

11 STILL *SOLA SCRIPTURA*: AN EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SCRIPTURE

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Evangelicals are first and foremost people of the gospel. With Jesus at the Father's right hand and the Apostles gone to their reward, evangelicals hold that our sure source for knowledge of the gospel is the Bible.¹ The Bible is, in the well known words of catechism²

¹ Cf. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (10 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1932; repr., Baker, 2003), 1:72. Not a few non-evangelicals have alleged that evangelicals exalt the Bible over Jesus. See, for instance, the discussion of a previous generation of liberals and moderates who held this and/or similar positions while teaching at the institution I am privileged to serve, in Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859–2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 244–46, 373, 406, 496–97. What is most remarkable to me about this charge is how superficial it is. Apart from the Bible, what knowledge of Jesus does anyone have? If Jesus has priority over the Bible, how does one arrive at a knowledge of Jesus that puts one in position to criticize the Bible? (cf. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 262–63.) Which parts of the Bible are trusted in order to arrive at the position from which the Bible is criticized? (cf. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 137–38.) Liberals and moderates point to contradictions they see between, for instance, Jesus and Paul, but conservatives and evangelicals are not convinced that there are contradictions (see Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 182–89) and seek to read the New Testament from a hermeneutic of sympathy and trust rather than suspicion

and confessional statement,³ “the only infallible rule of faith and practice.” In other words, what we believe (faith) and what we do (practice) comes from the Bible.⁴

In this essay I will argue that the evangelical view of Scripture is derived from the Bible alone.⁵ In keeping with the Reformation

and skepticism. As an evangelical, I would argue that a hermeneutic of suspicion and skepticism bars the way to understanding the sources and the concerns of those who produced them. Moreover, the Bible is more easily seen to be consistent with itself than critical scholars are (see Wills again, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 163–64). For the role of the Bible in spirituality, see Peter Adam, *Hearing God’s Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality* (NSBT; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).

² See e.g. question 4 of “The Baptist Catechism” (from the ed. printed by the Charleston Association [South Carolina] in 1813) in Tom J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Amityville, N.Y.: Calvary, 1998), 59.

³ See e.g. “Of the Holy Scriptures” in the “Second London Confession” (a.k.a. “The Baptist Confession of 1689”) 1.1 in William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (rev. ed.; Valley Forge: Judson, 1969), 248. Such language is typical of Protestant confessional statements and can be found in the Anglican Thirty Nine Articles, the Presbyterian Westminster Confession, the Methodist Articles of Religion, and the Congregationalist Savoy Declaration (cf. the Lutheran cry *sola Scriptura*). For a representative statement of the non-denominational Bible church movement, similar language can be found in the full doctrinal statement of Dallas Theological Seminary.

⁴ For studies of the trajectory of institutions that started with an evangelical view of the Bible only to abandon the same, see George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), and James Turnstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). For what took place at Fuller Seminary, see George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 200–219.

⁵ As will be seen below, this does not exclude the use of supporting evidence from extra-canonical ancient writings. I consider the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy [hereafter CSBI] to be an apt summary of the evangelical understanding of Scripture. This document is available many places online, e.g. <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html> (accessed June 2009).

cry of *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone),⁶ evangelicals believe the Bible's own assertions about itself.⁷ Rather than being a philosophical or theological construct,⁸ the evangelical doctrine of Scripture arises inductively from the text of Scripture itself.⁹ More specifically, the understanding of the Bible to which the Bible itself bears witness is this: the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon are inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore inerrant.¹⁰ The inspiration of the Holy Spirit results in written communication that is totally true and trustworthy.¹¹ This is the Bible's own claim about itself, as this es-

⁶ Cf. Article II of the CSBI, "We deny that church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible."

⁷ Cf. Article XV of the CSBI, "We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration."

⁸ Cf. Article XVI of the CSBI, "We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism."

⁹ See Gregory K. Beale's lecture, "The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation and Its Bearing on Christology and on the Authority of Revelation as Scripture," delivered at Westminster Theological Seminary on May 1, 2009, http://www.wts.edu/flash/media_popup/media_player.php?id=819 (accessed July 7, 2009). For a survey of the language used in the Old and New Testaments to describe "revelation," see Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 29–33. Cf. also Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 205: "Let it not be said that...we are refusing the inductive method of establishing doctrine. We follow the inductive method..."

¹⁰ Cf. the statement on Scripture in the Doctrinal Basis of the Evangelical Theological Society: "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs." The argument of this essay is focused on the inerrancy of the Protestant canon because this is what separates the evangelical view of Scripture from others who may have a high view of Scripture. In my view, a high view of Scripture entails its *authority*, *clarity*, *necessity*, and *sufficiency*. For a recent argument for the perspicuity of Scripture, see Mark D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture* (NSBT; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006).

¹¹ Cf. Article IX of the CSBI, "We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write."

say will attempt to demonstrate.¹² It is beyond the scope of this essay to demonstrate that the evangelical view of Scripture is the historic position of orthodox Christianity, but it is worth mentioning that evangelicals believe this to be so.¹³

My attempt to demonstrate the thesis that the Bible itself claims to be inspired and therefore inerrant will be presented in three parts. First I will seek to show that the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon have been *recognized* as inspired.¹⁴ This recognition can be seen within the texts of these canonical books, and extra-canonical literature also testifies to this reality. That is, both biblical and non-biblical writings recognize only the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Second, I will seek to show that the Bible itself claims to be inspired

¹² It might be objected that this essay presents nothing new. My response is that lengthy citations of primary sources in the body of the text accompanied by generous quotation of the CSBI in the footnotes is necessary because those who reject inerrancy so glibly pass over the primary data, so often misrepresent the standard evangelical position set forth in the CSBI (this is especially true among those who resent the fact that their institutions require them to affirm inerrancy), and employ so much fallacious logic and rhetoric. For a thorough engagement with the discussion in recent secondary literature, see Jason S. Sexton, "How Far Beyond Chicago? Assessing Recent Attempts to Reframe the Inerrancy Debate," *Them* 34 (2009): 26–49. For trenchant review-essays of recent books on Scripture, see Robert W. Yarbrough, "The Embattled Bible: Four More Books," *Them* 34 (2009): 6–25, and D. A. Carson, "Three More Books on the Bible: A Critical Review," *TrinJ* 27 (2006): 1–62. For a thorough response to recent challenges to inerrancy from Peter Enns, see G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008). It is remarkable how contemporary Warfield's essay "The Real Problem of Inspiration" seems (in *Revelation and Inspiration*, 169–226), reinforcing the idea that "new" challenges to the doctrine are just stale, outworn retreads of boring, long rejected ideas.

¹³ Cf. Article XVI of the CSBI, "We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history." For a defense of this position, see John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982). See also Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 149–65, 173.

¹⁴ Cf. Article I of the CSBI, "We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source."

by the Holy Spirit, flawless, totally true, and completely trustworthy. In three words, the Bible claims to be inspired, inerrant, and infallible. Inspiration points to the role of God's Spirit guiding those who wrote (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20–21).¹⁵ Inerrancy points to “the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake.”¹⁶ Infallibility points to “the quality of neither misleading nor being misled...Holy Scripture is a sure, safe and reliable rule and guide in all matters.”¹⁷ In the necessarily brief third section of the essay, I will seek to address key objections to the doctrine of inerrancy. To be clear about what is at stake, if my thesis is demonstrated to be true, then rejection of the evangelical view of Scripture (that the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon are inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore inerrant) is rejection of the Bible's own claims about itself.¹⁸

¹⁵ Cf. Article VII of the CSBI, “We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.”

¹⁶ The CSBI, Part III “Exposition,” Section C “Infallibility, Inerrancy, Interpretation,” paragraph 3.

¹⁷ The CSBI, Part III “Exposition,” Section C “Infallibility, Inerrancy, Interpretation,” paragraph 2.

¹⁸ Assertions like the one that I have just made invariably strike people today as arrogant, or at least overconfident. It seems to me that an assertion of what one thinks to be true is only arrogant if one claims to have invented that truth or to be exempt from its jurisdiction. The humble position is that of submission to the truth. The arrogant position is taken by those who reject the truth. I would also embrace the humility expressed by the framers of the CSBI in the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the preface: “We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we propose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said...we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word. We invite response...We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help that enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.”

THE SIXTY-SIX BOOK PROTESTANT CANON

The Witness of the OT to Its Own Canonicity

The Old Testament (OT) bears witness to its own canonicity by evidencing a recognition of certain writings as those in which God has spoken. The OT itself then shows that these writings were set apart in ways that reflect their uniqueness and authority.¹⁹ For instance, Exod 24:7 states, “Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.’”²⁰ Three points inductively arise from this text. First, the description of what Moses read as “the Book of the Covenant” shows that Moses presented this information in his own language and in accordance with the literary forms of his culture.²¹ Second, the text depicts the people themselves *recognizing* that what Moses had read to them had been spoken by God. Neither Moses nor a group of elders around him told the people that what they had heard was the word of the Lord; the people recognized it for themselves. Third, the people’s promise to obey the word of the Lord shows their understanding of its binding authority.

¹⁹ The best treatment of the Old Testament canon is Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). For a full summary, see esp. Roger T. Beckwith, “Formation of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling; CRINT 2/1; 1988; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 39–86. See now also Roger T. Beckwith, “The Canon of the Old Testament,” in *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2577–79.

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are from the *English Standard Version*.

²¹ Cf. Article IV of the CSBI, “We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God’s work of inspiration.” Article VIII is also relevant, “We affirm that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.” See Peter J. Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image,” *SBJT* 12 (2008): 18–19, and idem, “The Covenant at Sinai,” *SBJT* 12 (2008): 60.

The Bible also gives indication of an awareness that revelation was being progressively received from God.²² So we find evidence in the narratives that a growing amount of material was, like the Book of the Covenant in Exod 24:7, seen to be God's word, authoritative, and canonical in that it was set apart from other writings.²³ In Exod 40:20 we see that "the testimony" is placed in a uniquely holy place, and nothing else is put there: "He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above the ark." In the next verse the ark of the covenant is referred to as "the ark of the testimony" (40:21).²⁴ We find something similar near the end of the book of Deuteronomy, in a statement that seems to apply to the whole of the Pentateuch: "When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end, Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, 'Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you' (Deut 31:24–26).²⁵ The many references to the "Law of Moses" in the rest of the Old and New Testaments are not limited in scope to the book of Deuteronomy, which indicates that later biblical authors understood the

²² Cf. Article V of the CSBI, "We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive."

²³ See Beckwith's discussion of "The Temple as the shrine of the canon," *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 80–86, 101–103.

²⁴ Cf. Gentry, "Kingdom through Covenant," 26: "If one were to enter a pagan temple, passing through the courtyard, and the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies, what would one find there? An image representing one of the forces of nature. But that is not what one finds at the center of Israel's worship. What was in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle? First of all, there was no image or statue there...All there is in the Holy of Holies is just a little box. And what is in the box? The Ten Commandments. Thus, what God is saying to the Israelites is that he cannot be manipulated by magic. If they want the good life, they must conform their lifestyle to his revealed standards of right and wrong...when one both compares and contrasts the biblical text with the ancient Near Eastern cultural setting...the differences are so radical that only divine revelation can explain the origin of the text."

²⁵ Cf. also Deut 31:9, "Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel."

“Law of Moses” to comprise the whole of the Pentateuch. Evangelicals accept the testimony of the ancient texts as more reliable than the skeptical rejection of the sources reflected in higher critical opinions of the last two centuries.

Milton Fisher writes,

There is now abundant evidence from the ancient Near East of a “psychology of canonicity”—viz., a sensitivity to the inviolability of authoritative documents as far back as early second millennium B.C.E. This will not surprise the careful reader of the Bible. He finds no difficulty in statements that Moses (Deut 31:9ff. [26]), Joshua (Josh 24:25, 26), and Samuel (1 Sam 10:25) placed written covenant documents in the sanctuary, for this paralleled the common practice among surrounding peoples of that day.²⁶

The texts Fisher cites from Joshua and Samuel indicate that later texts were added to the Mosaic writings as the years passed. Josh 24:25–26 states, “So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.” This text indicates that material now in the book of Joshua was added to the Mosaic writings, which were with the ark in the sanctuary. The Mosaic writings are also referred to as “the Law of God.” These claims the text makes for itself, namely, that the writings recognized as speaking for God were held at the sanctuary with the ark. First Samuel 10:25 states, “Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD...” Robinson and Harrison write, “Such language was also found in Hittite suzerainty treaties, which contained a clause requiring deposition of the text in some secure location so that in subsequent generations the treaty would be available for public reading.”²⁷

²⁶ Milton C. Fisher, “The Canon of the Old Testament,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (12 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 1:387.

²⁷ G. L. Robinson and R. K. Harrison, “Canon of the OT,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols.; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:593.

Later in the OT we find indication that the writings of Moses were indeed kept in the ark: “There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt” (1 Kgs 8:9). In addition to the texts already cited above, other texts show that sacred writ encompassed more than the two tablets: “Then he brought out the king’s son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony. And they proclaimed him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, ‘Long live the king!’” (2 Kgs 11:12). This reference to the “testimony” recalls other instances of that word seen above.

Nor are texts lacking that show that the Law of Moses was also thought of as the Law of God. For instance, Neh 8:8 states, “They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.” Beckwith notes, “Twice at least God is spoken of as the *writer* of the Law (2 Kings 17.37; Hos. 8.12).”²⁸ Zechariah 7:12 indicates that Yahweh gave his word by the Spirit through the prophets: “...the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets...”

The book of Daniel also asserts that the word of the Lord comes not only in the writings of Moses but also in those of the prophets: “in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years” (Dan 9:2).

It is not uncommon for modern scholars to reject the testimony seen in the OT itself to the canonicity of the OT documents. Those who hold the evangelical view of Scripture simply find the OT’s own canonical consciousness more compelling than the alternative constructs of those who reject the OT’s self-attestation. The alternative construct is not derived from the text’s own claims as the evangelical view of Scripture is. The idea that only the books of the Protestant canon are canonical also finds support in the extra-canonical writings. To this evidence we now turn.

²⁸ Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 68.

Other Jewish Writings and the OT Canon

The evidence drawn from both ancient testimony and the surviving manuscripts supports the evangelical understanding of the OT canon. As Robinson and Harrison correctly state, “The MSS discovered at Qumran make it evident that no canonical book of the OT was written later than the Persian period [ca. 539–331 B.C.E.], a consideration that also extends to Daniel and those Psalms that were formerly regarded as Maccabean.”²⁹

The Prologue to the Wisdom of Sirach, dating from about 132 B.C.E., gives threefold evidence of the tri-partite arrangement of the OT canon: “Whereas many great teachings have been given to us through the *law and the prophets and the others that followed them*...my grandfather Jesus, after devoting himself especially to the reading of the *law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers*...Not only this work, but even *the law itself, the prophecies, and the rest of the books*...” (emphasis added)³⁰

Josephus’s statement in *Against Apion* also provides strong evidence on the OT canon:

Seeing that with us it is not open to everybody to write the records, and that there is no discrepancy in what is written; seeing that, on the contrary, the prophets alone had this privilege, obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which they owed to God, and committing to writing a clear account of the events of their

²⁹ Robinson and Harrison, “Canon of the OT,” 595. See also Roger Beckwith, “Early Traces of the Book of Daniel,” *TynBul* 53 (2002): 75–82, which demonstrates the use of Daniel in three intertestamental works that date from before the time Daniel is commonly supposed to have been written.

³⁰ Robert Hanhart writes, “It seems to me justifiable to conclude that the distinction—in relation both to their character and the quality of their translation—between Law, Prophets, and the other Writings, on the one hand, and the literature first exemplified in the work of his grandfather, on the other, was grounded first and foremost in the distinction between ‘canonical’ and ‘apocryphal’ already current at the time” (Robert Hanhart, “Problems in the History of the LXX Text from Its Beginnings to Origen,” forward to *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture*, by Martin Hengel [trans. Mark E. Biddle; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 3). Unless otherwise noted, citations of the Apocrypha are from *The Revised Standard Version*.

own time just as they occurred³¹—it follows, I say, that we do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with each other. Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time. Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to the death of the lawgiver. This period falls only a little short of three thousand years. From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persian,³² the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books.³³ The remaining four books³⁴ contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of life. From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.³⁵ We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable;³⁶ and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the

³¹ Josephus manifestly states that the OT consists of writings recognized as Scripture because they were (1) understood to be the writings of *prophets* who were (2) *inspired* by God that (3) *do not contradict each other*, (4) are *perspicuous*—“clear account,” and (5) *historically accurate*—“just as they occurred.”

³² From this statement and the reference to Artaxerxes that follows a few phrases later, we see that Josephus regards the whole of the OT to have been completed during the reign of Artaxerxes (464–423 B.C.E.).

³³ Probably (1) Joshua, (2) Judges and Ruth, (3) Samuel, (4) Kings, (5) Chronicles, (6) Ezra and Nehemiah, (7) Esther, (8) Job, (9) Isaiah, (10) Jeremiah, (11) Ezekiel, (12) Minor Prophets, (13) Daniel.

³⁴ Probably (1) Psalms, (2) Song of Songs, (3) Proverbs, (4) Ecclesiastes.

³⁵ Josephus draws a firm line between the OT and the Apocrypha, and his basis for drawing that line is the fact that the Apocrypha were not written by inspired prophets.

³⁶ It is not difficult to harmonize the evidence that some things in the OT were updated with what Josephus says here about nothing being altered. From his statements that “it is not open to everybody to write the records” and from his assertion that only inspired prophets had the privilege, we can also say the following: while anyone might undertake an effort to edit or alter a text previously recognized as sacred Scripture, from what Josephus says we have evidence that the community would only

day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God,³⁷ to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them.³⁸

With the statement of Josephus that the writings of the OT were completed by the time of Artaxerxes (ca. 464–423 B.C.E.), there are several other indications that Ezra (who returned to Jerusalem in 458 B.C.E.) and Nehemiah (who returned in 445 B.C.E.) played key roles in the finalization of the OT canon.³⁹ Second Maccabees (ca. 70 B.C.E.) states that Nehemiah “founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and the letters of kings about votive offerings” (2:13).⁴⁰ The apocryphal *4 Ezra* (a.k.a. 2 Esdras in the RSV Apocrypha)

accept alterations or updates done by those recognized as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the evidence would seem to allow for someone like Ezra, who was recognized as an inspired author of Scripture, to update place names and perhaps arrange the final form of the Psalter. See further Michael A. Grisanti, “Inspiration, Inerrancy, and the OT Canon: The Place of Textual Updating in an Inerrant View of Scripture,” *JETS* 44 (2001): 577–98.

³⁷ Josephus indicates that all Jews regard these twenty two books, which can be identified as the thirty nine books of the Protestant Old Testament, as the unalterable, error free, authoritative, inspired word of God. On the reference to the twenty two books of the Old Testament, see Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 235–40, 263–64.

³⁸ Josephus, *Against Apion*, (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), 1.37–42 (LCL 186:177–81).

³⁹ See the discussion by Beckwith of the references in the Mishnah (Moed Katan 3.4, variant text) and the Tosephta (Tos. Kelim B.M.5.8) to “a copy of the Pentateuch in the Temple called ‘the Book of Ezra.’ This was probably the oldest and most revered copy of all, traditionally believed to have been written by Ezra the scribe,” in *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 84, 102, 112, 167. See also David N. Freedman, “The Symmetry of the Hebrew Bible,” *ST* 46 (1992): 105: “We attribute the conception and execution [of the final arrangement of the whole OT] to the Scribe Ezra and Governor Nehemiah, who may have worked partly in tandem, but also in sequence, with Ezra responsible chiefly for the conception and Nehemiah for the execution and completion of the project.”

⁴⁰ On this text see Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 150–53.

clearly distinguishes between canonical and non-canonical writings, giving Ezra a key role with respect to both: “And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, ‘Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first⁴¹ and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise⁴² among your people’” (4 *Ezra* 14:45–46).

In addition to these differentiations between the books understood to be canonical and the books that were understood to come after them, we have statements within the apocryphal writings that disclaim inspiration.⁴³ That is, there are statements in these writings that openly declare that their authors are not inspired prophets. Three times in 1 Maccabees (ca. 100 B.C.E.) alone we find statements that there is no prophet:

[They] stored the stones...until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them. (1 Macc 4:46)

Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them. (1 Macc 9:27)

And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise... (1 Macc 14:41)

These statements all declare that at the time the narrated events took place, there were no prophets who were inspired by the Holy Spirit and able to give authoritative decisions from God. Since 1 Maccabees does not go on to narrate the resolution of the problem

⁴¹ The tri-partite order is probably in view here: Five books of Moses, eight books of the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve), and eleven books of the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra–Nehemiah, and Chronicles).

⁴² Note the esoteric, hidden nature of the “Apocryphal” books.

⁴³ Bruce M. Metzger, “The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 1:162, citing the Prologue to Ecclus., 2 Macc 2:27 and 15:38. On the status of the Apocrypha, see esp. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 338–433. Summarized briefly in Roger T. Beckwith, “The Apocrypha,” in *The ESV Study Bible*, 2581–83.

of the lack of a prophet, we can conclude that the author of the book did not regard himself as possessing that status.⁴⁴ Against this can be compared the reference to the writings of the OT as “the holy books” in 1 Macc 12:9. Also going in this direction is the clear statement that there are no more prophets in 2 Bar 85:1–3.⁴⁵

NT Evidence on the OT Canon

The New Testament (NT) evidence on the OT canon is, for evangelicals, decisive.⁴⁶ In addition to the many references to “the Scriptures”⁴⁷ and to “the Law and the Prophets,”⁴⁸ there is the reference to the tri-partite arrangement of the whole of the OT in Luke 24:44, “Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in

⁴⁴ Beckwith (*The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 68) explains, “Since the Scriptures were God-given and sacred, and often originated with prophets, the concept of inspiration was extended from the oral form of the messages of the prophets to their written form, and was applied to these in every part.”

⁴⁵ 2 Bar 85:1–3, “Further, know that our fathers in former times and former generations had helpers, righteous prophets and holy men. But we were also in our country, and they helped us when we sinned, and they intervened for us with him who has created us since they trusted in their works. And the Mighty One heard them and purged us from our sins. But now, the righteous have been assembled, and the prophets are sleeping. Also we have left our land, and Zion has been taken away from us, and we have nothing now apart from the Mighty One and his Law.”

⁴⁶ Cf. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 10: “To Christians, however, the teaching of Jesus, his apostles and the other New Testament writers has also a theological significance; for if they teach us what their Old Testament canon was, do they not also teach us what, for Christians, the Old Testament canon ought to be?” See also E. Earle Ellis, “The Old Testament Canon in the Early Church,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, 653–90.

⁴⁷ Cf. Matt 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; Mark 12:24; 14:49; Luke 24:27, 32, 45; John 5:39; Acts 17:2, 11; 18:24, 28; Rom 1:2; 1 Cor 15:3, 4; 2 Pet 3:16. See the essay on “‘Scripture,’ ‘The Scriptures,’ in the New Testament” in Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 115–65.

⁴⁸ Matt 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:44; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Rom 3:21.

the *Law of Moses* and *the Prophets* and *the Psalms* must be fulfilled” (emphasis added). The phrase “the Psalms” likely refers to the whole of the Writings.

Significantly, no Apocryphal book is ever cited *as Scripture* in the NT. Never are the non-canonical writings cited using the kind of quotation formula used for the books of the OT.⁴⁹ Some scholars reject the testimony of Jesus and the authors of the NT to the OT canon,⁵⁰ but not evangelicals. Evangelicals embrace the testi-

⁴⁹ Cf. Metzger, “Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” 162. On the citation of 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 1:14–15, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 468–71: “*First Enoch* is not considered to be canonical Scripture by any religious group, whether we think of Judaism, Roman Catholicism, the Greek or Russian Orthodox, or Protestantism...It is better to conclude that Jude quoted the pseudepigraphical *1 Enoch* and that he also believed that the portion he quoted represented God’s truth. Jude’s wording does not demand that he thought we have an authentic oracle from the historical Enoch...Indeed, the content of the prophecy is not remarkable, assuring the readers that the Lord will truly judge the ungodly...The verb ‘prophesy’...sometimes is used to designate canonical Scripture (Matt 15:7; 1 Pet 1:10). But the verb also is used to say that a certain utterance or saying is from God. For example, Caiaphas prophesied...(John 11:51)...A prophecy may derive from God and still not be a part of canonical Scripture...” Since writing this, Thomas Schreiner alerted me to the fact that *1 Enoch* is sometimes thought to be included in the Ethiopian Orthodox Deuterocanon, along with other books only they hold to be at all canonical, such as *Jubilees* and *1, 2, and 3 Makabis*, not to be confused with the Books of Maccabees. But Beckwith (*Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 430 n. 237) contends, “It is often asserted that these four works [including *1 Enoch*] are in the (very inclusive) Ethiopian canon, but, as is seen in Appendix 5, the Ascension of Isaiah is not in the Ethiopian canon even today, and in the early period of Ethiopian church history it is probable that only *Jubilees* was, if, indeed, any of them were.” See his appendix 5 in *Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 478–505, and also the discussion of the way the New Testament authors handle the Old, “‘It Says:’ ‘Scripture Says:’ ‘God Says,’” in Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 283–332.

⁵⁰ For instance, Richard H. Bell (*The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul’s Theology of Israel* [WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 310) writes concerning Jesus, “He was fallible regarding biblical criticism.” Illustrating the “fallible” positions of Jesus, Bell notes, “For example, he assumed Moses wrote the Pentateuch and that David wrote Psalm 110”

mony of the Old and New Testaments regarding the OT canon, and that testimony is corroborated by other non-canonical Jewish writings. We turn now to the NT canon.

The NT Canon

Because no Christian group adds to the NT canon the way that some add to the OT canon, this discussion can be brief. When we consider the question of the NT canon, two sets of data must be considered. First is the testimony that has established the traditional view of the formation of the NT canon.⁵¹ The second set of facts has given rise to recent arguments that would support the notion that the NT canon was recognized earlier rather than later.

The Traditional Argument

We can work back from the thirty ninth Easter letter of Athanasius in 367 C.E., sometimes regarded as “The first official recognition of the twenty-seven books of the present NT canon as being *the* NT canon of the Church...”⁵² That being one bookend, the other bookend is the earliest testimony pointing to a developing NT canon in the indications that Paul expected his own writings to be read aloud to the gathered church in the context of Christian worship (e.g. Col 4:16). In addition to Paul’s own statements we have the words of Peter that both treat Paul’s writings as Scripture and point toward an early collection of his writings: “...just as our beloved brother *Paul also wrote* to you according to the wisdom given to him, *as he does in all his letters*...There are some things in *them* that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, *as they do the other Scriptures*” (2 Pet 3:15–16, emphasis added). We see in this statement that Peter is aware of

(310 n. 78). Bell has assumed that Moses did not write the Pentateuch and that David did not write Ps 110, and evangelicals simply find the “assumptions” of Jesus more compelling than Bell and scholars of like mind.

⁵¹ For this see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987). For a brief summary see Charles E. Hill, “The Canon of the New Testament,” in *The ESV Study Bible*, 2579–81.

⁵² R. P. Meye, “Canon of the NT,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:601.

“all” Paul’s letters, and we also see that Peter refers to what is done to Paul’s letters as being done to “the other Scriptures,” which places Paul’s letters on par with other Scripture.⁵³

After the words of 2 Pet 3:15–16, another strong testimony to the NT canon is the Muratorian Fragment.⁵⁴ This document contains a list of writings that can and “cannot be received in the catholic Church,” rejecting, for instance, an epistle “to the Alexandrians, forged in Paul’s name for the sect of Marcion, and several others.”⁵⁵ These words are especially significant on the point that pseudonymous writings were in circulation *and were rejected*. We should not neglect on this point also 2 Thess 2:2, where Paul himself rejects writings that purport to be from him but are not: “we ask you...not to be quickly shaken...by...a letter seeming to be from us...” (cf. also 2 Thess 3:17).⁵⁶ Also significant is the Muratorian Canon’s concern regarding which books can and “cannot be read publicly in the Church.”⁵⁷ The Muratorian Canon is concerned with apostolicity: lines 3–4 establishing Luke’s legitimacy via his being a companion of Paul, and line 14 noting Andrew’s apostolic status. Following the statement disallowing the reading of Hermas in church (line 78), there is what appears to be a reference to the reading of “the [OT?] prophets, whose number is settled,” and the

⁵³ Schreiner has answered the arguments against the authenticity of 2 Peter in 1, 2, *Peter, Jude*, 255–76.

⁵⁴ Dating from ca. 200 C.E., so named because it was discovered and published in 1740 by the Italian historian L. A. Muratori (1672–1750). The 8th century manuscript is an annotated catalogue of the writings of the NT. The document might have originated earlier than 200 C.E., for it claims to be contemporaneous with the Shepherd of Hermas, which is dated to about 140 C.E. See lines 73–75 in the Muratorian Canon, as numbered in *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; trans. R. McL. Wilson; 2 vols.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 1:36.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, lines 63–65.

⁵⁶ Some scholars dispute the Pauline authorship of canonical letters claiming to have been written by him. Evangelicals hold that these letters are genuine because the church rejected forgeries, and because we find it more likely that these letters are authentic than that they fooled everyone for 1700 years only to be found out by modern scholars working in the last few centuries. See Article XVIII of the CSBI.

⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, 36, lines 70–78, where the revelation of Peter and the Shepherd of Hermas are not read in church.

reading of “the apostles to the end of time” (lines 79–80). These lines appear to indicate that whereas the prophets and apostles were read aloud in church, Hermas is not to be classed with either set of writings. With this evidence are the classifications made by Eusebius of the writings that were acknowledged, disputed, and heretical.⁵⁸ The acknowledged books were used in church by all, the disputed were used in church by some, and the heretical were forgeries put forward by heretics. This is the evidence that has traditionally been used to establish the limits of the NT canon. Recently some arguments have been made on the basis of evidence based directly on features of the manuscripts.

Recent Arguments Based on Manuscript Evidence

Both Larry Hurtado⁵⁹ and David Trobisch⁶⁰ have made observations on the evidence yielded by the manuscripts. Hurtado does not go as far as Trobisch, so we will begin with his findings.

Hurtado makes the important observation that texts played a large role in early Christianity, and in spite of the claims of the modern day champions of various heretics and heresies, the majority of texts that have come down to us are “artifacts of Christians of recognizably mainstream, ‘orthodox’ stance.”⁶¹ The manuscripts in our possession indicate that the only Gospels that were linked and copied together in one manuscript were those that became part of the NT canon, and texts such as the *Gospel of Thomas* were not so treated. Hurtado concludes that “those Gospel texts that were copied together were regarded as in some way complementary and sufficiently compatible with one another to be so linked.”⁶²

The linking together of Paul’s writings in the manuscripts give further evidence of an early Pauline letter collection, at least by the

⁵⁸ Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesia*, 3.25.1–7; 3.3.1–2, 6. For a fascinating study, see Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁵⁹ Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

⁶⁰ David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶¹ Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 29, cf. 24.

⁶² Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 37.

early second century and perhaps late in the first. Similar manuscript evidence points to a Johannine collection consisting of the letters and Gospel of John as well as the Apocalypse. John's writings appear to have been bound in a single codex and circulated as a collection.⁶³

Having surveyed the use of the codex by the early Christians, which was a manifest departure from the preference for the roll in the wider culture, Hurtado concludes "that Christians strongly preferred the codex for *those writings that they regarded as scripture...*"⁶⁴ He goes on to suggest that this use of the codex appears to have been a deliberate step intended to differentiate copies of Christian Scripture from other writings. In my view, even though Hurtado thinks the process took longer to complete than what Trobisch proposes,⁶⁵ the conclusions reached by the two authors are complementary.

Trobisch's proposal is based on realities common to the manuscripts: the abbreviation of the sacred names (*nomina sacra*), the use of the codex, and the collection units of the manuscript tradition. He argues that these features function the way that modern printing conventions function. For instance, the page numbers of this book will all be in the same place on the page, the size of the margins will be uniform, and so forth. An editor decided upon these features of this book then made sure they were consistent throughout. Trobisch argues that the same can be said for the widespread use of the common collection units, the *nomina sacra*, and the use of the codex.⁶⁶ The uniformity of the titles of the Four Gospels,⁶⁷ the consistent abbreviate of key terms, the grouping of the same books in the same order into codices as opposed to rolls are all features that would point to an early practice achieving an influence so widespread that it became virtually universal. Trobisch is restrained in his suggestion as to when this "First Edition" of the NT was produced and published, simply presenting it as a work of

⁶³ Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 39.

⁶⁴ Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 57.

⁶⁵ See Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 122 n. 82.

⁶⁶ Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament*, 6, 8–44.

⁶⁷ See also Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels* (trans. John Bowden; Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2000), 48–56.

the second century.⁶⁸ If Trobisch's theory is correct, the appearance of these manuscript features in the earliest manuscripts we possess calls for a date earlier in the second century rather than later.

Whatever we conclude as to *when* the twenty seven books of the NT canon were recognized as Scripture, and the evidence indicates that it happened earlier rather than later, *that* the NT canon consists of twenty seven books is the agreed upon position of historic Christian orthodoxy. Evangelicals agree.

Some Christians think that the OT canon includes more than the thirty nine books recognized by Protestants, but evangelicals are convinced that the OT's own witness, the Apocryphal writings themselves, other early Jewish literature, and the testimony of the NT to the question firmly settles the matter. The NT never quotes the Apocrypha as Scripture, and the Jews never accepted it as Scripture.⁶⁹ We now turn to the evidence that the Bible itself claims to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore flawless.

INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THEREFORE INERRANT

The point evangelicals hold here is simple. Just as the Bible does not use the word "Trinity" while teaching the truth, so the Bible does not use the term "inerrant" while claiming to be so. Here is a sampling of the kinds of claims the Bible makes about itself:

The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. (Ps 12:6)

The law of the Lord is perfect. (Ps 19:7)

Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. (Ps 119:89)

I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad. (Ps 119:96)

The sum of your words is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever. (Ps 119:160)

Every word of God proves true. (Prov 30:5)

⁶⁸ Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament*, 7, 43.

⁶⁹ I owe this precise formulation to correspondence with Thomas Schreiner.

Truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass away from the law until all is accomplished. (Matt 5:18)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. (Mark 13:31)

The Scripture cannot be broken. (John 10:35)

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)

Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David... (Acts 1:16)

But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets... (Acts 3:18)

When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God. (2 Thess 2:13)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16–17)

No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet 1:20–21)

Evangelicals hold the Bible to be self-authenticating.⁷⁰ We believe what it claims for itself. The Bible is our authority. We place ourselves under it. We approach it with a hermeneutic of trust.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See Wayne A. Grudem, "Scripture's Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture," in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 19–59.

⁷¹ See Richard B. Hays's essay, "A Hermeneutic of Trust," in his *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 190–201. Unfortunately Hays contradicts himself and the hermeneutic of trust he advocates when he writes, "Cases may arise in which we must acknowledge internal tensions within Scripture that require us to choose guidance from one biblical witness and to reject another" (198). Evangelicals trust that no biblical witness needs to be rejected, not even those that are out of step with modern day feminism. In

We believe what it says. It claims to be pure, perfect, inspired,⁷² and true, and we believe those claims. As Warfield put it, “It is the testimony of the Bible itself to its own origin and character as the Oracles of the Most High, that has led the Church to her acceptance of it as such...”⁷³

In addition to this testimony from the Bible about the Bible, evangelical Christians can employ an argument from authority when discussing the nature of Scripture. That is, evangelicals invoke the authority of Jesus himself, and we believe that we have learned our view of the Bible from him.⁷⁴

OBJECTIONS TO THE EVANGELICAL VIEW

Those who reject the evangelical view of Scripture do so because they do not think it stands the test of the evidence. Prominent objections to the evangelical view of Scripture include (1) the claim that the doctrine of inerrancy dies the death of a thousand qualifications; (2) the claim that since we do not possess the autographa, to which evangelicals attribute inerrancy, the doctrine is useless; and (3) the simple claim that there are manifest errors in the Bible.

To the first objection, Jason Sexton persuasively responds, “Qualifications describe theology, which is always provisional, fragmentary, and tainted because it is human.”⁷⁵ We might also

his otherwise excellent commentary on 1 Corinthians, Hays regards Paul’s argument about the role of women in 1 Cor 11:2–16 as invalid (Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* [Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1997], 187, 191–92). For the view that Paul’s argument is valid, see my essay, “What Women Can Do in Ministry: Full Participation within Biblical Boundaries,” in *Women, Ministry and the Gospel* (ed. Mark A. Husbands and Timothy Larsen; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 32–52.

⁷² See the impressive study of “God-Inspired Scripture” in Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 229–80.

⁷³ Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 174.

⁷⁴ See John W. Wenham, “Christ’s View of Scripture,” in *Inerrancy* (ed. Norman L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 3–36; and Donald Macleod, “Jesus and Scripture,” in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture* (ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 69–95. See also Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 84–90.

⁷⁵ Sexton, “How Far Beyond Chicago?” 48.

quote John Ames's observation about the man who "lacked patience for anything but the plainest interpretations."⁷⁶ We can also note that the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy seeks to address the many arguments lodged against inerrancy. Some of the complexity, then, is due as much to the opponents of the doctrine as it is from the biblical data itself. Asked what they believe about the Bible, many evangelical Christians are content to quote 2 Tim 3:16.

To the second we simply observe that what inerrantists mean is that God has not re-inspired everyone who set out to copy or translate the text of the Bible.⁷⁷ God inspired the authors of the text, and we have substantially what they wrote. Indeed, we have everything they wrote, and we have some variants that do not represent what they wrote. No major doctrine of the Christian faith is affected by any text critical variant.⁷⁸

To the third objection the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy states:

Apparent inconsistencies should not be ignored. Solution of them, where this can be convincingly achieved, will encourage

⁷⁶ John Ames is a fictional character in Marilynne Robinson's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *Gilead* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 31.

⁷⁷ See Hurtado's discussion of "Corrections" in *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 185–189, the upshot of which is that "...even less skillful scribes...showed by their zealotry in correcting their mistakes that they too felt 'the obligation to make an exact copy'" (188, quoting James Royle). For further discussion, see Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Inerrancy of the Autographa," in *Inerrancy*, 151–93.

⁷⁸ See Daniel B. Wallace, "Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism for the Twenty-First Century," *JETS* 52 (2009): 94–95. See also Article X of the CSBI: "We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original. We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant." See also Peter J. Gentry, "The Text of the Old Testament," *JETS* 52 (2009): 19–45, and idem, "The Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament," *BBR* 16 (2006): 193–218.

our faith, and where for the present no convincing solution is at hand we shall significantly honor God by trusting His assurance that His Word is true, despite these appearances, and by maintaining our confidence that one day they will be seen to have been illusions.⁷⁹

In addition to this I would observe that a remarkable amount of confidence is necessary to declare the Bible to be in error. One must be absolutely certain that one is correct about so many things.⁸⁰ The scope of this presentation allows for only one example of what I have in mind. The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* asserts in a note on Dan 2:1, “*Second year* is a slip (compare ‘third year’ in 1.5–6,17,20).”⁸¹ The logic here appears to be that since Daniel was to be educated for three years (Dan 1:5), and since he stood before the king at the end of that period in Dan 1:17–20, the placement of the events of Dan 2 in the “second year” of Nebuchadnezzar cannot possibly be correct. But what if Nebuchadnezzar had reigned for part of a year before his first official year began (Daniel’s first year of training)? There are indications that Nebuchadnezzar reigned some months before the official tally of his years on the throne began. Depending, then, on how the years were counted, it is possible that Daniel completed three years of training by the second “official” year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. I do not know that this is in fact the way things happened, but the possibility that this explanation is true would urge against a confident assertion that Dan 2:1 represents an error. A modern analogy to this example is the way the United States of America considers the years of its presidents. George W. Bush was president from 2000 to 2008, but he was not sworn into office until early in 2001, and he did not leave office until Barack Obama was sworn into office in early 2009. Some historian thousands of years hence might declare that the ancient records have wrongly listed the years of George W. Bush as being 2000 to 2008, when in fact they were 2001 to 2009. The error will be on the part of the historian, not the ancient re-

⁷⁹ Section III, part C, paragraph 6.

⁸⁰ For a similar discussion, see Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 214–26.

⁸¹ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Revised Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments* (ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger; New York: Oxford University Press, 1962, 1973), 1068.

cords. Evangelicals are content to trust that when all the evidence is brought forth, the Bible's claims about itself will be vindicated.

CONCLUSION

The evangelical view of Scripture is that the sixty-six books of the Protestant Canon have been recognized to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore inerrant. The Old and New Testaments attest to their own inspiration, and evangelicals believe the Bible's testimony about itself to be self-authenticating. We seek to be those whom God himself describes, "this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word" (Isa 66:2).*

FOR FURTHER READING

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