, see Gaffin, “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” in the *Westminster Theological Journal*, 1982 and 1983; John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982). Refuting the Rogers and McKim argument against documented evidence, church historian Woodbridge notes among others, Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine as proponents of a doctrine reflective of inerrancy (31-46). Regarding Origen, Woodbridge concurs with Bruce Vawter, “a good case can be made for Origen the inerrantist.” (34). For Augustine, see *Letters LXXXII*, 3, XXVIII, 3. Also see “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” in *Inerrancy* (ed. Norman L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 493-502.

\(^3\) Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Baker, 2005). See for example, pp. 15-16: “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 want to focus on three issues that have not been handled well in evangelical theology. Is the Old Testament really that unique? … it really seems as if there are contradictions, or at least large differences of opinion, in the Old Testament….Why do the New Testament authors handle the Old Testament in such odd ways?” Enns desires to address “The Bible’s uniqueness…the Bible’s integrity…the Bible’s interpretation.”

\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 108, 110.

\(^5\) Ibid, p. 15.

\(^6\) Berkouwer p. 12.

\(^7\) Ibid, p. 13.
When the radical critics concluded from the “human character” of Scripture that they had a right to criticize it—and many of them claimed that an honest historical examination left little or nothing of the nimbus of infallibility, supernaturalness, and uniqueness—their opponents were tempted to present the divine character of Scripture in such a manner that the human character could be of little significance.\(^8\)

As we engage the hermeneutical crisis, it behooves us to remember Berkouwer’s appeal to the astute observation of Bavinck where he avers that opposition to Scripture can arise from both within as well as from without orthodoxy.

There are different kinds of opposition to the real authority of Scripture that are not precluded or conquered by any kind of theory. When Bavinck reflects of the attack upon Holy Scripture, he sees this attack first of all as enmity of the human heart, which can manifest itself in various ways: “It is by no means only, and maybe not even most, prominent in the criticism to which Scripture is subjected in our day. Scripture as the Word of God meets with opposition and unbelief from every psychic human being. In the period of dead orthodoxy unbelief in Scripture was in principle just as powerful as in our historico-critical age.”\(^9\)

Similarly, the hermeneutical crisis that wrestles with “the real authority of Scripture” can be found not only at the fault line between orthodoxy and secular biblical criticism, but also within the boundaries of those who openly profess a sincere commitment to Scripture as divine self-revelation.

I. The Hermeneutical Crisis, the Westminster Standards and Westminster Seminary

In this crisis context, what should we think of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the climactic statement of Reformed Theology?\(^10\) The Confession, having defined the canon of Scripture, says of the canonical books, “All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.”(I.2). Can this high and historic view of Scripture

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\(^8\) Ibid, p. 17
\(^9\) Ibid, p. 34-35.
championed by the Westminster Divines\textsuperscript{11} as well as by Calvin,\textsuperscript{12} Kuyper\textsuperscript{13} the Princetonian forerunners\textsuperscript{14} and founders of Westminster, such as Geerhardus Vos,\textsuperscript{15} John Murray,\textsuperscript{16} Cornelius Van Til\textsuperscript{17} and E. J. Young,\textsuperscript{18} remain in force in the face of the hermeneutical crisis confronting the Church?

Westminster Seminary professor E. J. Young believed it could. As a keen advocate of the relevancy of the 	extit{Confession}'s teaching on Scripture, Young declared:

\begin{quote}
We do not believe that the “facts” which the modern “scientific” study of the Bible has brought to light compel us to change or modify or abandon the historic
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{WCF}, I is entitled “Of the Holy Scripture” and is a classic statement of the Reformed understanding of Scripture. This succinct summary of the doctrine of Scripture touches many themes including Scripture’s necessity, the definition of its canon, its divine authority, the divine source of human assurance concerning its infallibility, its sufficiency and perspicuity, the authority of its original languages, its preservation and propriety of its translation, its interpretation, and its finality for controversy.

\textsuperscript{12} See J.I. Packer, “John Calvin and the Inerrancy of Holy Scripture” in \textit{Inerrancy and the Church} (ed. John D. Hannah; Chicago: Moody, 1984), 143-188. “It seems obvious from what has been said that Calvin could never have consciously entertained the possibility that human mistakes, whether of reporting or of interpreting facts of any sort whatever, could have entered into the text of Scripture as the human writers gave it. Nor did he.” (178). John Murray, \textit{Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty} (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1960). Summarizing Calvin, Murray writes, “God speaks in Scripture. In it he opens his sacred mouth.” (50). This article can also be found in John Murray, \textit{Collected Works}, Volume 4.

\textsuperscript{13} Kuyper’s views are well summarized in “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., \textit{WTJ}, (1982-83), 272. “The errorlessness of Scripture is a divine, not a human errorlessness (Dictaten 1.86, 91f.).” “…For whether these are without error, we decide; but if Scripture is infallible, then it decides for us that there are no errors in it, even though we might also think that to be the case” (Dictaten 1.89); inspired Scripture expresses its content ‘in a divinely errorless fashion’ (’goddelijk feilloos,’ 1.86); p. 273, “The form of Scripture is ‘infallibilis’ (1.73). Moreover, to acknowledge this is critically important, for ‘Scripture retains its divine authority only in those circles where at the same time its formal infallibility is confessed: (2.128).” “…An inscripturated revelation is necessary, for one reason, because oral tradition becomes corrupted.” “…An uncertain memory is just as much falsehood as intentional falsification.” At the end of the passage, he summarizes: ‘Thus these three: forgetting, lying and unintentional falsifying corrupt all oral tradition.’ Accordingly, Scripture is necessary and as such is free from all error, unintentional mistakes as well as deception.’ “…In the summary paragraph at the beginning of the section on the inspiration of Scripture (2.128), we find the flat assertion that, among other purposes, graphic inspiration aims at “the removal and prevention of every error which threatened to creep into any writing through inadvertence and malicious intent.”... p. 275, “Accordingly, the infallibility secured by inspiration excludes ‘the result of sin like forgetting, making mistakes, etc.’”…”Graphic inspiration functions, among its other provisions, to keep the writers of the NT epistles from making any mistakes (2.138; \textit{Holy Spirit}, 177).” “…And yet in both prophet and apostle inspiration is the wholly extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit whereby, in a manner for us incomprehensible and to them not always conscious, they were kept from the possibility of error.”

\textsuperscript{14} Benjamin Brekenridge Warfield, \textit{The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible} (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1948), 173. Archibald A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, \textit{Inspiration} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979). Benjamin Brekenridge Warfield, \textit{Revelation and Inspiration} (New York: Oxford University, 1927), 74. Paul D. Feinberg, “The Meaning of Inerrancy” in \textit{Inerrancy} (ed. Norman L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 287, writes, “As has already been indicated, for at least a fair number of biblical and theological scholars of former days inspiration was synonymous with inerrancy. To say that the Bible is inspired was to say that it is absolutely accurate or inerrant. Two men among those who held such a view were B. B. Warfield and Charles Hodge.”

\textsuperscript{15} Geerhardus Vos, the founder of Reformed Biblical Theology, issued a clarion call for inerrancy as a \textit{sine qua non} in the principles of Biblical Theology. On May 8, 1894, Vos delivered his inaugural address as Professor of Biblical Theology, entitled “The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline.” (Originally published in 1894 by Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, this essay is now in the public domain.) In this famed address, Vos elucidates the dual nature of Scripture, simultaneously underscoring the primacy of divine Authorship and the indispensably human and historical nature of revelation.

The historical character of the truth is not in any way antithetical to, but throughout subordinated to, its revealed character. Scriptural truth is not absolute, notwithstanding its historic setting; but the historic setting has been employed by God for the very purpose of revealing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It is not the duty of Biblical Theology to seek first the historic features of the Scriptural ideas, and to
Similarly, Moses Silva declares that the Confession’s teaching on Scripture is intact even in the face of the advance of biblical studies.20

Harvie Conn, however, concerned for cultural contextualization in hermeneutics and the hermeneutical spiral,21 was less sure, at least in terms of the use of the Confession. Thus Conn specified the dangers of “gnosticizing” culture and “remythologizing” the

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Confession. He expressed his worries over “the evangelical’s perception of theology as some sort of comprehensively universal science…the Queen of the sciences, the watchdog of the academic world, the ultimate universal confessional theology.” He believed that “our creedal formulations, structured to respond to a sixteenth-century cultural setting and its problems,” would “lose their historical character as contextual confessions of faith and become cultural universals, having comprehensive validity in all times and settings.” What was the resulting danger in Conn’s mind for this view of the Westminster Confession? He explains: “The possibility of new doctrinal developments for the Reformed churches” would be “…frozen into a time warp that gnosticizes the particularity of time and culture.” The cure for these dangers was the “contextualization” of the creeds and the recognition of “how we have diminished their historical, contextual character.”

The Reformed confessions, to be sure, have a historical context. Consequently it can be claimed as Conn implies that the Reformed Confessions are time bound because they were primarily aiming at Roman Catholic anti-Protestant apologetics. Yet it is important

model has its problems. Evangelicals have feared that to bind text and exegete into a circle is to create a relationship of mutuality where ‘what is true for me’ becomes the criterion of ‘what is true.’ Instead, it has become more popular among evangelicals to speak of a hermeneutical spiral. Behind the idea of the spiral is the idea of progress in understanding; it is closer to the biblical image of sanctification, of growth in grace. Within the spiral, two complementary processes are taking place. As our cultural setting is matched with the text and the text with our setting, the text progressively reshapes the question we bring to it, and in turn, our questions force us to look at the text in a fresh way.” P. 194. “At the same time, our participation in hermeneutics is real also. And as we have noted, that is not a neutral participation without theological, cultural, or psychological presuppositions. We cannot escape the influence of our preunderstandings in looking for meaning and significance. How, then, does my specific sociocultural and psychological background aid or distort my reading of Scripture?” p. 203. Berkouwer also addresses the “hermeneutical circle” in Holy Scripture, p. 119, “This leads us to what is now commonly called the ‘hermeneutical circle.’ The term usually describes the relationship of the understanding of the whole of Scripture to its parts and vice versa. It is understandable that the circle has also been invoked in opposition to the ‘pre-understanding’ (i.e., the interpreter is no tabula rasa). The idea is that understanding though it focuses on the text, is yet not the sum total of variously understood parts, since the ‘pre-understanding’ cannot be eliminated. The part which subjectivity plays in the process of understanding must be recognized. In all of this the circle itself is not at stake, inasmuch as it demands attention to the particular involvement of the interpreter, who does not approach the text of Scripture with a clean slate. The critical question in regard to this is whether or not the ‘encounter,’ the positing of the a priori of the text over against all of the interpreter’s baggage and presuppositions, is completely recognized. Only then does the circle avoid being a necessarily vicious one. Only when the aim is a correlation between kerygma and existence, in which existence itself, despite every accent on the text, is made the final ‘canonical’ for its understanding, will such a peculiarly vicious circle be created.”

22 In his inaugural address as Professor of Missiology at Westminster, Harvey Conn, for example, expresses his concern of a perceived “gnosticizing” of culture that impedes missiological and doctrinal advances: “Related to this struggle is the evangelical’s perception of theology as some sort of comprehensively universal science. Theology becomes functionally the Queen of the sciences, the watchdog of the academic world, the ultimate universal. Combined with Western ethnocentrism, it produces the tacit assumption ‘that the Christian faith is already fully and properly indigenized in the West.’ Our creedal formulations, structured to respond to a sixteenth-century cultural setting and its problems, lose their historical character as contextual confessions of faith and become cultural universals, having comprehensive validity in all times and settings. The possibility of new doctrinal developments for the Reformed churches of Japan or Mexico is frozen into a time warp that Gnosticizes the particularity of time and culture. The Reformation is completed and we in the West wait for the churches of the Third World to accept as their statements of faith those shaped by a Western church three centuries before in a corpus christianum. In all this, there is no desire to diminish the place of the creed as the expression of the progressive understanding of truth conveyed by the Holy Spirit. Nor do we want to minimize or question the system of doctrine found in the reformed creeds of these centuries. Our concern is over how we have diminished their historical, contextual character. The creed as a missionary document framed in the uniqueness of an historical moment has too often been remythologized by white paternalism into a universal essence for all times. Contextualization, as a missionary demand of theologizing, is relegated to the non-Western ‘mission field.’” WTJ 45 (1983), pp. 16-17.

23 Ibid.
also to keep in mind what Turrentin recognized: “in every age the enemies of true religion and of Scripture have thought that they had found contradictory passages in Scripture.” Thus beyond the obvious nemesis of Roman Catholicism, Turrentin also identified “various libertines, who, although living in the bosom of the church, never stop calling attention to some ‘irreconcilable differences’ and ‘contradictions,’ so as to erode the authority of Scripture.”

Under Conn’s lead, a faculty symposium was published addressing the interplay between inerrancy and hermeneutics reflecting a breadth of opinions within Westminster’s Confessional tradition. The essays in general, however, made minimal explicit reference to the Confession’s implications for the task of hermeneutics.

Critics of inerrancy see philosophical motivations rather than biblical concerns at work in Turrentin’s development of his doctrine of Scripture. Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 235, “Falling back on the philosophy of Aristotle and the theological categories of Thomas Aquinas, Turretin produced a scholastic theology that placed great emphasis on precise definition and systematic, scientific statement.”

Francis Turretin, The Doctrine of Scripture, ed. & trans. John W. Beardslee III, (Baker, 1981), pp. 57, 58. Turretin writes, “When the divine quality of Scripture, which was argued in the preceding question, has been accepted, its infallibility follows of necessity. But in every age the enemies of true religion and of Scripture have thought that they had found contradictory passages in Scripture, and have vigorously presented them in order to overthrow its authority; for example, Porphyry, Lucian, and Julian the Apostate among the pagans of antiquity, and today various atheists, who in hostile fashion declare that there are contradictions and irreconcilable differences which cannot be harmonized in any way. Therefore this particular question must be discussed with them, so that the integrity of Scripture may be upheld against their impiety by a completed fabric and covering. Our controversy is not with open atheists and pagans, who do not recognize Holy Scripture, but with others who although they seem to accept it, yet indirectly deny it in this manner; for example, the enthusiasts, who allegre the imperfection of the written word in order to attract people to their esoteric word or special revelations...and finally, various libertines, who, although living in the bosom of the church, never stop calling attention to some ‘irreconcilable differences’ and ‘contradictions,’ so as to erode the authority of Scripture.”


Conn’s introductory article is “A Historical Prologue: Inerrancy, Hermeneutic, and Westminster”, which surveys the development of the views of Scripture held by Westminster Seminary’s faculty. He concludes, p. 34, “The chapters in this volume are, as stated in the preface, only bridge building in intention. They attempt to sketch the agenda changes over four decades. They are catch-up exercises for the evangelical, concerned with affirming the reliability of our fundamental commitment to the inerrant Word of God in the face of new questions. The problems shift and move; the Word of our God abides forever.”

Silva writes, “The hermeneutical flexibility that has characterized our tradition would probably come as a surprise to many observers who view Westminster as excessively rigid. Ironically, our confessional documents, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, are far more extensive and detailed than those found in most evangelical institutions. Our theological parameters are indeed very clearly defined, and yet those parameters themselves have made possible a diversity of viewpoints that would not have been tolerated in some other institutions.” Moses Silva, “Old Princeton, Westminster, and Inerrancy” in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Baker, 1988), p. 78.

In the fourteen essays presented in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate, edited by Harvie Conn, there are only eight references to the Westminster Standards. Two are general references to the Westminster Confession. Five are specific citations of the Confession with one reference to the first question of the Shorter Catechism, and none to the Larger Catechism. The five specific citations of the Confession are all to the first chapter, namely I.2-3, 4, 5, 7, 8. The salient point is that there is no citation of I.9 of the Confession, the central text that directly links infallibility and hermeneutics! This relevant passage defines “the only infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture.” And specifically, Professor Conn’s extensive citations of literature in his two articles in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic do not include any citation of the Westminster Standards. Ironically, Inerrancy and Hermeneutic references Bullmann eight times as well.
More recently, Professor Peter Enns, Professor of Old Testament and Hermeneutics at Westminster Theological Seminary, has published a hermeneutical study that repeatedly calls for a reconsideration of the evangelical doctrine of Scripture. Enns seeks a reassessment of doctrine on the basis of external evidence….My concern is that, at least on a popular level, a defensive approach to the evidence tends to dominate the evangelical conversation.”

This appears to be a significant step beyond the perspective of Professor Conn. Conn concluded his essay, “…in the face of new questions. The problems shift and move; the Word of our God abides forever.” But Professor Enns begins his study by connecting

30 Enns once references Westminster Seminary but does not refer to the Westminster Standards, “Also influential has been my own theological tradition, represented by my colleagues at Westminster Theological Seminary, past and present, and the wider tradition of which that institution is a part. This is not to imply that I speak for that institution or tradition. Nevertheless, I am thankful for being part of such a solidly faithful group, that does not shy away from some difficult yet basic questions and with whom I am able to have frank and open discussions. Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 9.

31 Enns emphasizes this point: “My focus…to look at these data (data that biblical scholars work with every day) with a clear view toward discussing their implications for an evangelical doctrine of Scripture.” p. 9. “The purpose of this book is to bring an evangelical doctrine of Scripture into conversation with the implications generated by some important themes in modern biblical scholarship—particularly Old Testament scholarship—over the past 150 years. To put it this way is to suggest that such a conversation has not taken place, at least not to the degree that it could have.” p. 13. “In my view, however, what is needed is not simply for evangelicals to work in these areas, but to engage the doctrinal implications that work in these areas raises. Without wanting to overstate the matter, I know or hear of a fair number of Christians who conclude that the contemporary state of biblical scholarship makes an evangelical faith unviable. These are the primary readers I envision for this book, those who desire to maintain a vibrant and reverent doctrine of Scripture, but who find it difficult to do so because they find familiar and conventional approaches to newer problems to be unhelpful.” p. 13. “On the one hand, I am very eager to affirm that many evangelical instincts are correct and should be maintained, for example, the conviction that the Bible is ultimately from God and that it is God’s gift to the church. Any theories concerning Scripture that do not arise from these fundamental instincts are unacceptable. On the other hand, how the evangelical church fleshes out its doctrine of Scripture will always have somewhat of a provisional quality to it. This is not to say that each generation must disregard the past and start afresh, formulating ever-new doctrines, bowing to all the latest fads. But it is to say that at such time 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.” pp. 13-14. “Reassessment of doctrine on the basis of external evidence, therefore is nothing new. To state it differently, our topic is the age-old question of the relationship between special revelation (the Bible) and general revelation (creation, i.e., everything else). My concern is that, at least on a popular level, a defensive approach to the evidence tends to dominate the evangelical conversation….the terms are familiar, liberal vs. conservative, modernist vs. fundamentalist, mainline vs. evangelical, progressive vs. traditionalist. …My aim is somewhat more foundational….I want to contribute to a growing opinion that what is needed is to move beyond both sides by thinking of better ways to account for some of the data, while at the same time having a vibrant, positive view of Scripture as God’s word….To put it another way, my aim is to allow the collective evidence to affect not just how we understand a biblical passage or story here and there within the parameters of earlier doctrinal formulations. Rather, I want to move beyond that by allowing the evidence to affect how we think about what Scripture as a whole is.” pp. 14-15. “The end result, I truly hope, will be 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.” p. 15. “Regardless of how we organize the data, the issue before us is not how we handle this verse or this issue, one at a time. Rather, what needs to happen is that we take a step back from the details and allow these issues to challenge us on a more fundamental level. What is needed is a way of thinking about Scripture where these kinds of issues are addressed from a very different perspective—where these kinds of problems cease being problems…It is not enough simply to say that he 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?” pp. 16-17. “The doctrinal implications of these discoveries have not yet been fully worked out in evangelical theology.” p. 25. “…the doctrinal implications of the Bible being so much a part of its ancient contexts are still not being addressed as much as they should.” p.47. Emphasis added.


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“the problems” directly with the Bible, with the Old Testament, as seen in his provocative

For Enns, the external evidence about the Bible that has accumulated since the 1800’s
requires a new synthesis of doctrine and data. He writes:

> My aim is somewhat more foundational…I want to contribute to a growing
> opinion that what is needed is to move beyond both sides [i.e. liberal vs.
> conservative] by thinking of better ways to account for some of the data, while at
> the same time having a vibrant, positive view of Scripture as God’s word….To
> put it another, way, my aim is to allow the collective evidence to affect not just
> how we understand a biblical passage or story here and there within the
> parameters of earlier doctrinal formulations. Rather, I want to move beyond that
> by allowing the evidence to affect how we think about what Scripture as a whole
> is."

But to those who struggle to synthesize their own doctrinal commitments with
what we have learned about the Bible over the past 150 years, these ways of
handling the evidence can be both frustrating and even debilitating.

The findings of the past 150 years have made extrabiblical evidence an
unavoidable conversation partner. The result is that, as perhaps never before in
the history of the church, we can see how truly provisional and incomplete certain
dimensions of our understanding of Scripture can be. On the other hand, we are
encouraged to encounter the depth and riches of God’s revelation and to rely more
and more on God’s Spirit, who speaks to the church in Scripture. 34

There is indeed a hermeneutical crisis, one whose magnitude, if we accept Peter Enns’
phrase, is monumental in proportion: “perhaps never before in the history of the
church”. 35 Given that such is the case, even after the hyperbole is taken into account, it
seems appropriate to borrow Harvie Conn’s language and embellish his desire “to sketch

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35 There is some confusion as to the audience that Enns is addressing: the troubled evangelical or the historic
 evangelical. D.A. Carson (*Reformation 21*, May 2006), writes, “Who are the intended readers? The answer to that
 question, in the case of this book, must be an integral part of the evaluation. Enns himself, it must be recalled, states
 that his envisaged readers are the ‘fair number of Christians who conclude that the contemporary state of biblical
 scholarship makes an evangelical faith unviable’ (13). In other words, granted the
 historical/literary/archaeological/historical difficulties cast up by ‘biblical scholarship,’ how can ‘evangelical faith’—
 presumably what evangelical faith says about the Bible—be viable? Taking this at face value, the difficulties should be
 the ‘given’ in the minds of the envisaged readers, and the book would then either challenge some of those ‘difficulties’
 in order to maintain evangelicalism’s stance on the Bible, or it would accommodate the difficulties and provide a more
 sophisticated understanding of ‘evangelical faith,’ or perhaps a revision of it. Yet in the three substantive chapters, most
 of the space is devoted instead to convincing the reader that the difficulties Enns isolates are real, and must be taken
 more seriously by evangelicals than is usually the case. In other words, despite his initial claim that he is writing the
 book to comfort the disturbed, as it were, the actual performance aims to disturb the comfortable. This makes the book
 rather difficult to evaluate. Moreover, Enns’s ambitions are vaulting: the evidence cast up by biblical scholarship, we
 are told, is of the sort that requires that an ‘adjustment’ be made in how we think of Scripture, akin to the re-
 interpretation generated by the Copernican revolution (13). Wow. So are we explaining how evangelical faith
 accommodates biblical scholarship, or are we asserting that a Copernican revolution must take place within evangelical
 faith so as to accommodate biblical scholarship?”
the agenda changes over four decades". To do so, let us contrast two OT Faculty members of Westminster, namely E. J. Young and Peter Enns. By doing so, the changed OT hermeneutical agenda fueling this crisis and impacting the historic Confessional view of Scripture and hermeneutic taught at Westminster will thereby come into sharper relief.

Reflecting, then, on the same “data”, and “extrabiblical evidence” impacting OT scholars and their doctrine of Scripture referenced by Enns, earlier Westminster professor of OT, Young wrote:

In the face of this constant demand for a new doctrine of inspiration, what attitude is the Christian man to adopt?...Have the findings of “scientific” biblical study actually demonstrated the untenability of the traditional attitude toward inspiration? There are some evangelical Christians who apparently think that such is the case.

When we have once grasped the idea that we must derive our doctrine of inspiration from the Bible, we may begin to understand what the real issue before the Church is. The real issue is not whether we are to substitute one doctrine of inspiration for another. That is at the most a somewhat secondary question. The real issue before the Church today, and for that matter before every individual Christian, is whether the Bible is any longer to be regarded and accepted as a trustworthy teacher of doctrine. In other words, when the Bible testifies as to its own nature, are to pay heed to what it has to say?

The Bible, therefore, whether we will or not, is constantly being thrust into the forefront of discussion and one can only be amazed, to say nothing of being saddened, at the glibness with which many speak of the old-fashioned view of inspiration as being out of date and not relevant for the present age.

To understand the present demand for a new doctrine of inspiration and a new attitude toward the Bible one must know something about the background and soil from which much of our modern religious life and thought has sprung. Clearly, the hermeneutical crisis is real and has impacted Westminster Seminary. There are two theologies of Scripture wrestling in the faculty room. The question before us, to use an OT image, is whether the elder theology shall serve the younger. In answering this, the role of the Westminster Standards and the faculty vow to those Standards take on high importance.

II. The Hermeneutical Crisis and the Historic Presbyterian Subscription to the Confession

37 E. J. Young, Thy Word Is Truth, p. 16.
38 Ibid, p. 28.
39 Ibid, p. 15.
40 Ibid, p. 15.
The importance of the question of the relationship between the *Confession* and Biblical studies is especially important in the context of Biblically oriented Presbyterian Churches in general and Westminster Theological Seminary in particular. This is because subscription to these *Standards* is required. The subscription made by ordained Presbyterian officers in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) is well known. Perhaps less well known, the faculty and board of Westminster Theological Seminary make an extensive and even more explicit *ex animo* commitment to the *Westminster Standards*.

Along side this *Confessional* subscription, OPC and PCA officers as well as Westminster faculty and Trustees have also specifically subscribed to the infallibility of the Scriptures. The language of the Seminary’s subscription is identical to that of the OPC and nearly so to the PCA. The only difference of the OPC and Westminster subscriptions from that of the PCA is that the PCA’s text adds a phrase indicating commitment to the inerrancy of the *autographa*:

**Westminster**:  I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. (See note 43.)

**OPC**:  Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice? (Book of Church Order, OPC, XXIII.8, (1).)

**PCA**:  Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice? (Book of Church Order, PCA, 21-5, 1.)

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41 See, *Book of Church Order*, OPC, XXIII.8, “(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?”; *Book of Church Order*, PCA, 21-5, “2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechisms* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will on your own initiative, make known to your Presbytery the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?”.

42 Westminster Theological Seminary’s Constitution prescribes the following pledge for every voting member of the faculty: “I do solemnly declare, in the presence of God, and of the Trustees and Faculty of this Seminary, that (1) I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and (2) I do solemnly and *ex animo* adopt, receive, and subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms in the form in which they were adopted by this Seminary in the year of our Lord 1936, as the confession of my faith, or as a summary and just exhibition of that system of doctrine and religious belief, which is contained in Holy Scripture, and therein revealed by God to man for his salvation; and I do solemnly, *ex animo*, profess to receive the fundamental principles of the Presbyterian form of church government, as agreeable to the inspired oracles. And I do solemnly promise and engage not to inculcate, teach, or insinuate anything which shall appear to me to contradict or contravene, either directly or impliedly, any element in that system of doctrine, nor to oppose any of the fundamental principles of that form of church government, while I continue a member of the Faculty in this Seminary. I do further solemnly declare that, being convinced of my sin and misery and of my inability to rescue myself from my lost condition, not only have I assented to the truth of the promises of the Gospel, but also I have received and rest upon Christ and His righteousness for pardon of my sin and for my acceptance as righteous in the sight of God and I do further promise that if at any time I find myself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, I will on my own initiative, make known to the Faculty of this institution and, where applicable, my judicatory, the change which has taken place in my views since the assumption of the vow.”
Clearly, the historic Presbyterian commitment to the authority of the Westminster Standards and to the infallibility of the Scriptures has been maintained by Westminster Seminary, the OPC and the PCA as evidenced by these explicit vows.\textsuperscript{43}

Given the criticisms of the primacy afforded to the Westminster Standards, both from without\textsuperscript{44} and from within the Westminster tradition,\textsuperscript{45} a significant question arises concerning the Westminster Standards’ impact on the interpretation of the “infallible” Scriptures. In light of the hermeneutical crisis, the question to be considered here is: What are the hermeneutical parameters the Westminster Standards establish for the interpreters of Holy Scripture who have subscribed to these Standards?

\textsuperscript{43} Cf. Peter A. Lillback, “Confessional Subscription Among the Sixteenth Century Reformers” in The Practice of Confessional Subscription ed. David W. Hall (University Press of America, 1995), pp. 33-66. In regard to the matter of the nature of the authority of the protestant confessions, Schaff writes,

To decide this question we must remember that the object of a confession is, not to find out what God teaches, for this we find in the Scriptures, but to show what we believe. A quatenus-subscription is no real confession, but an evasion and leaves it to a person's subjective judgment what to accept and what to reject. The church must ask for a quia-subscription, for she must know where her ministers and teachers stand. A confession of faith is to the church what a constitution is to a society, and no one has a right to enter or remain in any Christian church except as its terms of membership give him that right.

Not only the heretical sects connected with Protestantism but also the liberal theologians of the church have raised an outcry against the authority of symbols as inconsistent with "the right of private judgment." They style the church's attitude in respect to symbols "symbololatry," worship of symbols, and see in the symbols only a yoke of human authority, a new popery in the form of printed documents. Making all due allowance for the prejudice which many of the opponents of the church's confessions have displayed, and for their ignorance which lies behind most of their comments on the subject, nevertheless, we cannot in the least support such a tirade against the symbols of the church, for the church does not compel anyone to accept her doctrines. A candidate for the ministry offers himself to the church for service, and his offer is accepted by the church on the ground that he is one with her in faith. If he cannot subscribe to the confessions of his church, he should not seek her ministerial office; or if, as a minister of the church, he has abandoned the faith of his church, he will, if he is at all sincere, leave that church and join another with which he is one in faith. (E. H. Klotsche, Christian Symbolics or Exposition of the Distinctive Characteristics of the Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed Churches as well as the Modern Denominations and Sects Represented in this Country, (Burlington: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1929), pp. 15-16.)

Thus the protestant confessional tradition simultaneously recognizes the subordinate character of its standards with respect to the Scriptures and the superiority of its standards with respect to the qualifications of its ministers and officers.

\textsuperscript{44} Hugh Pope declares,

That the Catholic Church which claims the prerogative of teaching revealed truth with infallible certitude, should have drawn up articles of faith and demanded for them the internal assent and outward confession of her children,
III. The Regulative Principle of Hermeneutics: The Westminster Standards’ Parameters and “Infallible” Hermeneutical Principle

Moses Silva, writing at the time as a Professor of NT at Westminster, notes that there are significant theological parameters established by the Westminster Standards that are vital for hermeneutics:

The hermeneutical flexibility that has characterized our tradition would probably come as a surprise to many observers who view Westminster as excessively rigid. Ironically, our confessional documents, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, are far more extensive and detailed than those found in most evangelical institutions. Our theological parameters are indeed very clearly

was logical and consistent; but it is difficult to understand with what logic or consistency Protestantism, which proclaimed the Bible as interpreted by the private judgment of the individual, to be the sole and sufficient rule of faith, could follow her example. (Hugh Pope, "Protestant Confessions of Faith" in The Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. V. p. 760.)

But Roman Catholics have not been alone in raising this alleged inconsistency. Thus a preface to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms published by the Church of Scotland in 1719 sought to deal with a growing movement among Protestants rejecting confessional subscription as inherently Roman Catholic in nature.

The first and most noisy argument whereby endeavours are made to run down all creeds, and expose them to contempt and hatred is, "(a) That they are in their own nature an arbitrary and tyrannical invasion upon the natural rights of mankind whereby every man hath a title to judge for himself, and not to be imposed upon by the determinations of others, whether private persons or councils and churches; That therefore, for any to form creeds, and make their own sentiments and darling opinions the standard of truth and orthodoxy, is to usurp an authority over the consciences of men, founded upon the maxim of popery, and directly contrary to the spirit of the Reformation. And therefore as it is an attempt to be abhorred in every body so 'tis particularly in Protestants, who separate from the Church of Rome upon the foot of private judgment; and seems to argue, that tho' they plead for a liberty of dissenting from every body else, yet they would fain keep others from exercising their own judgments, in following the dictates of their own minds, and that while they are engaged in a pretended defiance to implicit faith: Besides 'tis alleged that 'tis contrary to our avowed principle, That the Scriptures are the only rule by which we are to try all opinions, and determine all controversies; for a church at the same time to claim an authority in matters of faith, decide disputable questions, and either absolve or condemn men according to their own formulas, as well as the Scriptures." (A Collection of Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories, Books of Discipline, Etc. Of Publick Authority in the Church of Scotland, (Edinburgh: James Watson, 1719), vol. 1 p. Ivii.)

In fact, the Arminian Episcopius (1583-1643) saw the hand of the Devil himself in the "tyranny" of confessional subscription:

The Devil knows that tyranny is universally abhorred by mankind, and therefore is too cunning to attempt the barefa'd promoting of it; he more artfully slips in by undiscerned chinks and gradually winds himself into a station, to which he could not make way by the straight road. First he perswades men in order to preserve the purity of doctrine, to compose confessions about matters that are not absolutely necessary to be known or believed and thus far the affair goes on easily: Then he urges a consent to these articles as a bond of peace and union; good still! Next measures must be taken that this consent be kept inviolable, this also is specious enough, and is an encouragement to farther advances; therefore he loudly cries up the necessity of forms and creeds to be subscribed, so as not only a consent, but a perseverance in that consent may be promised. And that is the first visible step to the tyranny of men and tyrannical confessions of faith, by this way it is not hard for the Devil to ascend to the highest elevation of tyranny, especially if such a creed be venerable for its antiquity, and unshaken hath outbrav'd many persecutions; if it hath been stoutly defended against adversaries, and be fortified and recommended by the blood of martyrs who adhered to it; all these are supports and helps by which the Devil makes way for establishing the most ambitious aims of humane authority. (Cited in Ibid., p. xlii.)

45 Harvie M. Conn, as noted above, expresses his concern for a “gnosticizing” of culture as well as a fear of a “remythologized” Confession. WTJ 45 (1983), pp. 16-17. In this context consider Berkouwer’s criticisms of Edmund Clowney’s critique of the United Presbyterian Church’s proposed Confession in Holy Scripture, pp. 163-165.
defined, and yet those parameters themselves have made possible a diversity of viewpoints that would not have been tolerated in some other institutions.46

Westminster’s discussion of the doctrine of Scripture under the lead of Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. has identified deeply with the Reformed tradition reflected by Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck47 and has thereby avoided the conundrums created by the theology of fundamentalism.48

Nevertheless, the question before us to use Silva’s words is whether the “diversity of viewpoints that...have been tolerated” and “made possible” at Westminster by these

46 Moses Silva, “Old Princeton, Westminster, and Inerrancy” in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Baker, 1988), p. 78. Berkouwer affirms the inescapable connection of theology and hermeneutic, Holy Scripture, p. 106, “The fact that hermeneutics is continually busy with rules for the exposition of Scripture shows a desire to oppose the arbitrariness which, despite the recognition of Scripture as God’s Word, neglects its concrete authority. It is impossible for any theological study to bypass these questions. For in every hermeneutical question lies an aspect which is intrinsically tied to the confession of scriptural authority.” See also Silva, Has The Church Misread The Bible? The history of interpretation in the light of current issues (Zondervan, 1987), p. 38. “The first item listed above—the Bible as both divine and human—constitutes the most basic question of all. Strictly speaking, it is not so much a hermeneutical question as it is one of theology, even though, as we shall see in the course of our discussions, one can hardly divorce doctrine from interpretation....”

47 See for example, “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., WTJ, (1982-83), p. 278, “The biblical records are impressionistic; that is, they are not marked by notarial precision or blue-print, architectural exactness.... This understanding of ‘impressionistic’ is echoed at a number of places elsewhere in Kuyper’s writings....” “Whoever in reading Scripture thinks that everything was spoken precisely as it stands in the text, is totally mistaken.’ Again, he points to the differences between the four Gospels and the NT use of the OT as sufficient to show that as a rule the latia of God has not come to us ‘in its original form.’”... “In typical fashion Kuyper illustrates his point by recalling an aspect of modern European parliamentary practice. Both the French and English parliaments keep two kinds of records; one is a verbatim account of what a speaker says (a ‘proces-verbal’), the other a brief resume or summary account (a ‘proces-analytique’)....” “It would be a mistake, Kuyper continues, to suppose that the verbatim report is better or more desirable....” p. 279, “In a similar vein, we ought not to think that the speeches in Job are given precisely as Bildad spoke them. Rather they provide a ‘romantic representation’ or ‘free rendering’ of what was said. But because this happens ‘under guarantee of the Holy Spirit,’ they express what was said ‘not only not inaccurately [onjust], but more accurately [juister] and, besides that, more elegantly.’”... “On the one hand, the biblical narratives do not record the past with stenographic preciseness or photographic exactness. Yet as historical records they are completely accurate and do not at all mislead.” ... “The distinguishing mark of inspiration, however, above everything else is that it guarantees absolute accuracy [absolute juistheid].” The singular character of the writers of the Old and New Testaments lies in the fact that the stamp of truth and certainty is impressed upon their writings. The Holy Spirit so leads their spirit that in them the results of sin are cut off and prevented. This distinguishing mark is not relative, but absolute.” ...

Biblical narrative is absolutely accurate without being notorially exact....”

48 Cf. Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, p. 22 “It is true that fundamentalists do not deny the human element in Scripture, but they allow their apologoetics to be determined by the fear that emphasis on the human witness may threaten and overshadow Scripture’s divinity.”, p. 24, “Fundamentalists allowed themselves, however, to be guided by the ‘wholly divine or wholly human’ dilemma, and thus they allowed the camp they opposed to force a problem on them.”, p. 25, “Bavinck points to the self-witness of Scripture, which is unalterable, and he acknowledges moreover that the examination of Scripture in recent years comes up with ‘phenomena and facts that can hardly be reconciled with this self-witness.’ The difference between fundamentalism and Bavinck is not that his confession regarding Scripture is less positive than fundamentalism’s, but that he gives much more attention to the manner in which Scripture came to us as human witness. Because of the divine nature of Scripture, the human witness does not become less important to Bavinck; rather, it receives special significance. This does not result from a relativizing of Scripture, but from his great respect for the manner of revelation that itself compels us to reflect on the nature of Scripture’s authority.”, p. 26, “... Bavinck did not capitulate in any way to the criticism of Scripture of his day. Instead, he analyzed this criticism and arrived at the conclusion that the critics had totally lost sight of the purpose of Holy Scripture....he calls attention to what the intent—the specific and emphatic objective—of Scripture is. The important thing to notice is that Bavinck’s rejection of biblical criticism takes the form of a positive contribution to the understanding of the nature of Scripture. It goes without saying that here many new questions could be raised. For example, what exactly is this ‘most’ scope(s) of Scripture?” But Gaffin rightly points out that Berkouwer is not a completely faithful expositor of Kuyper and Bavinck, “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” pp. 279-280, “Accordingly, when Kuyper speaks of the possibility of ‘innocent inaccuracies’ in historical records (Principles, 457), this expression ought not simply to be lifted out of context and
“theological parameters” have begun to erode or even breach the parameters that sheltered and enabled them in the first place?

In this context, it appears significant that Enns’ expressed desire is to “move beyond” the “parameters of earlier doctrinal formulations.”

…my aim is to allow the collective evidence to affect not just how we understand a biblical passage or story here and there within the parameters of earlier doctrinal formulations. Rather, I want to move beyond that by allowing the evidence to affect how we think about what Scripture as a whole is.

The end result, I truly hope, will be 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.49

What then are the Confession’s theological parameters and presuppositions concerning Scripture? Are there Confessional hermeneutical parameters and principles for interpreting Scripture? Young believed that these existed and identified them when he placed the entire first chapter of the Westminster Confession as an appendix to his defense of inerrancy,50 while Enns leaves his understanding of what is intended by the “parameters of earlier doctrinal formulations” vague and undefined.51

enlisted without further qualification against efforts at harmonization, as Berkouwer does. If we are not to distort Kuyper’s meaning, we must not fail to note the specific terms of the contrast that serves to define these ‘innocent inaccuracies’: they ‘so far from doing harm, rather bring to light the free expression of life above notarial affectation.’”…p. 280, “Perhaps the deepest perspective on the sense of the quotation under examination in this section is provided by reflecting further on the distinction, already noted, between divine and human errorlessness….What is the difference, Kuyper asks, between ‘divinely errorless’ and ‘humanly errorless’?...Divine errorlessness, in contrast, is like the work of a painter. In summary, divine errorlessness, like art, gives the essence without error, but without maintaining precisely the same form….The errorlessness of Scripture, then, is divine, not human.”

50 Young, Thy Word Is Truth, pp. 277-280.
51 The closest statement of theological disclosure that Enns provides is: “Also influential has been my own theological tradition, represented by my colleagues at Westminster Theological Seminary, past and present, and the wider tradition of which that institution is a part. This is not to imply that I speak for that institution or tradition.” Enns, Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 9. The lack of theological clarity in Enns’ theological position has been expressed by the OPC Mid-Atlantic Presbytery’s Report: “This general neglect of any detailed interaction with the classical Reformed treatments of Inspiration is notable. He seems to embrace Warfield’s concept of concursus but does not tell us how he differs from Warfield. He is able to simultaneously place Warfield and J. Patterson Smyth in his ‘Further Reading’ section (Inspiration, p. 22) seeming to commend Smyth for ‘honesty and spiritual sensitivity.’ Yet Warfield was not so favorable to Smyth’s work. While reviewing it along with two other works (Presbyterian and Reformed Review 5, 1894), Warfield states: ‘These are therefore three very instructive little books. They exhibit to us the working of the new heaven in its mildest form; and advertise to us what is the least change in our attitude towards the Bible which will satisfy the most moderate adherents of the new views. As such, they are not reassuring. It becomes evident at once not only that an entire revolution in the doctrine of sacred Scripture incorporated in our creeds, and held indeed by the whole Christian past, will be required of us (which is a comparatively small matter); but also that on the new ground we can no longer occupy the same attitude towards Scripture that our Lord and His apostles occupied. The attempts of these books being taken as samples, it becomes equally evident also that no consistent doctrine of inspiration, conservative of the detailed divine authority of the Scriptures, can be framed on the basis of the new views.’ If we are to open a new trajectory in our understanding of Inspiration, it would at least be helpful to gain some sense of where and why the boundaries suggested by Warfield—or perhaps better yet—Bavinck, are not adequate. If Enns is not saying anything that Bavinck has not said, he should acknowledge his debt. If he is saying something new, he should step forward and show the Reformed community—not just broad evangelicals—where they need further reformation.”
Although not directly addressed in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic* nor by Enns in *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, it is evident that the *Confession* in Chapter One “Of the Holy Scripture” establishes an overarching hermeneutical parameter or hermeneutic principle when it declares:

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

Thus the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture is declared to be of foundational importance. The *Confession’s* mandate for this hermeneutical method is patent and principal: it is an “infallible rule of interpretation”. Further, it is sweeping in its impact since it relates to the “true and full sense of any Scripture”. In fact, this interpretive method is not optional, but obligatory, since the meaning of any Scripture “must be searched and known.” The canonical self-interpreting character of this Scriptural hermeneutic is captured in the words, “by other places that speak more clearly.”

Finally, all of these words substantiate what is intended by the word *rule*—a *rule* is to be observed. As *Larger Catechism* question 99 says, “For the right understanding… these rules are to be observed….” Hence, the *Confession’s* hermeneutical principle is given an importance that cannot be ignored or diminished if the Scripture’s authority as the “only infallible rule of faith and practice” is consciously recognized with the seriousness that an *ex animo* subscription requires. This *Confessional* rule for the interpretation of Scripture might well be denominated, the *regulative principle of hermeneutics*.

The historic understanding of this principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture is enunciated by Turretin:

Comparison matches one passage of Scripture to another (Acts 9:22), by comparing the more obscure with the more understandable, similar or parallel ones with those like them, and the dissimilar with the dissimilar. The analogy of the faith (Rom. 12:6) means not only a measuring standard for the faith, or a measure given to each of the believers, but also the constant harmony or agreement of all the articles of faith in the most glorious words of the revealed Scripture, to which all expositions must conform, lest anything be taught contrary to the articles of faith or the commandments of the Decalogue.53

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52 Cf. Turretin, *Doctrine of Scripture*, p. 187, “It is not a question of whether matters necessary for salvation are presented clearly everywhere in Scripture. Indeed we grant that there are many passages that are difficult to understand, by which God wills to exercise our effort and the skill of the scholar. The question is whether these necessary matters are presented somewhere in such a manner that a believer can recognize their truth when he has given them serious consideration, because nothing is learned from the more obscure passages that is not found most plainly taught elsewhere. As Augustine says, ‘the Holy Spirit has arranged the Scriptures in such a wonderful and wholesome manner, that hunger is remedied by the plainer passages and pride by the more obscure…’ and, ‘We feed on the clear passages, and are disciplined by the obscure; in the one our appetite is overcome, in the other our pride.’”

53 Turretin, *Doctrine of Scripture*, p. 207.
Turretin reasons that this method is required since we must recognize that God possesses the authority to interpret His own words.

Just as a ruler is the interpreter of his own law, so also God is the interpreter of his own Scripture, which is the law of faith and conduct. And the privilege which is proper for other writers that each one is the interpreter of his own words, should not be denied to God when he speaks in Scripture.  

Westminster NT professor Vern Poythress well illustrates this principle:  

At a fundamental level, there is no such thing as a passage in and of itself. John 2:16 is part of the Bible, and God intends that we read it and understand it in relation to all the other parts of the Bible. When he caused these words to be written in the Gospel of John, he already intended that they should be seen as we are seeing them, namely, in connection with other passages that together unfold the purpose of God.

Moreover, this is the teaching of the Confession in I.5 where it speaks of “the consent of all the parts” that “doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God”.

IV. Sola Scriptura: Scripture, Science and the “Infallible Rule of Interpretation”

In the midst of the hermeneutical crisis, the importance of the reformational principle of Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres (Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter) must again be affirmed. For what is at stake is nothing less than the Reformation’s commitment to sola Scriptura. As Berkouwer explains, the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture is the logical outgrowth of a full and deep commitment to sola Scriptura. Berkouwer, who also is concerned not to miss the human dimension of Scripture, underscores this point.

Nowhere was the relationship between authority and interpretation so clearly expressed as in the Reformation confession of Scripture, which, based on sola Scriptura, offered a perspective on the real relationship between authority and interpretation, and expressed it in its hermeneutical rule: Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres (Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter).

The principle might appear to be primarily an apologetic for the Reformation. Since “Calvin”, for example, “spoke of the Holy Spirit as ‘a unique self-interpreter,’ since he spoke by the prophets.” Berkouwer declares, however, that this hermeneutical principle actually emerges from Scripture.

On hearing this rule, one can react that it is polemically understandable but really not a concrete and fruitful notion for the present interpretation of Scripture. The formula is indeed a polemical focusing of the sola Scriptura on interpretation.

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56 Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, p. 127.
57 Ibid, pp. 127-128.
This already excludes the possibility of speaking of a purely formal rule without diverse perspectives. It contains a concrete rejection of other interpretations which are foreign to the nature of Scripture. By so doing it naturally reminds us of the scriptural message that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation (2 Pet. 1:20).  

And so in the context of the current hermeneutical crisis, what happens to the Reformation’s hermeneutical principle flowing from sola Scriptura when the issues of modern science or scholarship in their many forms enter this discussion? Berkouwer pointedly asks this question:

It has been repeatedly pointed out that behind many of the questions presently related to the interpretation of Holy Scripture looms the important presence of science….The way in which this relationship is usually discussed is by maintaining that certain results of science, be it natural science or historical research can provide the “occasion” for understanding various aspects of Scripture in a different way than before. If this is indeed the case, then what is the relationship between such an “occasion” and the authoritative power of “Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter”? Berkouwer asks, “Does it mean that science has become a fellow interpreter, or is it impossible to state the problem in such a way?” Enns seems to answer affirmatively: “the findings of the past 150 years have made extrabiblical evidence an unavoidable conversation partner.” Yet for Berkouwer, if science becomes part of biblical hermeneutics, the principle of sola Scriptura is lost. Berkouwer explains:

It is not true that, as far as the Reformation was concerned, Scripture alone was its own interpreter and that now we see a second interpreter being added. If that

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58 Ibid., p. 127.
59 “Science” in Berkouwer’s mind is broader than what is often intended in the American use of the word. Jack B. Rogers, translator of Holy Scripture, p. 133, n. 80, explains, “The word ‘science’ is used throughout this book in a much broader sense than is usual in the U.S.A. Berkouwer’s concept of a science is equivalent to our notion of an academic discipline. Thus, studies done in the humanities and social sciences as well as the natural sciences are included. Theology is also a science, since it proceeds by orderly academic research and reflection.”
60 Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, p. 133-134. The Reformed theologians Kuyper and Bavinck also wrestled with the findings of science and their impact on the theology of the inspiration of the Bible. See “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy!” by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., WETJ (1982-83), pp. 281-282., “The classic, rational apologetic for graphic inspiration is not only inappropriate but counterproductive, because it places the demands of mechanical preciseness on Scripture, which by its nature demands organic precision; Scripture is forced into a mold which is not suited to its organic character…. Kuyper observes that the full, multifaceted character of Scripture cannot be exhausted by the finite grasp of our logical, mathematical thinking. One result is that according to intellectual demands and on the flat terrain of logic, everything in Scripture is not in harmony. But certainly that harmony is there, and we see it when, in faith, we view it ‘from the standpoint of the Holy Spirit.’… Kuyper and Bavinck held that Scripture does not intend to give us ‘technically correct scientific information.’ That is right. But at the same time what Kuyper would also want to point out is that in its undeniably impressionistic, not notarially precise, not scientifically exact, fashion, Scripture gives information that is directly relevant to science.”
61 Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, pp. 133-134.
62 Enns, Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 49.
were the case, it might be better to recognize that the Reformation scriptural principle now appears insufficient and out of date. ⁶³

When, however, the *sui ipsitus interpres* receives increasingly concrete attention, it also becomes apparent that science cannot become an “interpreter” alongside Scripture itself. This is one pretension not found in the circles of science itself, except for odd cases of vain scientific idealism which are convinced that the light of Scripture has been permanently extinguished by that of science. Not just to spite science, but rather because of its totally different nature and of the secret of Scripture—the secret of the gospel—we will have to continue on the basis of the “*is its own interpreter*” and thus continue to honor Scripture as canon. ⁶⁴

Indeed, for Berkouwer, the “trustworthiness” of Scripture denies the legitimacy of the “new hermeneutic” that coercively forces concessions upon the canonical hermeneutical principle of the Reformation.

The discussion about Scripture, its God-breathed character and authority, cannot take place via a coerced concession to a new hermeneutical method and the “occasion” of science. It can only take place in the perspective of that trustworthiness of Scripture which enables us to abandon ourselves in complete trust to its authority and to preach its message. ⁶⁵

To fail to see the uniqueness of Scripture in this regard has but one end in Berkouwer’s mind—being “seized by irresolute doubt”.

Those who, because of the complicated questions of interpretation, the dangers of projection and twisting, of subjectivism and objectivism, want to give up trying to understand Scripture in accordance with its divine intent, have been seized by irresolute doubt….To overcome doubt of this kind, we must not allow any questions of interpretation, including those arising from newly disclosed knowledge, to hinder new essays into scriptural understanding from the vantage point of the *sui ipsius interpres*. On these voyages we will be aware that no single postulate that circumvents this dictum can in fact block our way. There is no single technique able to provide the key to the secret of Scripture, not even a perfected hermeneutics. ⁶⁶

We can scarcely summarize Berkouwer’s point here more cogently than by reaffirming his declaration of the uniqueness of Scripture that he denominates “the secret of Scripture”:

Not just to spite science, but rather because of its totally different nature and of the secret of Scripture—the secret of the gospel—we will have to continue on the

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⁶⁴ Ibid.
⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 138
basis of the “is its own interpreter” and thus continue to honor Scripture as canon.  

Given the infallibility, extensiveness and mandatory character of the Westminster Confession’s hermeneutical rule (WCF, I.9), all other “scientific” considerations for interpreting Scripture must be viewed as having secondary importance. Whether they are historical, archaeological, linguistic or extra-biblical phenomena, as helpful as they may be to reflect the historical milieu of Scripture and to provide insights into the nature and meaning of Biblical language, they must be considered to be subordinate and not equivalent in interpretive force to the self interpreting character of Scripture. Moreover, as Kuyper argued, there are two kinds of science—that which operates within the Christian worldview and that which comports with a naturalistic philosophy. Consequently, the “canon” for Biblical hermeneutics as opposed to naturalistic hermeneutics is and must be the canon of Scripture. This alone preserves “sola Scriptura.” At this point it is interesting, perhaps even ironic, to observe that the “modern” Berkouwer is in sympathy with the “protestant orthodox”, Turretin. The latter writes,

The purpose of Scripture requires this perfection, for it was given that we might have salvation and life from it (John 20:31; 1 John 5:13; Rom. 15:4). How could this purpose be accomplished, unless Scripture were perfect, containing all that is

Ibid.

Abraham Kuyper explains, “Our proposition that there are two kinds of science is, from the nature of the case, merely the accommodation to a linguistic usage. The two sciences must never be coordinated with each other. In fact, no one can be convinced that there is more than one science, and that which announces itself as science by the side of, or in opposition to, this can never be acknowledged as such in the absolute sense. As soon as the thinker of palingenesis has come to that point in the road where the thinker of naturalism parts company with him, the latter’s science is no longer anything to the former but “science falsely so called.” Similarly the naturalistic thinker is bound to contest the name of science for that which the student of the “wisdom of God” derives from his premises. That which lies outside of the realm of these different premises is common to both, but that which is governed, directly or indirectly, by these premises comes to stand entirely differently to the one from what it does to the other. Always in this sense, of course, that only one is right and in touch with actual reality, but is unable to convince the other of wrong. It will once be decided, but not until the final consummation of all things.” Abraham Kuyper, Principles of Sacred Theology (Baker, 1980), p. 176.


In Reformed theology, the Holy Spirit’s ministry was not absent from the creation of the canon of Scripture, cf. “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., WTJ, (1982-83), p. 268 “The apostles themselves believed in a predestined Bible and saw inspiration as extending to the individual words and letters (2.177). The scriptural attire (het Schriftgewaad) of the Word is woven by God according to the pattern that he has drawn up for it (1.86). Graphic inspiration in the narrower sense is the operation of the Holy Spirit in the various human authors, “whereby they wrote in just the way and at such a time and in such a form as was necessary for the delivery of that part of Scripture for which each was responsible, finished and adapted to the canonical linking together of all the parts, to that one harmonious whole which the Lord God had foreseen and foreordained for Holy Scripture.” This graphic inspiration concerns “the production of the autograph in the form intended by God, at the moment it enters the canon” (2.127)....” p. 270, “The Holy Spirit directed them, brought to their knowledge what they were to know, sharpened their judgments in the choice of documents and records, so that they should decide aright, and gave them a superior maturity of mind that enabled them always to choose exactly the right word. ...But whether He dictates directly, as in the Revelation of St. John or governs indirectly, as with historians and evangelists, the result is the same: the product is such in the form and content as the Holy Spirit designed, an infallible document for the Church of God.” Cf. R. Laird Harris, Inspiration and Canonicity of the Scriptures (Greenville, S.C.: A Press, 1995).
necessary for salvation? It was given to be canon and rule of faith but a rule which is not full and sufficient is no rule; a rule is a standard from which nothing can be taken and to which nothing can be added, “an inviolable law and infallible measure, allowing no addition or substitution,” as Favorinus says.\textsuperscript{71}

The vows of the OPC, the PCA and Westminster all reflect Turretin’s “canon and rule of faith” and “inviolable law and infallible measure” when they unitedly declare belief in, “the only infallible rule of faith and practice.”\textsuperscript{72} Such an “infallible rule” would appear to be “a rule” or “standard from which nothing can be taken and to which nothing can be added”.

V. “A Modern Doctrine of Scripture”? “Provisional Theologizing” and the Confession’s “Infallible Rule of Interpretation”

As we turn from this consideration of the Reformers’, Turretin’s and Berkouwer’s understanding of \textit{sola Scriptura} to the views of Professor Enns, we must engage Professor Enns’ emphasis upon the humanity of Scripture and his concomitant insistence that the doctrine of Scripture be developed without “blissful isolation” from extrabiblical evidence. Do the archaeological discoveries of scholars require a mere provisional confession of our doctrine of Scripture?

Professor Enns has strongly pressed these issues and has here given his views in unmistakable terms. His “Two assumptions”, his stated presuppositions, clarify his perspective:

1. I assume that the extrabiblical archeological and textual evidences should play an important role in our understanding of Scripture….I reject the notion that a modern doctrine of Scripture can be articulated in blissful isolation from the evidence we have.
2. All attempts to articulate the nature of Scripture are open to examination, including my own. I firmly believe…that the Spirit of God is fully engaged in such a theological process and at the same time that our attempts to articulate what God’s word is have a necessarily provisional dimension. To put it succinctly: The Spirit leads the church to truth—he does not simply drop us down in the middle of it. To say this is not a low view of Scripture or of the role of the Holy Spirit. It is simply to recognize what has been the case throughout the history of the church, that diverse views and changes of opinion over time have been the constant companions of the church and that God has not brought this process to a closure.\textsuperscript{73}

Here Enns assumes the view that both Berkouwer and Turretin have just rejected. Thankfully Enns does not advance in place of the Confession’s “infallible rule of

\textsuperscript{71} Turetin, \textit{Doctrine of Scripture}, p. 175.
\textsuperscript{72} See section II above.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Inspiration and Incarnation}, pp. 48-49.
interpretation” the “irresolute doubt” identified by Berkouwer. But he does overtly confess a “provisional” doctrine of Scripture 74:

If even God expresses himself in the Bible through particular human circumstances, we must be very ready to see the necessarily culturally limited nature of our own theological expressions today. I am not speaking of cultural relativism, where all truth is up for grabs and the Bible ceases being our standard for faith. I simply mean that all of our theologizing, because we are human beings living in particular historical and cultural moments, will have a temporary and provisional—even fallen—dimension to it. In other words, there is no absolute point of reference to which we have access that will allow us to interpret the Bible stripped of our own cultural context. 75

The theme of the provisional doctrine of Scripture is a repeated element of his study:

On the one hand, I am very eager to affirm that many evangelical instincts are correct and should be maintained, for example, the conviction that the Bible is ultimately from God and that it is God’s gift to the church. Any theories concerning Scripture that do not arise from these fundamental instincts are unacceptable. On the other hand, how the evangelical church fleshes out its doctrine of Scripture will always have somewhat of a provisional quality to it. This is not to say that each generation must disregard the past and start afresh, formulating ever-new doctrines, bowing to all the latest fads. But it is to say that at such time 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. 76

The findings of the past 150 years have made extrabiblical evidence an unavoidable conversation partner. The result is that, as perhaps never before in the history of the church, we can see how truly provisional and incomplete certain dimensions of our understanding of Scripture can be. On the other hand, we are encouraged to encounter the depth and riches of God’s revelation and to rely more and more on God’s Spirit, who speaks to the church in Scripture. 77

Perhaps, then, it makes more sense to speak of the incarnational parallel between Christ and the Bible. This should lead us to a more willing recognition that the expression of our confession of the Bible as God’s word has a provisional quality to it. By faith, the church confesses that the Bible is God’s word. It is up to Christians of each generation, however, to work out what that means and what words work best to describe it. 78

74 In the following quotations Professor Enns’s use of “provisional” is highlighted by bold type.
76 Enns, Inspiration and Incarnation, pp. 13-14.
77 Enns, Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 49.
78 Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 168.
… it would be very difficult for someone holding to such a view to have a meaningful conversation with linguists and historians of the ancient world. To argue in such hypothetical terms can sometimes become an excuse for maintaining a way of thinking that is otherwise unsupportable. It is just such explanations that some readers might find problematic, for they seem motivated by a desire to protect one’s theology rather than to engage the available evidence. Regardless of when Genesis was written and in what language, it still reflects an ancient Near Eastern worldview that clearly is significantly older.79

Because our theologies are necessarily limited and provisional, the church today must be open to listening to how other Christians from other cultures read Scripture and live it out in their daily lives. ... The incarnational analogy helps us to see it differently: diverse expressions of God’s one, but multidimensional gospel are precisely what he wanted.80

This provisional nature of the churches’ confessions results in a process without “clear rules or guidelines to prevent us from taking this process too far.” Professor Enns acknowledges that this results in a kind of uncertainty with regard to the Scriptures given the questions that may be raised by evidence yet to be discovered:

There do not seem to be any clear rules or guidelines to prevent us from taking this process too far. But again, this is why the metaphor of journey or pilgrimage is so appealing. The path we walk may contain risks, unexpected bumps, twists, and turns. We do not always know what is coming around the corner—we were not able to anticipate the discovery of ancient Near Eastern creation texts or the Dead Sea Scrolls for example. But yet, we have turned a few important corners over the past several generations. It is always an option, I suppose, to halt the journey and stand still, or perhaps turn around and walk back a few hundred yards, so as to stand at a safe distance from what lies ahead. We should continue the journey, however; not because we are sure of our own footing, but because we have faith in God who placed us on this journey to begin with.81

Is Enns really saying by his word “provisional” that sola Scriptura and the “infallible rule of interpretation” can no longer be the foundational hermeneutic of the Reformed tradition? If so, the stakes are high indeed. Simply put, the hermeneutical crisis has brought us to a major crossroads of theology.

Young would agree.

The Church is indeed at the crossroads. Shall she listen to God or to man? Will she receive what the Spirit says concerning inspiration, or, turning her back upon Him, will she cleave unto man? This is the choice to be made. Sad is it, however, that many do not realize the necessity for making a choice. Having their vision

79 Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 52.
80 Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 169.
81 Ibid, p. 171.
obscured by the dense fog that modern theology is casting over the way, many do not realize that there is a crossroad. They are not aware that they must decide which road they will follow. Unless something is done, they will travel on, taking the wrong turning, until the road leads them at last into the valley of lost hope and eternal death.\textsuperscript{82}

But this is not merely the “traditionalist” view of Young, the “conservative”. Even Berkouwer the “progressive” agrees:

Those who see the \textit{lamp} of the Word of God on a continuum with the new and increased \textit{light} of science, lit before all the world, inevitably arrive at a dangerous crossroads. They will either follow a course condescending to Scripture and its message, or they will tend to abandon every new question about interpretation because of the danger involved. Both paths must be avoided.\textsuperscript{83}

Yet Enns unflinchingly writes, “In other words, there is no absolute point of reference to which we have access that will allow us to interpret the Bible stripped of our own cultural context.”\textsuperscript{84} But in saying this, does he not strip the Church of \textit{sola Scriptura} and the hermeneutical principle afforded us by the Bible which the \textit{Confession} declares to be the “infallible rule of interpretation”?

The crossroads is now clear.\textsuperscript{85} We must either confess an “infallible rule of interpretation” (\textit{WCF}, I.9) reflecting the hermeneutical rule of \textit{sola Scriptura}, or, confess a “provisional” (p. 168) theology subject to the “bumps, twists and turns”(p. 171) of the unanticipated discoveries of “extrabiblical evidence” (p. 48). Moreover, all of this occurs on a “journey or pilgrimage”(p. 171) led by Professor Enns and others who assure us that we walk no “slippery slope” (p. 172) on this “appealing” (p. 171) journey. Nevertheless, we are not “sure of our footing” (p. 171) and “there do not seem to be any clear rules or guidelines to prevent us from taking this process too far” (p. 171.) Consequently, all Enns leaves for the Church is “faith in God who placed us on this journey” (p. 171). The “infallible rule of interpretation” (\textit{WCF}, I.9) that emerges from divine “infallible truth” (\textit{WCF}, I.5) is nowhere to be found since “there is no absolute point of reference to which we have access that will allow us to interpret the Bible….” (p. 169).

Consequently, Enns also seems to dismiss or redefine another type of “evidence” that the \textit{Confession} affirms. Referring to Holy Scripture, the \textit{Confession} says that it abundantly provides “\textbf{evidence} … to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Sprit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.” (\textit{WCF}, I.5.)

To be sure, Enns does not deny “the role of the Holy Spirit” in relationship to human understanding of Scripture.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{82} Young, \textit{Thy Word Is Truth}, p. 35.
\item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid, p. 135.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Enns, \textit{Inspiration and Incarnation}, pp. 168-169.
\item \textsuperscript{85} The quoted phrases in this paragraph can be found in \textit{Inspiration and Incarnation} on the identified pages.
\end{itemize}
I firmly believe...that the Spirit of God is fully engaged in such a theological process and at the same time that our attempts to articulate what God’s word is have a necessarily provisional dimension. To put it succinctly: The Spirit leads the church to truth—he does not simply drop us down in the middle of it. To say this is not a low view of Scripture or of the role of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{86}

But what Enns affirms here does not appear to cohere with the Confession’s explanation of the Spirit’s intimate “witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”\textsuperscript{87} He confesses that “The Spirit leads the church to truth—he does not simply drop us down in the middle of it.” Although he claims that “…this is not a low view of Scripture or of the role of the Holy Spirit”, this does not appear warranted when it is compared with the affirmations of the Confession: “…the Word of God…full persuasion and assurance … infallible truth and divine authority … the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts….the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.” (WCF, I.5, 10.)\textsuperscript{88} The Confession binds together Word and Spirit far more closely than Enns appears willing to do.

Indeed, Enns’ phrases are stunningly different when contrasted with those in the Confession. He writes: “the word of God…”; not “sure of our footing”…; “provisional”…; “The Spirit leads the church to truth—he does not simply drop us down in the middle of it”…; “There is no absolute point of reference to which we have access that will allow us to interpret the Bible…. ” These statements are difficult to reconcile with the union of Word and Spirit reflected by Larger Catechism Q. 2: “How does it

\textsuperscript{86} Inspiration and Incarnation, pp. 48-49.

\textsuperscript{87} Perhaps it is simply an editorial feature, but Inspiration and Incarnation (e. g., pp. 15, 17, 21, 39, 47, 49, 56, 67, 73, 108) prints “the word of God” without a capital letter. In both the original English and Latin texts of the Westminster Confession, “Word” and “Verbum” are printed with a capital “W” or “V”. Schaff, Creeds, III, pp. 600-601.

\textsuperscript{88} There is a clear epistemological emphasis in the Westminster Standards. WCF I.1 states, “Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people now ceased.” LC Question 192: “What do we pray for in the third petition? Answer: In the third petition (which is, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven), acknowledging, that by nature we and all men are not only utterly unable and unwilling to know and do the will of God, but prone to rebel against his Word, to repine and murmur against his providence, and wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh, and of the devil: we pray, that God would by his Spirit take away from ourselves and others all blindness, weakness, indisposedness, and perverseness of heart; and by his grace make us able and willing to know, do, and submit to his will in all things, with the like humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy, as the angels do in heaven.” Harvie Conn agrees with D. A. Carson in “Normativity, Relevance, and Relativism”, Inerrancy and Hermeneutic, p. 191, in calling attention to the non-neutrality of all interpreters: “In short, we are all biased already in our thinking and knowing, bringing assumptions structured by our cultural perceptions, even by the language symbols we use to interpret reality, ‘We are, that is, “interested” before we begin to read a text and remain active as we read it. We belong, to a great extent through language, to the theological, social, and psychological traditions that have moulded us as subjects and without whose mediation we could understand nothing.’ D. A. Carson puts it bluntly: ‘No human being living in time and speaking any language can ever be entirely culture-free about anything.’ In sum, the idea that the interpreter is a neutral observer of biblical data is a myth. How then do we avoid hermeneutical discoveries based largely on what we have assumed? If what we hear from the text, and how we act upon what we have heard, is so heavily influenced by the baggage we carry with us in the process, how do we avoid the relativism of selective listening and selective obedience?”
appear that there is a God? Answer: The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God; but his Word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation.” Enns’ uncertainty seems inconsistent with the knowledge of God claimed by LC Q. 6 that asks: “What do the Scriptures make known of God? Answer: The Scriptures make known: What God is, the persons in the Godhead, his decrees, and the execution of his decrees.”

At the heart of the hermeneutical crisis there is really an epistemological crisis that denies to men the certainty of divine knowledge. Thus Helm critiques Enns’ theological method,

We see now that Enns' problems have little or nothing to do with the discoveries and claims of Old Testament scholarship. Instead, they are due to two basic failures. A failure in theological method, that of starting from difficulties instead of from dogma. And a failure in epistemology, a commitment to the idea of universal cultural bias that makes objectivity and finality about our faith impossible.

When we consider Professor Enns’ repeated statements in this regard, it seems as if a believer can trust God, but he may not necessarily be able to trust Scripture:

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90 For a representative study of the deep commitment of the Reformed faith to an epistemology built upon the accessibility by revelation of divine knowledge for the Christian in spite of man’s metaphysical agnosticism given the noetic effects of sin and his autonomous rebellion from the Creator, see Cornelius Van Til, An Introduction to Systematic Theology, ed. William Edgar (P&R, 2007).

91 Harris’s uncertainty seems inconsistent with the knowledge of God claimed by LC Q. 6 that asks: “What do the Scriptures make known of God? Answer: The Scriptures make known: What God is, the persons in the Godhead, his decrees, and the execution of his decrees.”

When we consider Professor Enns’ repeated statements in this regard, it seems as if a believer can trust God, but he may not necessarily be able to trust Scripture:

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90 Enns defends God’s own lack of divine knowledge, Inspiration and Incarnation, pp. 103-107. Although ostensibly distancing himself from the “openness of God” theology, p. 106, he ultimately cannot fully do so because he rejects the Confession’s “infallible principle” of Scripture interpreting Scripture. He writes, “In this story, God did not know until after the test was passed” (p.103). “Any attempt to force the God of Genesis 6 into a mold cast by certain theological commitments or to reconcile this description to other biblical passages simply amounts to reading past this story.” (p. 104). “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.” (p. 106.) This appears to be a denial of WCF 1.9, “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” Perhaps Enns’ insistence on the primacy of the specific narrative over the theological metanarrative of the Scripture’s system of doctrine as well as its infallible hermeneutic reflects the hermeneutic of Lyotard, the postmodern whose dictum is “narrative not metanarrative”. Jean-Francois Lyotard has been a leader in Postmodern thought, a contemporary form of skeptical philosophy. Postmodernism questions and critiques all claims for certainty. Lyotard dismissed the claim for universal theories of truth claiming that arguments defending “grand narratives” were no longer credible. Thus Lyotard’s opposition to the grand narrative, as well as its inherent authority led him to defend the idea of the “little narrative”, namely the stories of individual human beings, which require no foundational or epistemological defense. His summary of postmodernism declares, “I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: … To the obsolescence of the metanarrative … corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy … The narrative function is losing …its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language…."

Postmodernism in general claims that a correct description of reality is impossible, reflecting the skepticism, of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Popper and Kuhn. The core beliefs of postmodernity include: 1. Truth is limited, approximate, and is constantly evolving; 2. No theory can ever be proved true (a theory can only be shown to be false); 3. No theory can ever explain everything; 4. Thus absolute and certain truth that explains all things is unobtainable.

91 Paul Helm, (Reformation 21, April 2006).
We are to place our trust in God who gave us Scripture, not in our own conceptions of how Scripture ought to be.\textsuperscript{92}

This should lead us to a more willing recognition that the expression of our confession of the Bible as God’s word has a provisional quality to it. By faith, the church confesses that the Bible is God’s word. It is up to Christians of each generation, however, to work out what that means and what words work best to describe it.\textsuperscript{93}

The second concerns the Bible’s integrity, its trustworthiness. It is a common expectation that the Bible be unified in its outlook, be free of diverse views, if we are being asked to trust it as God’s word (does not God have just one opinion on things?)\textsuperscript{94}

There are many ways of asking these questions, but they all boil down to this: Is the Bible still the word of God?\textsuperscript{95}

If anything, would we not expect the Bible, which records God’s revelation, to “get it right” by not allowing authors to be biased like all the other histories of the surrounding cultures, but instead just giving us the objective and neutral facts? No evangelical can consider this issue and not feel the force of this argument. If the Bible does not tell us what actually happened, how can we trust it about anything?\textsuperscript{96}

My intention below is to explore how the biblical and extrabiblical evidence can affect these assumptions. If, in full conversation with the biblical and extrabiblical evidence, we can adjust our expectations about how the Bible should behave, we can begin to move beyond the impasse of the liberal/conservative debates of the last several generations.\textsuperscript{97}

Lacking in Enns is the insistence of Berkouwer on the trustworthiness of Scripture.

The discussion about Scripture, its God-breathed character and authority, cannot take place via a coerced concession to a new hermeneutical method and the “occasion” of science. It can only take place in the perspective of that trustworthiness of Scripture which enables us to abandon ourselves in complete trust to its authority and to preach its message.\textsuperscript{98}

At the core of the hermeneutical crisis there is a contrast of great importance. The \textit{Westminster Confession} presents an “infallible rule of interpretation” while Enns

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Inspiration and Incarnation}, p. 169.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid, p.45.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid, p. 138
proposes a hermeneutic that embraces a method without “clear rules”. When Young and Berkouwer can agree on the gravity of what is at stake in the hermeneutical crisis, should we not heed their warnings before we “blissfully” embrace the “modern doctrine of Scripture”99 advocated by Professor Enns?

VI. The Starting Point: A Unique Or Non-Unique Scripture?

The hermeneutical crisis is born at the intersection of the question concerning the nature of Scripture and the consideration of the starting point for its interpretation. Does one begin the interpretation of Holy Scripture viewing it primarily as divine revelation or instead as a human book?100

Bavinck’s description of the eternal and yet human relevance of Holy Scripture helps to set the stage for this discussion:

In a human manner it always speaks of the highest and most holy, of the eternal and invisible things. Like Christ, it considers nothing that is human strange. But that is why it is a book for mankind and lasts until the end of the ages. It is old, without ever aging. It always remains young and flourishing; it is the language of life. *Verbum Dei manet in aeternum.*101

Should not this high view of Scripture flow from Enns’ view of Christ’s incarnation? This would seem to be so, particularly when he writes,

The starting point for our discussion is the following: as Christ is both God and human, so is the Bible…. Jesus is 100 percent God and 100 percent human—at the same time….In the same way that Jesus is—must be—both God and human, the Bible is also a divine and human book.102

But when Enns moves beyond the starting point for his “discussion” and elaborates his starting point for engaging Scripture it becomes clear that he does not believe that the starting point is the Bible’s full divinity or its uniqueness. Instead, his starting point for hermeneutics is the Bible’s non-uniqueness given its full humanity:

It is essential to the very nature of revelation that the Bible is not unique to its environment. The human dimension of Scripture is essential to its being Scripture. This, I argue, is the proper starting point for looking at the relationship between the Bible and the issues we will discuss in this book. That the Bible is so

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99 Ibid, pp. 48-49
101 Cited in Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, p. 27.
102 *Inspiration and Incarnation*, p. 17.
The “100 percent divine” of Christ’s incarnation seems here in the context of the Bible to have little relevance and seems to have been eclipsed by the “100 percent human”.

Accordingly, Enns finds the Genesis stories mirrored in the Babylonian texts as evidence of the Bible’s humanity and apparent dependence upon other human and pre-non-Hebrew sources. But when Young reviews these Babylonian texts in light of Scripture he instead proclaims the Bible’s uniqueness and the divine origin and inerrancy of Scripture. In fact the uniqueness of Scripture in Young’s mind is a foundational

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103 Incarnation and Inspiration, p. 20. Enns repeatedly affirms the non-uniqueness of Scripture, see for example, pp. 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 31, 32, 42, 43, 46, 47, 168.

104 Enns writes, “In both their oral and written versions, the stories of Genesis seem to be younger than the stories of other ancient Near Eastern cultures. If pressed, one could attempt to mount the argument that the Israelite stories were actually older than all the Ancient Near Eastern stories but were only recorded later in Hebrew. Such a theory—for that is what it is, a theory—would need to assume that the biblical stories are the pristine originals and that all the other stories are parodies and perversions of the Israelite original, even though the available evidence would be very difficult to square with such a conclusion. But could it have happened this way? Yes, I suppose one could insist on such a thing, but it would be very difficult for someone holding to such a view to have a meaningful conversation with linguists and historians of the ancient world. To argue in such hypothetical terms can sometimes become an excuse for maintaining a way of thinking that is otherwise unsupportable. It is just such explanations that some readers might find problematic, for they seem motivated by a desire to protect one’s theology rather than to engage the available evidence….regardless of when Genesis was written and in what language, it still reflects an ancient Near Eastern worldview that clearly is significantly older. It stretches logic and common sense to try to protect the uniqueness of the Genesis accounts by arguing that Mesopotamian peoples, who existed long before Israel came on the scene and who were the dominant cultures of the day, had no creation myths for hundreds of years and simply waited for Israelite slaves to provide the prototype, which they then corrupted.” Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 52. In engaging Enns’ claims here, one should consider Herman Bavinck’s concept of “primitive revelation” or “original revelation” in The Philosophy of Revelation (Baker, 1979), pp.171, 188-189. “Both in earlier and later times in the Christian Church the truth and wisdom found among the heathen have been generally derived from a primitive revelation, from the continuous illumination by the Logos, from acquaintance with the literature of the Old Testament, or from the operation of God’s common grace.”… “All these fundamentals are given from the beginning in human nature; they are transmitted from generation to generation, and are at the same time grounded in the very nature of man, so that dependence and independence work together here. And they all point back to a divine origin: ‘all knowledge is,’ at least so far as principles and foundations are concerned, ‘of divine origin.’” Knowledge in this sense flows from revelation. To this original revelation is joined on that revelation which according to the Old Testament was bestowed upon Israel. The latter is built upon the former and rests upon it, and is at the same time the continuation, the development and completion of it. The distinction between what has come to be called general and special revelation does not begin until the call of Abraham; before that the two intermingle, and so far have become the property of all peoples and nations. Special revelation certainly is set antithetically over against all the corruption which gradually entered into the life of the peoples, but it takes up, confirms, and completes all that had been from the beginning put into human nature by revelation and had been preserved and increased subsequently in the human race.”

105 Young explains, “When compared with other literature from the ancient Near East, the Bible stands out like a fair flower in a dreary, barren desert. We read the crude polytheism of the Babylonian documents, and then open the pages of Holy Scripture and learn of Him who is good and true and holy. We read the pseudo-creation accounts of the ancient world and then listen to the majestic account of true creation given in the Bible. We read of the struggles and strivings of men to atone in one way or another for sins. How dark was the light of ancient religion! Then we learn from the Bible that man cannot save himself, but that God has provided the one Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world. How unspeakably grand is the doctrine of salvation by grace!...Many and convincing are these evidences whereby the Scriptures reveal their Divine origin. Yet, despite their clarity, not all men are willing to accept these evidences, and the reason for this unwillingness is not far to seek. Is it because there is some defect in the evidences themselves? Are not they of sufficient clarity and cogency to convince all men? The answer is that the evidences are clear enough; indeed so clear are they that he who is not convinced by them has no excuse.” In Thy Word Is Truth, p. 33.

106 Young writes, “If then we may arrive at the position (and it is the only position at which one may legitimately arrive) that the early chapters of Genesis purport to be history let us next ask the question whether, as a matter of actual
perspective that necessarily flows from the doctrine of providence affirmed by the Westminster Confession.\textsuperscript{107}

In this context, consider D.A. Carson’s critique of what he believes to be the one-sided use of the incarnational analogy in Enns’ hermeneutic:

Using the incarnational analog, the "human dimension" of the God/man not only places him in the human environment, but leaves him unique in that environment since only he is without sin. And even more strikingly, of course, what makes Jesus most strikingly unique to the human environment is that, without gainsaying his thorough, perfect, humanness for an instant, he is also God, and thus the perfect revealer of God, such that what Jesus says and does, God says and does. But when Enns speaks of "the very nature of the revelation of the Bible" as "not unique in its environment," he looks only at its "human dimension" and integrates nothing of what else must be said if we are to understand what the Bible is in this "human environment."\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{107} Young writes, “There is of course no question but that the events of the Bible are unique events. We may very legitimately speak of the uniqueness of these things which God wrought in history for the salvation of sinners. We are saved from our sins, not by the exploits of Alexander the great, but by the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. For the believer, the latter event is rich with meaning that is lacking in the former. The Christian is naturally more interested in those events in history by means of which his redemption was obtained. When all this granted, however, we must insist that the events of Biblical history took place in history. They were, in other words, historical events. As such, they are related to all other events of history. Since the sovereign God in His providence upholds all things, we may be assured that all events of history are related. The matter has been accurately stated—accurately, because it is in agreement with the teaching of the Bible—by the Westminster Confession of Faith: ‘God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible fore-knowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy.’ All things that occur, according to the Confession’s statement are ordained of God. They occur because he has decreed that they should occur. All are parts of His over-all plan. All are parts of His one all-embracing eternal purpose and decree. Inasmuch as this is the case, all events of history in the very nature of the case, are related. With the words of Pascal, we may well agree, “If the nose of Cleopatra had been shorter, the whole face of the earth would have been changed.” The events of Biblical history are parts of this eternal purpose of God. As such they occur in the realm of history. They cannot be removed or separated from their historical context and background. Our salvation was wrought by the Lord of Glory when He died upon the cross and rose again from the dead.”… “Christianity, therefore, is rooted and grounded in history. At the same time it is true, as we noted above, that there is indeed a uniqueness about biblical history. This uniqueness has been expressed in the words of the Westminster Confession as follows: ‘As the providence of God doth, in general reach to all creatures, so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of His Church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof.’ Jesus Christ is, without controversy, the center of history. There is a Before Christ and an In the year of our Lord. The distinction is perfectly legitimate. There is a certain sense in which all things may be said to subserve the purposes of God in salvation.” In Thy Word Is Truth, pp. 254-257. Also compare how differently Young handles the Nuzi tablets, pp. 201ff with Enns, pp. 29-31.

\textsuperscript{108} See D. A. Carson, (Reformation 21, May 2006).
Moreover, Paul Helm’s assessment of Enns’ incarnational hermeneutical methodology finds that a non-unique Bible results in a “disturbingly new” approach that moves Enns ever “farther away” from an “orthodox doctrine of Scripture.”

However what is new, disturbingly new, is the claim that Enns makes about this cultural embeddedness. We discover that the Bible itself is far from unique: it’s a diverse, culturally-biased product, which we can only ever hope to understand provisionally. It’ll be best to assess the book by considering a set of answers from Enns to three questions: Is our interpretation of the Bible provisional? Is the Bible unique? And finally, and most importantly, Is the Bible objective? These are among the central questions the author himself raises. My argument in this review is that in his answers to such questions Professor Enns has not gone too far – as he occasionally fears, perhaps – but that he has not gone far enough. The book is troubling not because of the profundity of the treatment but rather because of its superficiality. We shall find that Enns's answers to each of these questions take him farther and farther away from being able to maintain an orthodox doctrine of Scripture.109

Whether one agrees or disagrees with Carson’s and Helm’s critiques of Enns, one thing is clear. The methodology of Enns is to express concern for previous “doctrinal formulations” but not to quote those “formulations” as he develops his own doctrine of Scripture.

A summary of Professor Enns’ doctrine of Scripture manifests that he assiduously avoids the traditional theological terminology that hitherto has articulated the evangelical and Reformed doctrine of Scripture. Conspicuous by their absence are: “infallible”, “verbally inspired”, “verbal plenary inspiration”, “God-breathed”, “inerrant” (and perhaps “Word of God” with a capital “W”). Nevertheless, Professor Enns does employ specific phrases to develop his doctrine of Scripture.

Enns begins110 by speaking of “a vibrant and reverent doctrine of Scripture” (p. 13) and affirms that “the Bible is ultimately from God and that it is God’s gift to the church” (p. 14.) Thus he can speak of “a vibrant positive view of Scripture as God’s word” (p. 15) and declare that “the Bible is God’s word.” (p. 15.) However, “It is not enough simply to say that the Bible is the word of God or that it is inspired” (p. 17), because “the Bible is also a divine and human book.” (p. 17.) Thus Enns asks, “How does Scripture’s full humanity and full divinity affect what we should expect from Scripture?” (p. 18.) His desire for “a high and healthy view of Scripture as God’s word” (p. 46) and for “a sound doctrine of Scripture”, (p. 56) leads him to emphasize extrabiblical evidence and incarnation: “A doctrine of Scripture that does not think through this incarnational dimension is inadequate in light of the evidence we have.” (p. 67.) Hence for Enns’ doctrine of Scripture, “…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

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109 Paul Helm, (Reformation 21, April 2006).
110 The quoted phrases in these paragraphs can be found in Inspiration and Incarnation on the identified pages.
dimension of Scripture.” (p. 67-68.) And this “incarnate dimension” means “our confession of the Bible as God’s word has a provisional quality to it.” (p. 168.)

What then are the consequences of Enns’ “provisional” doctrine of God’s Word as incarnate Scripture? There seem to be four. First, there is a new definition of the uniqueness of Scripture: “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.” (p. 168.) Second, there is no longer any basis to place our trust in our confession of Scripture: “We are to place our trust in God who gave us Scripture, not in our own conceptions of how Scripture ought to be.” (p. 169.) Third, the Bible’s significance for ethics is significantly redefined: so from now on we are to consider “...the Bible not as a timeless rule book or owner’s manual for the Christian life—so that we can lift verses here and there and apply them.” (pp. 169-170.) Finally, “It is in the person and work of Christ that Christians seek to read the Old Testament, to search out how it is in Christ that the Old Testament has integrity, how it is worthy of trust, how the parts cohere....A christotelic coherence is not achieved by following a few simple rules of exegesis.” (p. 170.)

Does this summation of Professor Enns’ teaching on Scripture substantiate Helm’s claim that Enns’ approach moves him away from an orthodox doctrine of Scripture? Perhaps a more specific and precise question is this: Does Professor Enns’ doctrine of Scripture reveal that he is departing from the Westminster Standards’ teaching on Holy Scripture?

We conclude this study by a comparison of Enns’ doctrine of Scripture and hermeneutics as summarized above with the teachings of the Westminster Standards. As we do, the following seven questions will be briefly addressed:

1. Is the Confession therefore “inadequate” if it has not thought “through this incarnation dimension” that incorporates “extrabiblical evidence”?
2. Is the Confession’s view of Biblical “authority in continual conversation with the incarnate dimension of Scripture”?
3. Does the Confession argue for the uniqueness of the Scriptures because God therein uniquely speaks “incarnately”?
4. Does the Confession view itself as a “provisional” confession and thus not a trustworthy guide for how “Scripture ought to be”?
5. Does the Confession prohibit viewing the Bible as a “timeless rule book...for the Christian life”?
6. Does the Confession teach that the only dimension of the Scripture’s trustworthiness is in its specific focus on Christ, i.e., a “christotelic coherence”?
7. Does the Confession reject the idea that there are a few basic rules of exegesis?

If we discover that these elements do not “cohere” with the Confession, then we must conclude that Professor Enns’ doctrine of Scripture is out of accord with the Westminster Standards.

VII. Inspiration and Incarnation Contra The Westminster Standards
Since Professor Enns has stated, “All attempts to articulate the nature of Scripture are open to examination, including my own”\textsuperscript{111} let us now examine his doctrine of Scripture in light of the \textit{Confession}. To do so, we will assess the principles we have just distilled from his doctrine of Scripture.

1. Is the \textit{Confession} therefore “inadequate” if it has not thought “through this incarnation dimension” that incorporates “extrabiblical evidence”?\textsuperscript{112}

In making this claim, Enns is actually taking a non-confessional position since the Reformed Confessions do not use the incarnational analogy to explain the doctrine of Scripture. As Berkouwer declares, “…it is useful to remember that the church did not adopt this parallel in its confessions.”\textsuperscript{112}

As we have seen above, the \textit{Confession} rejects the notion of a required extrabiblical criteria for biblical hermeneutics given its expressed hermeneutical principle of \textit{sola Scriptura} in I.9. Indeed, it calls this canonical hermeneutic the “infallible rule of interpretation”. This rule is consistent with and emerges from the high view of Scripture as the Word of God summarized in Chapter One of the \textit{Confession}. The \textit{Confession} declares that the Scriptures are necessary given mankind’s inability to know God truly in any other way.\textsuperscript{113} While the Reformed tradition has valued archaeological findings and ancient discoveries, it has held them to be historically relevant, linguistically fruitful and potently illustrative for interpretation, but not ultimately determinative for the meaning of the text.\textsuperscript{114} For the \textit{Confession}, Holy Scripture is the “Word of God written.”\textsuperscript{115} So if this principle of Professor Enns is true, the \textit{Westminster Standards} must be declared to be “inadequate”. But this raises the question if one can take an \textit{ex animo} subscription to an “inadequate” \textit{Confession}. This principle is immediately incompatible with the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} \textit{Inspiration and Incarnation}, pp. 48-49.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Berkouwer, \textit{Holy Scripture}, p. 199.
\item \textsuperscript{113} \textit{WCF}, I 1. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Cf. for example Young, \textit{Thy Word Is Truth}, pp. 201ff; Meredith G. Kline, \textit{Treaty of the Great King} (Eerdmans, 1963); Herman Bavinck, \textit{The Philosophy of Revelation}, (Baker, 1979), pp. 170-202.
\item \textsuperscript{115} \textit{WCF}, I 2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments…. All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. \textit{WCF}, I 3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the church of God, nor to be on any other approved, or made use of, than other human writings. \textit{WSC} Q. 2. A. “The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.” Cf. “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., \textit{WTJ}, (1982-83), p. 261, “The immediate context is the section on the testimony of the apostles to the inspiration of the OT. His third and last major point is the apostolic conviction that the OT is “the predestined transcript of God’s counsel, of which the instrumental author has, often unconsciously, produced the record, and which, as being of a higher origin, has divine authority” (p. 446). Not only do we find that “there is no hesitancy in announcing God the Holy Spirit as the subject speaking in the Old Testament” (p. 447), but the stringing together of quotations from different books (e.g., Acts 1:20; Rom 15:9-12; 1 Tim 5:18) “shows equally clearly, that in the estimation of the apostles the human authors fall entirely in the background” (pp. 447f.).
\end{itemize}
Confession because its demand for equivalent consideration for extrabiblical evidence violates the Confession’s “infallible rule” (I.9) of Scripture interpreting Scripture.

2. Is the Confession’s view of Biblical “authority in continual conversation with the incarnate dimension of Scripture”?

Since the Scriptures are self-interpreting, its authority is not based upon anything outside of Scripture. From the Confession’s perspective, the authority of the Scriptures does not depend upon men but upon God\textsuperscript{116} who is true and has given his Word.\textsuperscript{117} Although “the many other incomparable excellencies and the entire perfection” of Holy Scripture are evidences of its being the Word of God, “assurance of its infallible truth and divine authority” comes only from the “inward work of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{118} The “whole counsel of God” is found in Scripture and is understood only by the “inward illumination of the Spirit of God.”\textsuperscript{119} Hence the idea of an “infallible rule” that flows from these foundational truths of Scripture along with its attendant divine authority do not comport with the vicissitudes and variability implied by Professor Enn’s principle of “continual conversation.” Hence, this principle of Professor Enns is also incompatible with the Westminster Confession’s doctrine of Scripture.

3. Does the Confession argue for the uniqueness of the Scriptures because God therein uniquely speaks “incarnately”?

We have already seen that this cannot be viewed as a confessional position since the Reformed confessions do not utilize the incarnational analogy. However, the literature in this context reveals there is substantial disagreement over the propriety of using the incarnational analogy to present the doctrine of Scripture. Great Reformed theologians

\textsuperscript{116} Cf. Poythress, \textit{God Centered Biblical Interpretation}, pp. 33-45, for an excellent extended discussion of “The Divinity of the Word”.

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{WCF}, I 4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{WCF}, I 5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heaviness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{WCF}, I 6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.
take positions both in favor of and in opposition to the analogy’s value for developing the doctrine of Scripture.\textsuperscript{120}

We must therefore ask how Enns can make this controverted principle the definition of the Bible’s uniqueness? It clearly is less convincing when this theological principle is not accepted by many in the Reformed tradition, and is a theological paradigm that is not employed in any Reformed confession, let alone the \textit{Westminster Standards}.

If we seek the uniqueness of the Scriptures according to the \textit{Confession}, however, it is clear that the Scriptures are unique because they are divine,\textsuperscript{121} even though Scripture is very available to men in human form.\textsuperscript{122} Hence the Bible’s uniqueness is discovered in what the \textit{Confession} calls its “infallibility.”\textsuperscript{123} This unique reality of the Scriptures has led the Church to speak of the Scripture’s inerrancy\textsuperscript{124} or “errorlessness”.\textsuperscript{125} This

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{120} See, for example, Gaffin, “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?”; Silva, \textit{Has the Church Misread the Bible?}, pp. 38-45; Berkouwer, \textit{Holy Scripture}, pp. 195-212.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Cf. “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., \textit{WTJ}, (1982-83), p. 276, “Rogers and McKim, for one, cite this passage to show Kuyper’s support of their view that the authority of Scripture is located in its divine content in distinction from its human form.” Yet Gaffin points out, p. 277, “What graphic inspiration effects, then, is divinely authoritative certification. Concerning this certification Kuyper immediately adds the qualification that it happens ‘always impressionistically,’ in the NT as well as the OT.” “The point of the passage in question, then, is that the differences between the four Gospels (along with the NT use of the OT) exemplify the ‘impressionistic’ character of the biblical records.” “Concerning the activity of the human writers the sum of the matter is that ‘the Holy Spirit worked effectively as a leading, directing and determining power; but their subjectivity was not lost.’” “This is how biblical history lives on. It gives no notarial acts, but reproduces what has been received in the consciousness, and does this not with the precision of outline which belongs to architecture, but with the impressionistic certainty of life.”
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Compare here, Kuyper’s view of the divinity of Scripture in “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., \textit{WTJ}, (1982-83), 266, “This authority derives from the fact that the speaker in the Holy Scripture is not a creature but God Himself. That speech in Scripture to his church could come to pass by God immediately, i.e., without instruments (\textit{sine instruimento}). … But this has not been the way of the Lord: As in the work of redemption he does not continue to confront us transcendentally as God, but immanently in Jesus Christ he has united the divine and human natures in such a way that the divine life has appeared in a man, so also the Lord God has given us H. Scripture not transcendentally but immanently, because he has so intimately united the divine factor with the human factor that the divine word has come to us, always from a human pen, mostly from a human mind, and not seldom from a human heart. … In the union of both these factors now lies the mystery of Holy Scripture. Parallel with the mystery of the incarnation runs the mystery of inscripturation. In both cases the Word of God comes to us, in the manger as Emmanuel in the world where we live, in H. Scripture as Emmanuel in the world of our thoughts and ideas. Both revelations of the word belong together, just as our living and the consciousness of that living belong together. Thus both mysteries must either be rejected together or confessed together and if confessed, then on the same ground.”
  \item \textsuperscript{123} \textit{WCF} I. 5, 9.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Cf., for example, Young, \textit{Thy Word Is Truth}, pp. 113-185.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} See Young, \textit{Thy Word Is Truth}, p. 185 where he argues for the need to reserve judgment about errors in the Bible given its divine character. See also “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?” by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., \textit{WTJ}, (1982-83), p. 281 “It bears emphasizing, as Kuyper notes in this context, that the Bible’s divine errorlessness ultimately roots in its divine authorship, formally considered. If I transmit an authoritative message from someone else, then I must do so literally and may not change the wording…. But since ultimately it is the Holy Spirit who everywhere speaks in Scripture, formally and materially, he is free to make the variations we observe, without any detriment to its divine errorlessness…. By means of free quotations, in graphic inspiration the Holy Spirit maintains himself as the author of underlying material inspiration…. In fact, the Holy Spirit, who alone is able to convince us of graphic inspiration, enables us to perceive that the many incongruities in Scripture could not be left standing in a human author but are in fact a mark of its divinity…. There are two sorts of precision: mechanical and organic. A mechanically molded statue or piece of artillery precisely resembles from every angle all others cast from the same mold; among ice floes or winter flowers, however, there are great dissimilarities. The edges of a piece of wood fashioned by an artisan are completely smooth and even; the bark of a tree is quite coarse. And yet, if someone asks, where is the greatest precision, in the mechanical or the organic, everyone feels that it is not in the mechanical but in the organic that there is the greater precision and most perfect beauty.”
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uniqueness or high doctrine of Scripture is also evidenced in the *Westminster Standards* when it speaks of Scripture as “the Word of God,” 126 and God’s “revealed will.” 127

Along with the *Confession’s* emphasis upon the divine character of Scripture, it also recognizes Scripture’s human form. Scripture is written in Hebrew and Greek and was committed wholly to writing. 128 Divine revelation has come into human history in various ways which have now ceased with the finality of Scripture. 129 Since divine revelation in Scripture came into human history with specific purposes, some parts of Scripture no longer carry authority, as the abrogation of the laws of Israel attest. 130 All parts of Scripture are not equally plain to all and not all parts are equally clear. 131 It is not exhaustive and so requires human logic, the light of nature and Christian prudence to interpret and apply. 132 Its written texts have faced the vicissitudes of transmission requiring God’s providential care. 133 Engagement with the Scriptures can generate controversies of religion. 134 The Scriptures must be translated. 135 The canon itself has not been easily or fully recognized as seen by a canonical listing that excludes the apocryphal books. 136 The idea of “general equity” in interpreting the laws of Israel’s relevance for

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126 LC Question 3: “What is the Word of God? Answer: The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience.” LC Question 4: “How does it appear that the Scriptures are the Word of God? Answer: The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very Word of God.”

127 Q. 39. speaks of “obedience to his revealed will.” Q. 40 states, “The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.” LC Question 11 asks, “How does it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father? Answer: The Scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father.” LC Question 157 speaks of “…the will of God revealed in them.”

128 *WCF*. 1.1.8.

129 *WCF*. 1.1

130 *WCF*. 19.4. A Guide – The Westminster Confession Faith by John H. Gerstner, Douglas F. Kelly and Philip Rollinson Chapter 19 – Concerning the Law of God: 19.4 In addition to these CEREMONIAL LAWS for the church in her former state GOD ALSO GAVE THE ISRAELITES, AS A POLITICAL BODY, VARIOUS JUDICIAL LAWS. These traditional laws EXPIRED when that state of the church changed. While the moral law never changes, other laws not only change but actually EXPIRE. For example, the sixth commandment against killing remains, but the judicial law that certain violators of the moral law should be executed has not. Since capital punishment for such a violation as breaking the sabbath is not part of the moral law but only of the judicial, it EXPIRES with the end of the Israelite church-state.

131 *WCF*. 1.7.

132 *WCF*. 1.1.6.

133 *WCF*. 1.8

134 *WCF*. 1.10.

135 *WCF*. 1.8.

136 *WCF*. 1.2.3.
the NT era also affirms the humanity of Scripture. Because the Bible is a human book, it welcomes human means to interpret its message.

Consequently, Professor Enns’ view that the Bible’s uniqueness is in its human incarnate form is the opposite emphasis of the Confession that instead highlights its divine character. Hence his view appears to be incompatible with the Westminster Confession’s emphasis on the priority of the divine infallibility of Scripture.

4. Does the Confession view itself as a “provisional” confession and thus not a trustworthy guide for how “Scripture ought to be”?

It is important to recognize here that the Confession never calls for acceptance for its own sake. Instead, it points all to Holy Scripture as when it identifies in I.9, the “infallible rule of interpretation”:

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

Since this hermeneutical principle is “infallible”—as “infallible” as the “the Word of God…the infallible truth” (I.5) from which it is drawn, there is consequently no “provisionality” about what the Word of God is.

137 WCF. 19.4. For a consideration of the notions of equity and general equity see the “Report of the OPC Concerning Women in the Military.” Cf. Chapter XIX, Of the Law of God in An Exposition of The Westminster Confession of Faith by Robert Shaw: “The judicial law respected the Jews in their political capacity, or as a nation, and consisted of those institutions which God prescribed to them for their civil government. This law, as far as the Jewish polity was peculiar, has also been entirely abolished; but as far as it contains any statute founded in the law of nature common to all nations, it is still obligatory.” See also, Chapter XXI – Of the Law of God in The Westminster Confession for Today by George S. Hendry, “While God’s law is the fundamental determination of man’s being, and is, as such, absolutely and permanently binding upon all men, it involves obligations which are relative to the concrete situations in which it has to be obeyed… judicial laws were involved in the fact that Israel was at once a church and a state (“a body politic”), and they were necessary for the regulation of its life in its political aspect; since they were formulated in view of the peculiar historical conditions and geographical circumstances of the life of Israel as a primitive agrarian society, they are no longer obligatory, except in so far as they reflect general principles of equity.”

138 LC Question 157: “How is the Word of God to be read? Answer: The Holy Scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.” LC Question 159: “How is the Word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto? Answer: They that are called to labor in the ministry of the Word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.” Turretin, Doctrine of Scripture, pp. 187-188, writes, “It is not a question of a perspicuity that excludes necessary means for interpretation, such as the inner light of the Spirit, the attention of the mind, the voice and ministry of the church, lectures and commentaries, prayers and vigils. We acknowledge such means are not only useful but also normally are necessary, but we want to deny any obscurity that keeps the common people from reading Scripture, as if it were harmful or dangerous, or that leads to a falling back on traditions when one should have taken a stand on Scripture alone.”

139 For a discussion of the Confession as a subordinate standard to Scripture, see notes 44 and 45 above.
The *Confession*, consistent with its claim to present an infallible Scripture that gives to the Church an infallible hermeneutical rule, seeks to focus on and exclusively to present the teaching of the Scriptures by its vast, consistent and insistent appeal to the Scriptures. There are many who criticize the *Confession’s* alleged “proof text” method. Yet, what the *Confession* seeks to do is to interpret Scripture with Scripture. Hence the *Confession* could best be described as a subordinate standard making a massive albeit fallible attempt to apply an infallible hermeneutical rule derived from an infallible written divine revelation.

The point here is that Professor Enns’ principle of provisionality with regard to the *Westminster Standards* per se is not ultimately incompatible with the *Westminster Standards*’ teaching since they *Standards* are in fact subordinate standards. Yet his perspective of provisionality becomes incompatible with the historic Presbyterian vows to Scripture and *Confession* discussed above when it is remembered that the “infallible rule” itself is not provisional. It is instead the mandated method established by the infallible truth of Scripture which is the Word of God in human form. Hence Professor Enns’ principle of provisionality is incompatible with the *Confession’s* teaching on the nature of Scripture and in regard to the *Confession’s* “infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture”.

5. Does the *Confession* prohibit viewing the Bible as a “timeless rule book…for the Christian life”?

Contrary to Professor Enns’ desire for a doctrine of Scripture that removes the notion of timeless rules for the Christian life, the *Confession* consistently affirms that there are important “rules that are to be observed” by the Christian, whether in interpreting the Scriptures, the Ten Commandments, which are the standards or rules for the Christian life, as well as for prayer and for worship. The places in the *Standards* where timeless Scriptural rules for the Christian life are directly stated are listed below.

*Shorter Catechism*

*SC* Q. 2: The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.

*SC* Q. 24: What is sin? Answer: Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.

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140 The Scriptural citations in the *Westminster Standards* number well over two thousand.

141 *Cf.* here Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, pp. 279-285 concerning the “the so-called proof from Scripture” and Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*, pp. 219-221. Young writes, “On all sides one hears it asserted that we must not use the Bible as a book of proof texts. To use the Bible in such away is, we are told, to betray a profound misunderstanding of its nature...One thing, however, may be said about this practice. It was employed by none other than our Lord Himself.”, p. 219. Berkouwer writes, “Many of these ‘proofs from Scripture’ stem from a deep awareness of the humanity and coherence of Scripture...” “Clearly there is room for ‘therefores’ and ‘so that’s’ in conclusions and counter arguments within the realm of the gospel (II Tim. 3:16)...” “Anselm’s question ‘Why did God become man?’ should not automatically be rejected as rationalism. For we read everywhere of the coherence, centrality and depth of God’s actions.”, pp. 280, 282, 283.
SC Q. 40: What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience? A. The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.

SC 99 What rule hath God given for our direction in prayer? The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples commonly called The Lord’s Prayer.

The Westminster Confession

All which [the canonical books] are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. (1.2).

According to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed. (1.6).

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. (1.9).

The Law… continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness. (19.2).

The Law… a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty. (19.6).

To set down rules and direction for the better ordering of the public worship of God (31.2)

All synods or councils since the apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both. (31.3).

The Larger Catechism

LC 3 The Old and New Testament are the Word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience

LC 24 Or transgression of any law of God given as rule to the reasonable creature.

LC 92 The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the estate of innocence, and to all mankind

LC 97 Their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.

LC 186 But the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which our Saviour Christ taught his disciples.

But most significantly here, LC 99 must be noted as this answer teaches, “For the right understanding of the Ten Commandments, these rules are to be observed.”
But beyond this, the very vows of Westminster, the OPC and PCA recognize the “only infallible rule of faith and practice” that everyone taking the vow is to believe and so to obey. Therefore Professor Enns’ principle of a Bible without timeless rules for the Christian life is incompatible with the Westminster Confession.

6. Does the Confession teach that the only dimension of the Scripture’s trustworthiness is in its specific focus on Christ, i.e., “christotelic coherence”?

Professor Enns writes,

Not only do we no longer share the conventions of the ancient Near Eastern world, but we also live in union with the crucified and risen Christ, in whom all of the Old Testament finds its completion. All this to say that the central function of the Old Testament may not be there to “tell us what to do.” It may be more a part of a larger story that God brings to an end many hundreds of years later in Christ.  

Clearly the Christological focus of the Bible is one of the major theological paradigms advanced by the Confession. This can be seen in the history of the covenant of grace outlined by the Westminster Standards in chapters VII and VIII that reflect the history of salvation in the covenant of grace in Christ. Moreover, the idea of the Bible having a goal or “scope” is also referenced by the Confession.

But what does the Confession declare the “scope” of Scripture to be? In I.5 it says, “…the scope of the whole (which is to give glory to God)…” LC Q. 4 says, “…the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God;…” LC 157 discussing how the Word of God

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142 Inspiration and Incarnation, pp. 67-68.
143 There are a number of theological and interpretative paradigms or multiperspectival theological constructs offered by the Westminster Catechisms. These include: a decretal theology: LC Q. 6; a theology of union with Christ: LC Q. 79; a Covenant theology that focuses on the history of redemption: SC Q. 59. LC Q. 33, 34, 35, 36 101, 121; a Covenant theology structured on theological covenants, Q. LC 30, 31, 32; a theology of Kingdom and eschatology, SC Q. 102; and a theology of the Offices and Estates of Christ, LC Question 42, 43, 44, 45.
144 Turretin, Doctrine of Scripture, pp. 204-205, reflects an implicit appreciation for Christocentric interpretation, or the historical redemptive nature of Scripture when it is interpreted in light of Christ. “Since Scripture, which contains much more than words, is very rich in meaning, it is not absurd to say that the Holy Spirit wanted to give many teachings to us in the same word, but always one subordinated to the other so that one is the sign and figure of the other, or that they have some connection and dependency. Thus the promise given Abraham concerning his descendants refers both to Isaac as type and to Christ as antitype (Gal. 3:16). The oracle forbidding the breaking of the bones of the lamb (Exod. 23:46) refers both to the paschal lamb as a figure and to Christ in mystery (John 19:36). The promise given David, “I will be a father to him (II Sam. 7:14), refers both to Solomon and to Christ (Heb. 1:5). The prediction in Psalm 16:10 that the holy one will not see corruption applies both to David, although incompletely, and to Christ, completely (Acts 2:29-30). There are any number of such texts in Scripture, which have various aspects which must be held together in order to have the full meaning of the oracle, and they are fulfilled not all at once, but in stages over a period of time. Thus many of the ancient oracles had three aspects: for the dispensation of the law in the Jewish church, for the dispensation of grace in the Christian church, and for the dispensation of glory in heaven. Thus Isaiah 9:1, about the people who walked in darkness and saw a great light, has three stages of fulfillment: the liberation from Babylon, the proclamation of the gospel (Matt. 4:14-16), and the final resurrection, through which those who were living in the valley of the shadow of death will see the great light of the glory of God. Likewise in Ezekiel 37, it can be observed concerning the dry bones that the oracle had already been fulfilled when the people went out from their most bitter captivity in Babylon as from the tomb (v.12), it is being fulfilled today in the spiritual resurrection (Eph. 5:14), and it will be perfectly fulfilled in the final resurrection (John 5:25).”
is to be read, states “…with diligence and attention to the matter and scope of them;…” What all of this seems to be saying is that the “scope” of the Word of God is God’s glory, while the “matter” of the Bible is Christ and His saving work. Thus the Westminster Standards present the doxological purpose of Scripture\(^\text{146}\) that fits not only with the famous first question of the Shorter Catechism, but also parallels other passages of the Standards that refer to God’s glory such as LC Q. 112, 113, 190.

If the christotelic principle of Professor Enns is arguing for a Christocentricity to Scripture, this is consistent with the Westminster Confession. But this understanding of his term may not be accurate or sufficient. His further explication of christotelic seems to make the Scripture’s focus so much on Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of Scripture that the ethical dimension is diminished or removed.\(^\text{147}\) In that case, there is a loss of the Shorter Catechism’s emphasis on the dual teachings of the Scriptures—“what we are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man” (SC Q. 3).

If this de-emphasis of the Christian duty to obey God’s law is an inherent aspect of a christotelic hermeneutic, it would then be inconsistent with the Confession. A commitment to christomonism, that is, a Scriptural hermeneutic where only Christ is found in Scripture, without the concomitant pursuit of Christ’s glory through the new obedience of the believer, is a perspective that is incompatible with the emphases of the Confession. The potential for christotelic exegesis to devolve into chrisomonism seems possible since it appears to be a group quest for biblical meaning by an exclusive focus on Christ in the Bible. Moreover, there does not appear to be a clear sense of when this goal is achieved according to Professor Enns.\(^\text{148}\)

If a christotelic hermeneutic necessitates a christomonism such as summarized here, then this perspective is incompatible with the Westminster Standards’ Christocentricity is the heart of the Confession’s teaching on the covenant of grace that calls for a saving faith in Christ that also seeks to bring glory to God by obedience to His Law. The doxological

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\(^{146}\) Rev. Francis R. Beattie, B.D., Ph.D., D.D. The Presbyterian Standards: An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Chapter XXXIV – Summary and Conclusions, “The inquiry now raised may be considered from a twofold point of view: First, A general view of the principle upon which the entire Standards are constructed may be taken. Here what may be termed the theocentric principle rules. Everything is from God, is subject to God, and is for the glory of God. The absolute sovereignty of God in creation, in providence, and in grace, is the fundamental idea of the Standards. He is sovereign in the sphere of natural or physical government, and in the realm of moral government, as well as in the domain of his spiritual redemptive government. Thus the sovereignty of God, rightly regarded and applied, is the root idea of the generic Calvinism of the Standards, and it supplies their constructive principle. The first question in the Catechisms strikes the key-note, and the entire contents of the Standards are in harmony with this view. God is the ruler of nature, and he is the Lord of the head, the heart, the conscience, and the life of all men. He is also King of kings and Lord of lords, as well as the king and head of his church. The theocentric principle is the constructive principle of the Standards as a whole, and it gives great majesty and remarkable completeness to the doctrines, ethics, and polity which they contain.”

\(^{147}\) Enns, Inspiration and Incarnation, pp. 67-68, “Not only do we no longer share the conventions of the ancient Near Eastern world, but we also live in union with the crucified and risen Christ, in whom all of the Old Testament finds its completion. All this to say that the central function of the Old Testament may not be there to ‘tell us what to do.’ It may be more a part of a larger story that God brings to an end many hundreds of years later in Christ.”

\(^{148}\) Inspiration and Incarnation, pp. 170, “I am very intentional here in saying that this is something we seek after. A christotelic coherence is not achieved by following a few simple rules of exegesis. It is to be sought after, over a long period of time, in community with other Christians, with humility and patience. Biblical interpretation is…a path we walk rather than a fortress we defend.”
end of the Christian life is simply portrayed by Shorter *Catechism* questions one and two declare,

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. 1. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

Q. 2. What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A. 2. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

7. Does the *Confession* reject the idea that there are a few basic rules of exegesis?

Berkouwer writes, “The fact that hermeneutics is continually busy with rules for the exposition of Scripture shows a desire to oppose the arbitrariness which, despite the recognition of Scripture as God’s Word, neglects its concrete authority. It is impossible for any theological study to bypass these questions. For in every hermeneutical question lies an aspect which is intrinsically tied to the confession of scriptural authority.”

It appears, then, that the notion of *rule* is intrinsic not only to the *Confession*, but also to hermeneutics. Thus this proposed principle of Professor Enns seems to be not only anomalous to the *Confession*, but strangely inconsistent with the science of hermeneutics itself. We have already considered the *Confession*’s “infallible rule” of hermeneutics above. We have also seen that Westminster, the OPC and the PCA each affirm a belief in the “only infallible rule of faith and practice.”

But finally, there are other significant hermeneutical rules for living the Christian life presented in the *Standards*. Perhaps most directly, let us cite *Larger Catechism* Question 99:

Question 99: For the right understanding of the Ten Commandments, these rules are to be observed:

1. That the law is perfect, and binds everyone to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience forever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.
2. That it is spiritual, and so reaches the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures.
3. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.
4. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where a promise is

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annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.

5. That: What God forbids, is at no time to be done;: What he commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.

6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.

7. That: What is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.

8. That in: What is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them; and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them.

These eight rules—that “are to be observed”—cohere with WSC Q. 2, but also prohibit the development of a christomonism. Thus they stand as a critique of the potential christomonism in Professor Enns’ christotelic hermeneutics that admits that it has no “clear rules or guidelines to prevent us from taking this process too far.”

Given this clear emphasis upon these rules for interpreting the Ten Commandments, as well as the other references to the rules of interpretation considered above, the principle of Professor Enns advocating that there are not a few basic rules of exegesis to help us interpret the Scriptures is clearly incompatible with the Westminster Standards. Thus this principle of Professor Enns regarding the non-existence of a few basic rules of exegesis for interpreting the Bible is also inconsistent with the Westminster Standards.

Conclusion: Crossroads, Slippery Slope and Watershed.

To use Young’s and Berkouwer’s metaphor, the hermeneutical crisis has brought us to a crossroads. Since Professor Enns’ hermeneutical proposals are not compatible with historic Reformed hermeneutics they lead in a direction that the evangelical and Reformed churches ought not to travel, or if they do, to do so at their own risk. Although Professor Enns denies that he has led the church to a “slippery slope of unbelief” the crossroads has in fact brought us to a watershed as well.

Francis Schaeffer some years ago wrote about the “watershed” issue of inerrancy.

We must say that if evangelicals are to be evangelicals, we must not compromise our view of Scripture. There is no use in evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger, if at the same time appreciable parts of evangelicalism are getting soft at that which is the central core—namely, the Scriptures. We must say with sadness

150 WSC Q. 2. “What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him? Answer: The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.”

151 Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 171.

152 Inspiration and Incarnation, p. 172.
that in some places, seminaries, institutions and individuals who are known as evangelical no longer hold to a full view of Scripture. The issue is clear: is the Bible truth and without error wherever it speaks, including where it touches history and the cosmos, or is it only in some sense revelational where it touches religious subjects? That is the issue. The heart of neo-orthodox existential theology is that the Bible gives us a quarry out of which to have religious experience, but that the Bible contains mistakes where it touches that which is verifiable—namely, history and science. But unhappily we must say that in some circles this concept now has come into some of that which is called evangelicalism. In short, in these circles the neo-orthodox existential theology is being taught under the name of evangelicalism. The issue is whether the Bible gives propositional truth (that is, truth that may be stated in propositions) where it touches history and the cosmos, and this all the way back to pre-Abrahamic history, all the way back to the first eleven chapters of Genesis, or whether instead of that it is only meaningful where it touches that which is considered religious.153

The evangelical church stands again at a watershed, but this time it is the precipice of a hermeneutical watershed. Lest we are swept away by the flow of the hermeneutical crisis, we must once again stand fast on the infallible Scriptures and interpret them by the “only infallible rule for the interpretation of Scripture” which “is Scripture itself.”

When Schaeffer summoned the Church to a recommitment to inerrancy, he quoted a statement attributed to Luther,

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the Devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battle front besides, is merely flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.154

In this context of the hermeneutical crisis I would like to appeal to Luther as well. But as I do, I wish to note that there are strong parallels between the Germanic courage of Martin Luther and Peter Enns. Both have been willing to take on their known world about what they believe to be true about the Bible. Both have stood strongly for their views in the face of disagreements by colleagues and criticisms from authorities. Both have written down their beliefs and have been unwilling to change. But there is a difference and it is an important one. Luther boldly affirmed his commitment to sola Scriptura when he declared at the Diet of Worms “My conscience is bound by the Word of God. Here I stand, I can do no other.” In stark contrast Enns boldly affirms that “our confession of the Bible as God’s word has a provisional quality to it”155 and declares that he is bound by “the trajectory of flexibility set out in Scripture itself.”156

156 *Inspiration and Incarnation*, p.170.
If Luther’s motto—sola Scriptura—is now to be replaced, what should take its place? Should the new motto be Scientia et scriptura, to reflect the new hermeneutic that calls for the “adjustment” of “the evangelical doctrine of Scripture” in light of “extrabiblical evidence”?

But rather than walk with Enns on his theological “journey” of “bumps, twists and turns” let us instead continue to stand with Luther on God’s Word and sing,

That Word above all earthly powers,
no thanks to them, abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours,
 thru him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever.

Only thereby can we truly keep our historic vow to believe the “only infallible rule of faith and practice” and at the same time keep our footing before the crossroads, the watershed and the slippery slope created by the hermeneutical crisis of our generation.